Workplace Values and Norms

Power Distance

Low Power Distance
- It’s okay to disagree with or question the boss.
- There is more interaction between the boss and workers.
- The boss is more democratic.
- Taking initiative is okay.
- The boss sees himself/herself as one of the group.
- Power is decentralized.

High Power Distance
- The worker does not question or disagree with the boss.
- There is less interaction between the boss and workers.
- Power is centralized and generally not shared.
- The boss does not reward initiative.
- The boss is more autocratic.

Uncertainty Avoidance

Low Uncertainty Avoidance
- There is less emphasis on conformity.
- It’s okay to bypass the chain of command if necessary.
- Conflict can’t always be avoided.
- Taking risks is acceptable. Interactions are more informal.
- Differences are interesting.

High Uncertainty Avoidance
- There is more emphasis on conforming.
- It’s never good to bypass the chain of command.
- Conflict must be avoided.
- Taking risks is not attractive. Interactions are more formal.
- Differences are uncomfortable.

Source of Status

Achieved Status
- You earn status through achievement, by what you’ve accomplished in life.
- You get ahead based on your merit.
- Status must be earned; it isn’t automatic, and it can be lost.
- Your status comes with your family

Ascribed Status
- name, wealth, and/or the groups you are affiliated with.
- Achievements are important, but you can have status without them.
## Workplace Values and Norms (cont.)

### Concept of Work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work as Part of Identity</th>
<th>Work as Functional Necessity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>■ Work has value in and of itself.</td>
<td>■ Work is the means to pay bills and meet financial obligations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>■ Your job is an important part of your identity.</td>
<td>■ Work may be satisfying, but doesn’t have to be.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>■ You live to work.</td>
<td>■ Life is too short to revolve around one’s work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>■ Getting things done is inherently satisfying.</td>
<td>■ Work is what you do, not who you are.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Personal & Professional

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal/Professional Separated</th>
<th>Personal/Professional Intertwined</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>■ Personal matters should not be brought to work. Personal/family obligations should be scheduled around work.</td>
<td>■ It is impossible to separate personal matters from work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>■ Personal and professional lives should be kept separate.</td>
<td>■ You may have to interrupt work to take care of personal business.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>■ People don’t understand if you have a family emergency.</td>
<td>■ Personal and professional lives inevitably overlap. People understand if you have a family emergency.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Motivation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professional Opportunity</th>
<th>Comfortable Work Environment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>■ Professional opportunity and success are important motivators.</td>
<td>■ People want to have a pleasant work setting and good relationships with co-workers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>■ People want to learn, get ahead, move up in their professions and have greater power, authority and responsibility.</td>
<td>■ Job security is important, as well as a workplace that takes care of its employees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>■ Job security is not as important as making more money and advancing in one’s career.</td>
<td>■ Having more time off for family is very motivating.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>■ More power and responsibility are not by themselves attractive, even if they mean more money.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Workplace Values and Norms (cont.)

The Key to Productivity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Results</th>
<th>Harmony</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>■ Focusing on the task ensures success.</td>
<td>■ Harmony in the workplace will ensure eventual success.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>■ People won’t always get along, but you have to move forward anyway.</td>
<td>■ Results bought at the expense of harmony are too costly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>■ Harmony is nice but results are what count.</td>
<td>■ How you get results is just as important as the results themselves.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>■ Getting results is ultimately more important than how you get them.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>■ Working well with other people is the key to harmony.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Ideal Worker

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technical Skills</th>
<th>People Skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>■ What matters most in a worker is his/her technical qualifications: education, work experience and specific skills.</td>
<td>■ What matters most in a worker is his/her ability to work well with others and not rock the boat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>■ “People” skills are important, but they don’t contribute as much to the bottom line.</td>
<td>■ Experience and technical skills are important, but they don’t contribute as much to the bottom line.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>■ Competence is the key to advancement.</td>
<td>■ Age and seniority are important for getting promoted.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Monochronic Time vs. Polychronic Time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monochronic Time</th>
<th>Polychronic Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>■ Sticking to the schedule is more important than completing the transaction.</td>
<td>■ Flexibility is more important than sticking to the schedule.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>■ A meeting should proceed without digression and people should stick to the agenda.</td>
<td>■ Distractions and digressions are inevitable, and therefore, an agenda is just a piece of paper.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>■ Deadlines should be respected.</td>
<td>■ Deadlines should be viewed and followed as approximations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>■ Having to wait for a scheduled appointment is an insult.</td>
<td>■ Having to wait for a scheduled appointment is normal.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Communication Styles Case Study

Marcus is a member from Boston who is serving in a rural community with a population of fewer than 1,000 people. Part of his assignment is to engage community members and local organizations to help create a family literacy program at an elementary school. Although he is new to the community and the organization where he is serving, he is confident he will be able to successfully complete the activities in his assignment because he has a Master’s degree and five years of work experience. Early in his service year, a member of his organization named Sharon is assigned to be his mentor. He is told that he can ask her for any advice or guidance. However, when it comes time to plan a series of evening “design meetings” to gather support and input from the community, he rushes headlong into organizing the meetings, without consulting Sharon.

He sets an agenda and sends it with invitations to ten community members who he thinks would be instrumental in starting the program. To gain commitment he follows up the e-mail with phone calls. Marcus reaches eight of the 10 invitees by phone, all of whom say, “Sure, I can come to the meeting.” Encouraged, Marcus decides to live by the mantra, “If you offer food, they will come.” He buys chips, sodas, and cookies for the event.

On the night of the meeting, only three people show up. Marcus waits 15 minutes before beginning. “I thought we were going to have more representation here,” he apologizes while scanning the room. “I expected at least seven. I’m not sure what happened to the others. Does anyone else know?” Marcus looks to the two men and one woman seated. The woman shrugs. One of the men shifts in his seat, but no one says a word. Marcus decides he needs to move on with the meeting. He tapes up his charts and begins walking through his agenda. The three attendees offer very few comments, even when he asks each in turn for their opinions. “Looks like you’ve got a pretty good plan,” is all one man says the entire evening. However, all three remain the full hour and a half, shake his hand, and thank him politely on their way out. As Marcus cleans up, he attributes the low participation to the poor turnout.

Before the second meeting, Marcus e-mails the meeting notes to the 10 original invites. In his e-mail he says, “I hope you can make this very important second meeting. We really need your input and involvement. Help ensure that our family literacy programs reflect the needs of this community.” Again, he follows up with phone calls and gets eight confirmations of attendance; however, the only person to show up for the second meeting is Sharon, his mentor. After waiting 30 minutes, Marcus balls up his charts and tosses them in the trash. As they walk out together, Sharon suggests they have a debrief meeting the next day over lunch. During his bike ride home, Marcus begins to wonder if he is cut out for service.

- How would you assess what happened in the scenario? Discuss in groups.
Styles of Communication

Degree of Directness

Direct

- People say what they mean and mean what they say.
- You don’t need to read between the lines.
- It’s important to be direct and tell it like it is.
- Honesty is the best policy.
- The truth is more important than sparing someone’s feelings.

Indirect

- People are indirect.
- They imply/ suggest what they mean.
- Understatement is valued.
- You need to read between the lines.
- Telling the truth, if it hurts, should be tempered.

1. In regard to “Degree of Directness,” I tend to be more ________________

2. How does this communication style relate to the case study?

3. What could Marcus have done to communicate more effectively?

The Role of Context

Low Context

- Low context, heterogeneous and individualistic cultures: little is already known.
- The message must be explicit and spelled out.
- Words are the primary means of communication.
- Nonverbal cues are not the key to understanding.

High Context

- High context, homogenous and collectivist cultures: much is already known.
- The spoken word is not the primary means of communicating.
- Much is implied but little needs to be said.
- Nonverbal cues and the context are key.
- What is not said may be the message.

1. In regard to “Low or High Context,” I tend to prefer communicating in ____________ context cultures.

2. How does this communication style relate to the case study?

3. What could Marcus have done to communicate more effectively?
Organizational Culture and Community Entry

Styles of Communication (cont.)

The Importance of Face

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Face is Less Important</th>
<th>Face Is Key</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Face has moderate importance.</td>
<td>Saving face/not losing face takes precedence over the “truth”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The facts and expediency are more important than being careful about what you say.</td>
<td>Maintaining harmony is the overriding goal of the communication exchange.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting/giving information is the overriding goal of the communication exchange.</td>
<td>Confrontation is avoided.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criticism is straightforward.</td>
<td>Saying no is difficult.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s okay to say no, to confront people.</td>
<td>Criticism is handled very delicately.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Face is paramount.</td>
<td>What one says and what one feels often are not the same.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. In regard to “The Importance of Face,” I think saving face is _________________.

2. How does this communication style relate to the case study?

3. What could Marcus have done to communicate more effectively?

The Task or the Person

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Task</th>
<th>The Person</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The task is separated from the person.</td>
<td>Begin with small talk and then move to business.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do business first and then have small talk.</td>
<td>A personal relationship is a prerequisite to getting the job done.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishing rapport and a good personal relationship are not essential to getting the job done.</td>
<td>The goal is building the relationship.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The goal is accomplishing the task.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. In regard to “The Task or the Person,” I think communication focus should be on the _________.

2. How does this communication style relate to the case study?

3. What could Marcus have done to communicate more effectively?
Cultural Observation Tool

Observe Nonverbal Communication

- How do people dress?
- How do they greet each other in the morning?
- What is the protocol for going in and out of someone’s office?
- Do people maintain eye contact when they talk?
- How far apart do people stand?

Observe Mono/Polychronic Behaviors (Behaviors Related to Time)

- Do people come to work on time? Who does and who doesn’t?
- What happens when someone who is talking to someone else gets a telephone call?
- What does a third person do when approaching two others who are in conversation?
- Do meetings start on time?
- How long do people with appointments have to wait?

Observe Power Distance Behaviors

- How do subordinates treat their superiors?
- How do superiors treat subordinates?
- Do you see evidence of bosses delegating authority or holding on to it?
Cultural Observation Tool (cont.)

- Do you see evidence of subordinates taking initiative or just waiting for instruction?
- Whom do people eat lunch with? Do they eat only with their peers?

Communication Styles

- How is conflict handled?
- How is disagreement expressed?
- How is bad news or a negative concern communicated?
- How important does saving face seem to be?
- Are people generally direct or indirect in their conversation?
- Does this appear to be a high or low context workplace?

Other Workplace Norms

- When people interact, do they get to the task right away or talk more generally?
- Do people work closely together or more independently?
- Are women treated differently from men? If so, in what way?
- What kind of behaviors in workers seem to be rewarded? What are people praised for?
- What does the prevailing attitude seem to be about rules and procedures and the need to follow them?
Organization & Community Keys

- Listen more than speaking. Move slower than fast to understand and be understood and accepted.
- Seek out answers to questions in respectful ways.
- Seek out a trusted and knowledgeable ally to be your cultural mentor.
- Ask for help from reliable community resources to understand:
  - Major groups, sectors, and networks
  - Organizational and community structure
  - Formal and informal leadership - who are viewed as "spokes people" and the "elder voices" or keepers of wisdom and knowledge
  - Important values, practices, rituals, people, places, resources, attitudes, knowledge, and behaviors
  - How respect is defined and practiced
  - How is service and helping others understood and lived out, what are the traditions of service
  - What are the "non-negotiables"
  - The history of the community – economic, diversity, social, political, major conflicts and struggles, major successes, significant cross-cultural, cross-group collaborations
  - Current significant cross-cultural, cross-group collaborations
- Commit to suspending one's assumptions. It is important to resist making quick judgments and overgeneralizations. Keep focus on the fact that one's lense is one's lense.
- Understand that relationship building is key to almost everything related to one's service project. Share oneself in ways that earn and garner trust, respect, and confidence.
- Address cultural differences in ways that are not diminishing to anyone or group.
- View one's time in a community more as a privilege and special opportunity than as a right.