

# opción

Revista de Antropología, Ciencias de la Comunicación y de la Información, Filosofía,  
Linguística y Semiótica, Problemas del Desarrollo, la Ciencia y la Tecnología

Año 36, 2020, Especial N°

# 27

Revista de Ciencias Humanas y Sociales

ISSN 1012-1587/ ISSNe: 2477-9385

Depósito Legal pp 198402ZU45



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## **Public service corporate culture development: main problems and trends**

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### **Abstract**

In this article, they analyze the main stages of public service corporate culture development in Russian Federation: the determination of the mission and basic values; the development of traditions and corporate identity; the determination of employee behavior standards; the improvement of the favorable social-psychological climate. The main problem of public service corporate culture development in modern Russian conditions is the contradiction between its declared content and the internal values of its employees. The analysis of public service corporate culture state in Russia showed a regular tendency: the higher the level of management, the stronger the corporate culture.

**Keywords:** Corporate culture, Public service, Values, Traditions, Management principles.

## Desarrollo de la cultura corporativa del servicio público: principales problemas y tendencias

### Resumen

En este artículo, se analizan las principales etapas del desarrollo de la cultura corporativa del servicio público en la Federación de Rusia: la determinación de la misión y los valores básicos; el desarrollo de tradiciones e identidad corporativa; la determinación de los estándares de comportamiento de los empleados; La mejora del clima social y psicológico favorable. El principal problema del desarrollo de la cultura corporativa del servicio público en las condiciones modernas de Rusia es la contradicción entre su contenido declarado y los valores internos de sus empleados. El análisis del estado de la cultura corporativa del servicio público en Rusia mostró una tendencia regular: cuanto mayor es el nivel de gestión, más fuerte es la cultura corporativa.

**Palabras clave:** Cultura corporativa, Servicio público, Valores, Tradiciones, Principios de gestión.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Currently corporatism is a stable system of interest group relations concerning fundamental social-economic issues based on mutually beneficial terms for the involved parties. The concept of corporate culture is treated differently: as a special case of an organizational culture (HARRIS & SUTTON, 1986; MARTIN & SIEHL, 1983; HARRISON, BAIRD, 2015); as the culture of organizations in a post-industrial society (VAN MAANEN & BARLEY, 1984; PARKER, BRADLEY, 2000; GLADYSHEVA,

2017); as a set of organizational cultures of companies engaged in a particular business (SCHRAEDER et al., 2005); as a system of corporate communications (SADRI, LEES, 2011), providing a balance of interests within a company and even as something ephemeral, immeasurable, insensible, which does not affect a company success.

The works of many researchers of the 20th century are devoted to the study of the corporate culture and its impact on the activity of large entrepreneurial structures: KATZ & KAHN (1978), JONES & JAMES (1979), MARTIN (1982), WILKINS & OUCHI (1983), SCHEIN, EH (1965) and others. In the most general terms an organization culture is meant as the beliefs, the values and the traditions that express a prevailing management style, the ways of employee motivation, an organization image, etc. Thus, M.H. Meskon provided the following definition: "An organization atmosphere or climate is its culture. Culture reflects the prevailing customs, traditions and beliefs in an organization" (MESCON, 1985).

A famous researcher of an organizational behavior S. Robbins noted rightly that corporate culture is a "social glue" that helps to maintain the integrity of an organization by the development of thinking and behavior acceptable standards (ROBBINS, 2006). The studies show that a personality manifested in values and behavior is associated with leadership at the level of an organization leader (NADKARNI & HERRMANN, 2010; TSUI, ZHANG, WANG, XIN, & WU, 2006) and that these values and behaviors can influence an organization culture as a whole (O'REILLY et al., 2017).

Corporate culture means that workers and employers must solve all social and economic issues through social partnership system. In fact, corporate culture integrates itself into the surrounding society and the effectiveness of this contributes to an organization development. This is not just a term, but a generalized name for a complex of spiritual and practical values and actions within the framework of positive (democratic, administrative) corporatism. Corporate culture unites company employees (KIRILLOV et al., 2017). It ensures the functioning of a social system and the ability to manage an organization effectively through the involvement of staff. The studies conducted by The Gallup Organization, Hay Group, Aon Hewitt, Towers Perrin, etc., prove convincingly that the concern for the involvement of staff increases the efficiency of any organization significantly (KONOVALOVA, 2014). The main result of corporation organizational culture study over the past decades was the notion that culture is one of the important factors for an organization success and therefore should be managed by management (GRUDZINSKY, PETROVA, 2014).

During the last decade, more and more scientific work has appeared in the field of training, education, career and direct professional activities of public servants (MATEI, 2014; PRATAMA, 2015; FRAGKOU, 2013; SOROKO et al., 2018). The relevance of the proposed topic is determined by the need to improve the effectiveness of public service (FROLOVA et al., 2017) on the basis of a rational corporate culture development. Under certain conditions, it is the

corporate culture that can become an effective tool in the hands of organization heads seeking to harmonize social and labor relations.

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

The aim of the study is to identify the main problems of public service corporate culture development and to consider the current trends in this area. The main emphasis is on the social-psychological problems that arise in modern state structures when new elements of corporate culture are introduced, as well as on the most important aspects of manager activities in the management of an organization culture. In 2010-2016, the authors carried out sociological research on the problem of public service corporate culture development in Russian Federation. The method of research is the questionnaire survey of the target audience. The target audience was represented by the students of retraining and advanced training courses held for state and municipal employees. The amount of respondents  $N = 328$ . Besides, in 2014, 5 focus groups were held with state and municipal employees in Moscow and the Moscow region. The selection of respondents for focus groups was carried out on a professional basis, taking into account the differentiation concerning the position held and work experience. In 2015, semi-structured interviews were conducted between experts, government and municipal employees occupying top, main or leading positions ( $N = 18$ ). They stated as the main hypothesis of the study that the main measures for public service corporate culture development are directed, first of all, to its external attributes. Not

enough attention is paid to the changes in corporate communications, the creation of a specific team spirit that reflects an organization goals.

### **3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

In modern conditions, most organizations have their mission. Moreover, this applies even more, to state institutions and organizations. An organization (a company) mission is its positioning itself in society, its self-presentation to its employees. According to the study results, a significant part of civil servants (68.4%) stressed the social significance of their activities, defining the mission as "the way to benefit society" and "the service for the benefit of Russian state". However, at the same time, the majority of the respondents (85.2%) found it difficult to answer the question about the way of an organization mission implementation in their actual activities and everyday labor practices.

During the performance of focus groups, the opinions were divided. On the one hand, such judgments were expressed as "I am engaged in routine work that does not do any good", "declared principles and real life are different things", "I prepare reporting materials for management and do not see any special meaning in this". On the other hand, some focus group participants said that they "do the work honestly and in good faith", "try to execute all the instructions promptly and efficiently". Unfortunately, it should be noted that some optimism in relation to its role in the implementation of an

organization mission is more typical for young employees who have been employed in public service for less than 1 year. Such communicative units as traditions, rituals, ceremonies and symbolism play an important role in company role affirmation. According to the results of the survey, the majority of respondents (76.2%) noted such a tradition as "the parties on the occasion of birthdays and other holidays", 11.3% found it difficult to answer.

Thus, modern public service in Russia is characterized by the absence of established traditions inherent in this particular social organization. It should be noted that the development of collective traditions does not belong to spontaneous processes and mainly requires careful management study. As foreign practice shows, the development of relevant traditions belongs to the competence of an organization top management. However, one of the most important problems of modern corporate cultures is the problem of Western borrowed models "alienation". Undoubtedly, traditional culture undergoes changes in Russia and social communication are being transformed. And the experience of Western companies on the development of corporate culture is of greater importance. Turning to it you can save yourself from many mistakes, solve the most acute contemporary social and psychological problems in Russian companies quickly. However, the introduction of foreign experience requires a critical understanding, the adaptation to modern Russian conditions and national culture. According to the survey results, 86.7% of respondents are very wary of foreign experience borrowing and



introduction practice for the development of corporate culture in Russian organizations.

The majority of the respondents are not ready to accept such practices, as "collective performance of an anthem at the beginning of a working day" (76.1% gave a negative assessment), while 89.3% are generally positive about the idea of an organization anthem development. Thus, the borrowing of Western models for a corporate culture development should be based on Russian mentality specifics, taking into account national peculiarities. A social selection of new traditions is necessary, which implies reasonable conservatism. Corporate identity is an essential part of corporate culture. It develops the impression of an organization among social environment, it is called upon to develop a positive image of an organization, which is the main goal of corporate identity. According to the results of the survey, 35.8% of respondents do not support the introduction of a dress code for the public service (see Fig. 1). The relationship to a corporate style is determined by gender differences.

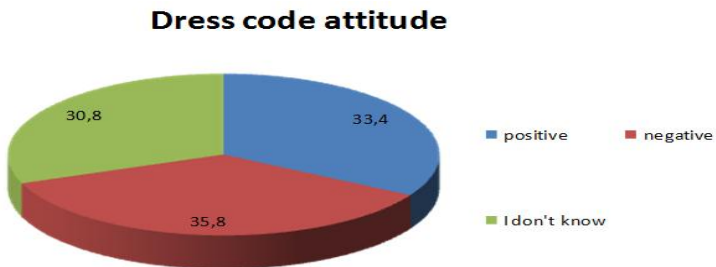


Figure 1: State employee relation towards dress-code

The greatest concern in this regard is felt by women (47.3% gave a negative assessment, which is above the average values by 11.5 percentage points). During the performance of focus groups, the main reasons of the negative attitude towards dress code were formulated: "heads determine what clothes to wear without any consultations", "the specifics of the work does not provide for business meetings and interaction with population".

The standards of employee behavior, the basics of business ethics, being closely related to traditions and customs, differ from them significantly, mainly by its reproduction on a daily basis, they find expression in the process of mutual communication between in a work collective, in a working group, as well as in motivations and beliefs of an individual, a person's intellect, will and feelings. The study "Engaging for Success: enhancing performance through employee engagement" emphasizes the need to follow the rules of business ethics (Engaging for Success ...). Within the focus groups, respondents identified such a problem as the diffusion of business ethics standards of the public service due to the tendency of expert appointment (recruited from business structures) to lead positions. For example, the respondents who have a fairly long record of civil service have noted an aversion to such norms as a non-official address and an address by name. This problem aroused a lively response during the discussion, the respondents argued their position with the proverbs ("when in Rome do as the Romans do"), the specifics of Russian mentality and traditions.

Of course, it is impossible to regulate the entire corporate culture fully. An extensive European study, dedicated to this topic, noted the importance of "soft" aspects of corporate culture (KONOVALOVA, 2014). The interaction of the formal and informal components of culture can take many forms, the correlation coefficient between these subcultures can vary from -1 to +1. It is possible to divide all the requirements of the leadership into mandatory and desirable ones.

The norms and rules of conduct should be recorded in organization regulations. A local organization act, which determines the basic moral and ethical, business rules and principles of relationships and by which all employees of the organization should be guided in their professional activities, is usually called the Corporate Code or the Code of Ethics. The main purpose of this document is to strengthen the corporate culture and implement an organization mission.

According to the study results, only 32.9% of the respondents noted that the Code of Ethics and Service Behavior was developed in their organization, 45.1% found it difficult to answer. During the performance of focus groups, an attempt was made to assess the level of respondent awareness about the content of documents that define the rules of corporate culture. Even those employees who are aware of this document existence could not reproduce its main points.

The responses that were received during the discussion illustrate a rather skeptical attitude: "the written down truths are stated there", "the document is designed for the sake of appearance", "has a remote relation to real life", "the chiefs write to show the appearance of work

and justify their high wages". Thus, the results of the studies illustrate the next contradiction between the declared principles and the real attitude of employees towards the policy pursued by leadership. The elements of corporate culture are perceived by modern civil servants, as a kind of theory that has nothing to do with real life. The principles are replaced by slogans that are not reflected in everyday working practices and, above all, in the activities of an organization leadership.

For example, the following points of view were expressed. "Often you hear that the main thing is human potential, the caring for a team, but we are working 12 hours a day, we go home after midnight", "Justice and transparency in the wage system are only slogans, in fact the premiums are distributed by a chief depending on his personal preferences and friendships". The violation of openness principle in management practices limits the processes of sustainable corporate communication establishment that ensures the achievement of organization goals. Also they revealed other factors limiting the effectiveness of corporate culture development. During the focus groups, the main principles of management and the specifics of their implementation in the daily activities of an organization were discussed. The results of the study illustrate that the essence of the fundamental principles of management is either replaced or ignored often. For example, according to respondents the principle of one-man management is often interpreted only on the basis of the following thesis: "a boss is always right" while a leader does not bear personal responsibility for the activities of an organization, shifting it to subordinates. Often, the principle of authority and responsibility

conformity is violated. Thus, "one is given unlimited powers, and at the same time he is released from responsibility, and the other becomes a "switchman", answering for someone else's mistakes". There is the practice of subordination principle violation. The following opinions were cited in the focus groups: "Some bosses like to demonstrate their power by putting tasks without informing an immediate supervisor that his subordinates carry out higher orders. The authority of an immediate leader is undermined".

The violation of management principles is fraught with the fact that all work on the definition and normative record of corporate culture basics will remain on paper, and will not be carried out (KIRILLOV, 2014). The subordinates react to the violation of the objective principles of management in an organization very sensitively, they understand intuitively that a manager is afraid of responsibility, that he is incompetent, and that his words do not coincide with his affairs. And the social ties so necessary for a successful transfer of the social system into the mainstream of corporate culture will never be created. Moreover, the existing social ties formed in an established organizational culture can be interrupted.

We must not forget that a man is the central and determining figure of any production process. The principle that "a man is the main object of attention", ensures the adoption of corporate culture and the involvement of all employees in the affairs of an organization (a company), increases the importance of a small group and group values for a person development (socialization). The study "The Power of

Three. Taking Engagement to New Heights", prepared by the consulting company Towers Watson, identifies three components of corporate engagement: the attachment to a company, the desire to make extra efforts and achieve more; the atmosphere that promotes productive work and contributes to the improvement of performance; individual working conditions (working environment, social conditions and emotional climate in a team) (Perspectives ...).

According to the research results, they noted a sufficiently high stability in the evaluation of their professional activities by state and municipal employees. Only 26% of respondents are going to change their place of work in near future. At the same time, more than half of them plan to remain in public service. However, according to the respondents, the factors forming a high commitment to their profession, are its prestige, public importance, pay and privileges. Only a small part of the respondents pointed to the influence of such factors as favorable social-psychological climate (4.1%), working conditions (1%) and leadership style (0.9%).

During the survey, state and municipal employees were asked to evaluate such components of their professional activities as leadership style, working conditions and motivation system. According to respondents, most managers have an authoritarian style of management (56.2%), which is generally perceived as a norm. More than half of the respondents (48.7%) are not satisfied with the working conditions, which is associated first of all with a non-standard working day. An overwhelming majority of respondents (89.1%) noted that they had to

"stay each or almost every day" at work, 24.3% had to work on weekends. In the course of focus groups, this position was clarified.

As it turned out, the negative evaluation of the respondents is caused not so much by the need to stay at work, as by a poor organization of work. The following views were expressed: "The first half of the day is almost completely free, the meetings begin near the end of a working day, everyone should wait for its end and only after that the orders are issued that must be urgently fulfilled", "the head does not let go, because he is afraid of urgent orders "from the top", in this case, all should be in place, even if there is no work. It is natural that most of the respondents are not fully satisfied with their remuneration, noting a high level of workload and tension at a workplace. Extremely negative reactions cause the lack of transparency in the system of financial incentives. When the corporate culture of an organization as a whole was evaluated, the opinions of the respondents were divided. Thus, 48.2% characterized it as "a weak and an inefficient" (see Fig.2).

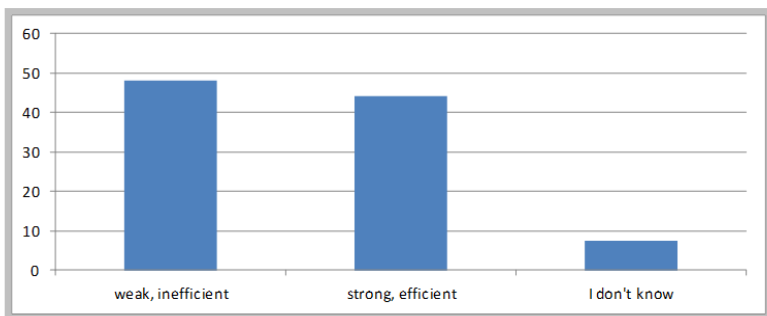


Figure 2: Distribution of answers to the following question: "How would you characterize the corporate culture of your organization?"

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

The effectiveness of a corporate culture development is largely determined by the actions of organization leaders, the degree of their consistency, systemic nature, the orientation toward search and the consideration of employee opinions at all hierarchical levels and the dominance of ethical factors. It is very important to avoid double standards, the substitution of concepts, ambiguity and incorrect hasty actions. The analysis of the public service corporate culture state in Russia showed a regular tendency: the higher the level of management, the stronger the corporate culture.

The contradiction between its declared content and the values of the employees was noted as the main problem of public service corporate culture development in modern Russian conditions. Modern conditions generate the attributive approach to the development of corporate culture, a head's attention is focused only on its superficial level. The analysis of foreign experience shows the significance of symbolic-ritual components, however, as studies showed, they meet a rather cautious perception in Russian environment.

The development of an effective corporate culture presupposes not only the installation of its "facade" elements for the illustration in the external environment, but also profound changes in corporate communications, the attitude of employees to work, the creation of a specific team spirit reflecting the organization's goals. The results of the research made it possible to formulate the basic principles for the



development of an effective corporate culture. We attribute the following to the main ones: the conformity to the national mentality and real practices; understanding synchronization of a mission, a strategy and the goals of an organization management and all employees; practicality, aesthetics, expressiveness and the value of corporate identity for employees; regulations and the compliance with the requirements of corporate culture by all employees; the adherence to the principles of management (openness, conformity of authority and responsibility and subordination).

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Revista de Ciencias Humanas y Sociales

Año 36, Especial N° 27 (2020)

Esta revista fue editada en formato digital por el personal de la Oficina de Publicaciones Científicas de la Facultad Experimental de Ciencias, Universidad del Zulia.

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