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Analyzing the Influence of Organizational Culture on Co-worker Identity: A Case Study within the Marine Services Sector

**Análisis de la influencia de la cultura organizativa en la identidad de los colaboradores:
Un estudio de caso en el sector de los servicios marítimos**

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Abstract

This research exhibits the results of the analysis of the corporate culture of a Maritime Services' company dedicated to the provision of services related to maritime transportation. The use of the deductive method made it possible to reach the objective of describing and obtaining the analysis of its corporate culture through the model of the thirteen dimensions of Zapata, Rodríguez, and Sánchez (2008) using a descriptive and qualitative type of research. Consequently, it was identified that

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the company functions as an open system and through a process of internalization and externalization. It has painstakingly forged its unique identity by melding together elements that have evolved since its inception with seamlessly integrated components that have been added progressively over the years

Keywords

Corporate culture, organizational culture, dimensions, marine services.

Resumen

La presente investigación expone los resultados del análisis de la cultura corporativa aplicada a una empresa dedicada a la prestación de servicios de transporte marítimo. Se consideró el tipo de investigación cualitativa y descriptiva. El uso del método deductivo hizo posible alcanzar el objetivo el cual facilitó describir y obtener el análisis de la cultura corporativa mediante la utilización del modelo de las trece dimensiones de Zapata, Rodríguez y Sánchez (2008). En consecuencia, se identificó que la compañía funciona como sistema abierto y mediante un proceso de interiorización y exteriorización construyen con el paso de los años su identidad, la cual está determinada por elementos que se han modificado desde su inicio y otros que han ido integrando progresivamente y que han aportado a la identidad de los empleados y permeado a las diferentes áreas de la organización.

Palabras clave

Cultura organizacional, talento humano, dimensiones de la cultura organizacional, empresa de servicios marítimos.

Introduction

The existence of organizational culture as a visible aspect in companies is not a new issue, even from the administrative model presented by Taylor there are traces of what would be the corporate culture considered as an important variable for the productivity of the company (Posthuma et al., 2023; Maskály & Kutnjak, 2023; Martínez, 1995).

Subsequently, people like Ford delved deeper into the subject by establishing new concepts within the organization such as work cells and multipurpose workers for the alignment of personal objectives with organizational objectives (Pedraza et al., 2023; Safón, 1997), Fayol continued with his contributions regarding the organization of management with his administrative model aimed at formalization and its 14 principles, However, with Elton Mayo in 1924, a closer approximation to this factor began through his experiments and the search for hypothesis tests on the relationship between variations in the organization and the relationship between personal and organizational objectives (Bagga et al., 2022; Safón, 1997).

Theoric References

Organizational culture based from a classic perspective.

The concept of organizational culture acquires a concise definition through Pettigrew (1979) defining such concept as a public meaning accepted by the entire collective belonging to a group and at a given time. Another concept is provided by Shwartz and Davis (1981), similar to Pettigrew (1979) who define organizational culture as beliefs and behaviors expected by all members of a group, an example of which are organizations that convert these beliefs into norms in order to influence the actions of all members and groups of the company (Secer et al., 2023; Morelos & Fontalvo, 2014; Kemp et al., 2023).

Analysis of dimensions in the organizational culture

Measuring organizational culture is essential in order to establish variables that serve to collect information that allows to reflect the reality of organizations (Hoang et al., 2023; Maan & Srivastava, 2023)), in that order of ideas the study carried out by Hofstede et al. (1990) “measuring organizational cultures: a qualitative and quantitative study in 20 cases” established that cultural manifestations in organizations were classified into four categories: symbols, heroes, rituals (the three visible practices) and values (Noh et al., 2023; Rass et al., 2023; Sampat et al., 2022; Osei et al., 2023).

Likewise, the model of Zapata, Rodriguez & Sanchez (2008) is used to analyze organizational culture, it is divided into 13 dimensions, which are detailed below (Table 1):

Table 1. Dimension in the descriptive model of the organizational culture

Dimension	Description
1. History	It refers to the company's founding myths, the founder's legacies, heroes identified by employees, and the process of change in the organizational structure.
2. Extern Culture	It refers to the external environment surrounding the organization and the individual, evaluating variables that affect organizations locally and globally.
3. Language y communication	It rescues the characteristics of speech, language, symbols, the use of slang, nicknames or proverbs, formal or informal language, of managers or subordinates.
4. Formal project of business	It groups together what is known as the company's philosophy: mission, vision, principles, policies, values, competencies, among other aspects that serve as support to establish action plans and their components.
5. Natural Assets	It refers a little more to the corporate name of the company itself, to the processes that support these mission processes and includes the economy, production, creation and sale of products or services, describing the company's mission activity and what it offers to the market.
6. Unnatural Assets	They are the symbols, what is in the imaginary, religions, beliefs, myths, witchcraft, political-ideological relations.
7. Social Assets	It includes rules and customs, aspects such as norms and values, as well as aspects that provide security and make the employee feel protected. This dimension includes a set of rituals, events, behaviors, values and principles that are promoted and recognized within the organization.
8. Interpersonal relationships	They include dimensions that define values according to hierarchical distance, organizational climate, neutral versus affective relationships, dualities between the individual and the group or between the particular and the universal, or what is categorized as feminine or masculine..
9. Relations of consanguinity	The group's perceptions about the fact of establishing bonds of affinity or possessing bonds of consanguinity through lasting relationships in time and space are identified.
10. Relations of power	This includes the way in which problems are dealt with through the use of power and the type of interaction between managers and subordinates, which in itself usually generates conflicts of interest.
11. Leadership	Characteristic on the description of the role assumed by and incumbent upon the leaders, the way of being of those who occupy managerial positions, their management styles and types of domination.
12. Subcultures	These are groups within the organization that are formed according to variables such as professional studies, areas, status, political, social and religious ideologies.
13. Identity	It is the central element and ultimate goal of the dynamic and continuous process of creation of culture, the levels are: relationship with ourselves, with others, with nature and with the sacred.

Source: Own elaboration with base on Zapata et al. (2008).

Finally, other dimensions considered for measuring organizational culture were formulated by Oriade et al. (2021): people orientation (teamwork, collaboration, concern for co-workers, respect for rights), innovation (experimentation, dynamism and entrepreneurship, commitment to innovation, risk-taking, incentive for creativity), customer focus (value provided to the customer, customer relations, meeting expectations), employee development (empowerment, opportunity for growth) and formality (structures, rules, policies, results ethic, achievement orientation) (Barjak & Heimsch, 2021; Mikušová et al., 2023).

Methodology

This research analyzed the corporate culture of a company that offers maritime services, it is a company that has been operating in the market for approximately 10 years, the staff has been recently renewed. The type of research is descriptive racional y propositivo. The approach used is qualitative because it seeks to identify and describe variables that allow analyzing the characteristics of the company's corporate culture. The research method is deductive, based on the general methodology related to the study of organizational culture, in this case, the tool to be used is based on the application of 13 dimensions proposed by the model of Zapata et al. (2008). Accordingly, the research sources used were, on the one hand, primary research sources such as questionnaire surveys to 55 employees - from different strategic, technical and operational levels - of the company, a semi-structured interview to the Corporate Wellness Leader and a non-participant observation from a visit made to the company, applied in the second half of the year 2022. On the other hand, the secondary sources come from books, studies previously conducted on the same subject, scientific articles, research available in databases, the company's website and documentation provided by the company.

Analysis of Data

Based on what has been previously described and supported by Zapata's analysis method, the following system for data processing and analysis is proposed (Table 2):

Table 2. Information processing and analysis

Target: Analizar la cultura organizacional de una empresa de servicios relacionados con el sector marítimo		
Phase	Strategy	Category
Phase 1. To describe the characteristics that make up the organizational culture of a maritime-related services company by means of its dimensions.	Development of the 13 dimensions through the application of various research sources: Interviews, questionnaires, news, documents in general.	Company history, external culture, company project, language, material production system, immaterial production system, social production system, interpersonal, kinship and power relations, management and leadership styles, subcultures and identity.
Phase 2. Analyze the company's corporate culture.	Interpretation following the organizational culture analysis model proposed by Zapata.	Internalization, externalization, material, social, immaterial variables and collective behaviors.

Source: Own elaboration

Results

Characteristics from the culture in a business of marine services

The case study describes the aspects in a company of the maritime services sector with headquarters located in the city of Cartagena-Bolivar, the results show the following characteristics:

History

It is a company with approximately 10 years in the market, it is a family company where the owners in addition to being the majority partners are spouses and hold the positions of director of corporate affairs and director of operations, which means that its family character is strong since both ownership and management underlie the family, who throughout all these years have faced various structural problems, one of the most chaotic situations was in 2019, during that year they had no contracts with any of their clients, they had to do without several employees and manage to stabilize because without income they were running the risk of permanence in the market. However, it was a situation that they were able to overcome and despite the fact that in 2020 they also had some turbulence due to the COVID-19 pandemic in terms of the provision of their services, they did not stop providing their services for a single day of the year.

As for their services, they initially began by providing many services that they do not currently have, by changing some of their processes they have had to eliminate certain activities and services, being a middle-aged company for its range between 5 to 24 years (Berger and Udell, 1988) allows lower that it is in the process of building and strengthening its identity, its history has been marked initially by a personal initiative that started from the knowledge of the Captain for his expertise in the specific activities associated with the services provided, he is the person who for the rest of the employees represents that authority and starting point, the decisions are made under his ultimate criterion and the support of his wife, the director of corporate affairs.

Extern Culture

The general management has instituted the responsibility to protect the environment in the services they provide, they provide assurance to their clients that the processes are carried out to offer services that comply with the established procedures and the design of the same is in accordance with the current environmental policy. They have a strong interest in continuous improvement and at the same time respect for the living environment that surrounds them externally, that is why they have an open relationship with the external environment; social, environmental, political and economic forces are influential in the development of their work.

Regarding the relationship with its customers, they take special care of their services because they know how important is the support from the companies that make contracts with it, the public is a specific public and its purpose (through the relationship with its customers) in providing guarantees and effectiveness in operations, customers that highlights the company are: Boskalis, Sociedad Portuaria Regional del Caribe, Contecar, Terminal de Contenedores de Buenaventura, Wilhelmsen Ships Service and Cerrejón.

Business Project

Based on the information analyzed on the corporate philosophy, the following characteristics of mission, vision and competencies will be presented (Table 3):

Table 3. Business Project

Mission: To be facilitators of efficient services with the highest standards of environmental and professional quality, responding to the requirements and taking advantage of the immense opportunities offered by the sector in the 21st century to promote the social and economic development of the environments where they develop their activities.	Vision: Their vision is defined as a consideration or the perspective from which they understand the scope of their service, this consists of an integral vision of maritime agency that unites the advances of naval sciences with the experience of a highly qualified interdisciplinary team, dedicated to exercise their knowledge with an effective and reliable service.
Service promise: "To provide the complete support and solution to improve your business" is repeatedly mentioned as the service promise and describes your bet and proposal to the market.	Competencies: Action, efficiency, skill, expertise, connection and awareness are the qualities that make them competent in providing their services.

Source: Own elaboration with a base on documents by the Company

The policies and other aspects of the corporate philosophy are generally made known during the induction of new employees, who consider that aspects such as vision and mission have a direct impact on the functions and objectives of the position. However, as for the objectives, employees state that they do not know them, therefore, they do not know how they contribute to the development of these objectives.

Language

The description given of this dimension from the corporate welfare department is informal, both in the words used within the company and the use of the means of communication, despite having a corporate email its use is not frequent as is the flow of information spontaneously, the WhatsApp messaging service is used by management, which means that the personal number of the manager is public for all employees of the company, it is worth noting that, according to the results of the interview and the questionnaire conducted the language has not changed over the years.

However, the communication towards the management and direction is based on respect, and based on the meaning of its slogan, a commitment is demanded from the management to carry out the activities, so that the employees have first of all a commitment that demands a fair and respectful treatment, which is not detrimental to the use of informal words, typical of the coastal slang that characterizes all employees.

In the maneuver work it is necessary that there is a correct flow of information between the maneuver coordinator and the operational personnel at sea, the coordination before, during and after the maneuver must be done strategically by the maneuver coordinator who must ensure that the rest of the workers are at the appropriate time and place, communication is everything in this operation and the way it is carried out before the process is informal, the citations are made by WhatsApp group, during the operation a technical and concrete language is used, at the end of the maneuver it returns to be informal.

Natural Assets

The company under study is working for the provision of services of local, national and global scope, its capital is private and its mission is to provide quality services with a select staff of professionals in various areas, highlighting their experience of over 30 years. The services offered based on information provided by the company are (Table 4):

Table 4. Services in 2021

Service	Description
Practical piloting	Service regulated by Law 1 of 1991, is its main service, supported by its pilot of the Captain Category and at the same time founder of the company, with training in maneuvers such as anchoring, docking, change of docks, running of docks and departure.
Marine inspections	They offer their clients security and peace of mind to the crew and cargo owners respectively, they perform an inspection qualified by them as: comprehensive, functional and subject to the standard. The inspections are of two types: quality and quantity (according to Draught Survey method).

Mooring service	The objective is to collect, carry and secure the moorings of a vessel following the instructions of the captain and the pilot pilot in the required order in order to facilitate mooring and unmooring.
Underwater services	Under the concept of "intelligence and depth", they offer their clients the service of inspection of hulls with damage, pre-sale inspections, to postpone entry into the dock, marine fouling on the hull, welding, painting or others.
Marine consultancies	The concept of this service is based on the versatility of the "operational" work they provide, their knowledge of maritime operations allows them to provide consultancy services to shipowners and captains in local, national and international ports.
Trainings	Its trainings are focused on the areas of maritime, industrial, management and quality, and are provided through a three-monthly schedule of specialized courses and workshops that include training (In Company or open).
Logistics consulting	As a result of the existing globalization, they decided to offer a logistics consulting service in the following areas: Logistics in packaging and storage in sacks General cargo politicized Loading in slings DRY VAN type containers REEFER containers Open tip type container.
Complementary services	AIS antenna system, GPC Tugs, boat transport and IMO courses.

Source: Own elaboration based on document provided by the company.

Regarding the production of these material goods, the employee of this organization emphasizes that the main competitive advantage is the experience in the sector, and the main service that identifies them is the practical piloting, with which they consider that they have a good level of satisfaction from their customers.

Unatural Assets

The company's slogan represents the passion and respect they have for the sea, highlighting the sea as an important natural resource and demonstrates the care and study that the company has in relation to this, in its beginnings the formula seemed to be: Effort + Love + Passion + Discipline, now heart and passion is what is most promulgated in the company, this insignia comes from the experience of the founder of the company who is passionate about the sea, they accompany this maxim with the creation of value for customers which is the ultimate goal. The logo

is simple, the anchor is the symbol that employees feel identifies the company, the colors that stand out at sight are blue, its shades and gold, both the logo and the slogan and aspects related to the company project are visible throughout the length and breadth of the facilities.

On the other hand, their main capital is the human capital, the personnel that integrates their plant and the services contracted with other companies is of vital importance, they always highlight the potential and experience of the professionals that work for the company. As a particular experience, when they try to integrate a person to the organization what they offer first to the candidate is an induction before signing a contract, so that the future employee has absolute freedom to choose whether to work with the organization, in this way the company ensures to establish a transparent link with its employees.

Social Assets

The celebrations and ceremonies that are held consist of the celebration of the birthday of each of the employees, a decoration of their workplace is made, which the employee can also decorate as he/she pleases, a sharing is made, a detail is given on behalf of everyone and also the anniversary of the company is celebrated. These celebrations are held within the company's facilities to a certain extent, since recreational, informal and sports activities are also held. It appears that these celebrations and activities have been encouraged by management, as employees point out that there are no traditions or non-formal events that are organized directly by them and that remain over time.

Among other things, it is also noted that some practices are prohibited, such as carrying or consuming drugs and alcohol in the company or during working hours and disrespectful attitudes.

In addition to the economic benefit of remuneration for the work performed, the employee occasionally receives "little markets" or personal grooming kits, lunch invitations and active breaks during the work day.

Interpersonal Relations

At this point we begin to identify how interpersonal relationships could be, which according to the employees' perspective, kinship relationships are "good, pleasant, and

relaxed” among all, the relationships between boss and staff and vice versa are “good” and are characterized by a hierarchical formality in the treatment between people, there are no gender preferences and no subgroups are identified within the firm.

Kinship relationships

The issue of kinship relationships is defined by the guideline that affective relationships are not allowed, despite the fact that it is a family company, the people who are part of it do not have a relationship beyond the work relationship and previous friendship or that is created within the organization, the employees surveyed believe that relationships affect job performance.

Power Relationships

Based on the questionnaire provided, it was found that there is no hierarchical distance between bosses and subordinates, relationships are quite close, there is no excess of intermediaries in daily life, although there are appropriate channels and people who facilitate the receipt of information. The obedience of subordinates to their bosses is paramount, the purpose is to comply with the rules and guidelines previously socialized, which does not prevent the participation of subordinates to make decisions that are put under consideration. Last but not least, the sources of power come mainly from the two managers of the company and are due to their knowledge and experience in the sector.

Styles of direction and leadership

Heart and passion is the starting point for the decisions made by management in the company, policies are extremely important for decision making, and although the members of the organization are encouraged to propose ideas or give their opinion, in the end, anything that is not strictly related to the previously established policies or guidelines will be rejected, it is the bureaucratized leadership style, however, the potential and experience of the personnel is constantly highlighted as a competitive advantage of the company.

Subcultures

Since the employees working at the company’s administrative headquarters are new, they identify that there are no subcultures within the company; there are

more relationships with some than with others due to the nature of the functions they perform on a daily basis, but since it is a relatively small group, they all interact with each other without any distinction. Therefore, they classify their culture as homogeneous and do not emphasize differences by hierarchical levels, professions, social classes or type of contract.

Identity

According to the data provided through its website, its international organization, purchasing capacity and efficient logistics are the aspects that identify its service to provide value to its customers. At the same time, employees identify that experience, service and people give the company its identity, moreover, it is considered that everything converges in the company seen with a dominant and passionate personality, as defined by the Corporate Wellness Leader.

The company is a family business and the role of leader is carried by its founder, the staff has been changing in terms of the people who compose it, some processes, products and the maxim that serves as the axis for the development of its value proposition, communication is informal although there is formality in terms of decision making, constant communication is a fundamental key to provide an adequate service and planning is very important to avoid making as many mistakes as possible, a factor in which they have been working year after year since in the beginning it was not like that.

It should also be added that English is of utmost importance, its website is designed in English, maneuvers and piloting is developed under a communication in that language, the management of their social networks such as Instagram is also done deliberately through publications written in English, some employees need to have a knowledge in that language, so it is identified that it is also an aspect that takes on great importance and is part of their identity.

Analysis of the corporative culture in the business sector of marine services

Based on the model presented by Zapata et. al (2008), which is based on the systems theory, the corporate culture of this company in the maritime sector is summarized as a culture that is created and given by the leadership style from the operations and corporate affairs management.

During the internalization process, the company assimilates its demographic, economic, political, cultural, geographic, legal and environmental context, since the service providers, the human talent, the services they provide and their geographic location condition the company to create its internal cultural proposal through the formulation of its organizational philosophy that highlights the environmental aspect, employee competencies and, of course, the legal aspect underlying the service provided. These concepts are reflected through its logo, slogan, the symbols that characterize them, the maxims and the entire imaginary system.

This internalization process also includes the principles and values and the processes, activities and resources that are designed in the organization in this process of adjustment of its organizational environment, therefore, it requires commitment from employees with the functions of each position, respect for the external environment and its customers, made possible by the linking of competent personnel and constant feedback through its main communication channel WhatsApp.

The systemic model includes another process called externalization, which occurs through the services offered abroad directly to its customers and with which it contributes to social, economic and even environmental development in the region, is what is known as the transformation of the intangible into tangible, immaterial into material, thus, the company works internally to configure its processes and ensure a service that satisfies all parties, especially customers along with a set of strategies that allow it to establish its identity and recognition in the market. This recognition is measured with the clients that request its services: port societies, maritime agencies, authorities and transnationals with global presence and that are in charge of large projects in the country.

As in the internalization, communication is also of utmost importance here, both internal and external, as for external communication has been opening its channels, through the website they have all kinds of channels: telephone, electronic and its address is published, also through their social networks are also open to receive feedback.

Finally, social assets are deployed taking into account the leadership style and the organizational environment that identifies the members of the organization. Based on the company's organization chart, there is schematically a wide distance between the lowest and highest levels, giving an essentially vertical complexity, taking into account the three elements of vertical, horizontal and spatial differentiation (Hall,

2001). The degree of formality is not described by the organization chart, in this case, based on the results obtained from the primary sources, it is informal in terms of communication, the means used for it, the conformation of work teams, the flexibility in terms of being open to encourage employee participation in making certain decisions, the type of bureaucratic leadership largely defines this system.

Conclusions

The work applied in a company of the maritime services sector in the city of Cartagena, evidences in first instance the interest of the management and the academic community in the subject of corporate culture and its characteristics; likewise, the results obtained in the research provide valuable information that demonstrates how organizational culture is a very useful strategic tool for management.

Regarding the first dimension, history, the company is a family company that has faced situations that have put it at risk of bankruptcy; however, perseverance and passion for the service they provide have allowed the owners to continue with the project. The company has faced structural changes even in its product portfolio.

On the other hand, the language is informal, words typical of coastal slang are used on a daily basis, communication is also carried out through instant messaging channels such as WhatsApp, even from management, not meaning that it is detrimental to respect and commitment. Regarding the production systems of goods, the material ones are made up of the services provided by the company as part of the maritime services sector, some such as practical pilotage, maritime inspections, mooring service, training among others, the immaterial ones on the other hand, are represented by its logo and slogan keeping a coherence and concordance between both regarding the meaning and that makes the employees feel identified, being its human capital seen as the most important resource.

Interpersonal and familial connections are delineated by their positive disposition, devoid of any gender biases or subgroups. Relationships extending beyond friendship among employees are regulated. Simultaneously, power dynamics are constructed upon the principles of deference and loyalty between supervisors and subordinates.

The identity of the company works in favor of the philosophical or strategic aspects that have been defined by its founder and manager, who, in this case has a

predominant role, however, is not attributed the absolute control of it, since it allows to integrate, motivate and exchange with the external environment, the identity is constantly under construction and the interaction with the external environment is key to continue developing as a company.

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