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Corporate Culture and Its Connection with External and Internal Public Relations

Abstract

The main aim of this article is to present the influence of corporate culture on company's stakeholders. This paper signalises the tendency in corporate communication with its internal and external publics. It is focused on two issues: corporate social responsibility and employer branding. Those two categories are consequences of corporate culture model.

1. Introduction

'Culture' is one of those fundamental notions, which was in the centre of (not only) social science. We cannot describe a humanity without the cultural background. Karl Marx said that a human is a reflection of social relations. Due to Durkheim's sociology we can understand culture as a social fact. Culture is a set of common senses (Brown 2005) and a human, as a creature who is able to symbolize, is a creator and participant of culture system (Kłoskowska 2005, pp. 9–17). Culture is always connected with values, which can be defined as *general convictions about desirable final effects, which underlie at the bases of human attitude and behaviour* (Conner, Becker 1975, p. 551).

The corporate culture is losing its descriptive sense and nowadays is more often treated as a coherent project connected not only with competitive advantage but also with ethical environment of the corporation. The corporate

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culture can be also described from the perspective of organisational culture, which has the wider meaning (Bjerke 2004).

One of the best known organisational culture concepts is the one presented by G. Hofstede (Hofstede, Bond 1988). This approach concentrates on creating classification of countries. In his research project he analysed differences between 100 000 IBM workers in different countries. He was looking for specific work and business behaviour derived from differences between national cultures. He was concentrated on characteristic way of thinking, feeling and behaving. There are five dimensions of culture mentioned in Hofstede's model: power distance (PDI), uncertainty avoidance (UAI), individualism/collectivism (IDV), masculinity/femininity (MAS). The first dimension is based on relation between superiors and subordinates and its connection with obedience and unequally distributed power. The second dimension describes the level of acceptance of uncertain future. The third concentrates on proportion between common goods and interests of individual. The fourth shows the tendency in spreading man-like or women-like traditional values in society. Nowadays the fifth is being added to this classification. It is long or short term orientation and it is taken from M. Bond typology. It characterises society time horizon (it can be also known as Confucian dynamism).

Another typology was presented by E. Schein (Schein 1985). In his opinion the success of company depends not only on well prepared strategy. It is also under strong influence of corporate culture, which Schein compares with corporate personality (identity). His model is divided into three levels: artefacts, norms and values, and cultural assumptions. Those assumptions should be shared by the members of the group because they help them to solve out the problems of adaptation and integration. To put it another way, those assumptions transform in a kind of a specific pattern of behaviour. Coming back to the levels; the highest visibility characterises artefacts. They can be: verbal (myths, legends, specific language, professional jargon), behavioural (ceremonies, rituals, patterns of interactions), physical (material goods, technology). Norms and values are harder to observe. They can be declared, which means that people profess in an open way what is good and needed and what is wrong. They can be also obeyed, which means how people really behave (those norms and values can be completely different from those that are declared). Cultural assumptions can be treated as unseen powers that shape the corporate identity. They can pertain to human nature, organisation nature, human relations and the relations between organisation and public.

L. Smircich is describing corporate culture using three approaches. Corporate culture can be recognized as: an independent variable, an internal

variable or a core metaphor. The first approach treats culture as reference standard or reference system with substantial influence on management process. It is different in different cultural systems and that is why we are able to speak about national types of corporate culture (American, Indian, Arabian, Chinese etc.). The second point of view assumes that culture is strictly related with the character of company. Firms are able to create their own culture, to manipulate it, and adjust it to company needs. Top management level is responsible for the corporate culture changes. If we understand culture as a kind of product it means that it can be good or poor quality. The good corporate culture supports effectiveness and gives a competitive advantage. The third approach is connected with anthropological context. We cannot diagnose or estimate the culture we can “only” try to understand what the corporate culture is. It is a kind of a filter which allows us to perceive the world and find a hidden sense inside it (Smircich 1983).

The organisational culture is crucial for external and internal environment of a company. Nowadays the company plays a role of one of the social actors in a society. Not only the high profit is the goal for a contemporary corporate, but also the input in society's common good. Company is a part of a social system and should build win-to-win relations with its stakeholders. That is why now some ideas show a direction of a transition from traditional management to relationship-driven one.

This approach is connected with the stakeholder theory (presented by E. Freeman), which assumes that anyone of stakeholders is in close relation with a firm. This relation can be described with the help of stake rate between the stakeholder and corporation. We can identify external (e.g. clients, providers, local community, local government, shareholders, cooperators) and internal stakeholders (employees). The stakeholder theory is strictly related with business ethics. This model represented the specific idea of management philosophy, which can analyse not only from descriptive or instrumental point of view but also from normative one (Donaldson, Preston 1995). This approach does not exclude (but even empower) the role of a corporate as benefits and profits provider for its stakeholders. In Freeman's opinion model of modern enterprise needs reconstruction. His standpoint is clear in this area. Nowadays company should act in the perspective of a stakeholder theory and we are on a transition from managerial capitalism to Kantian capitalism (Evan, Freeman 1993).

2. Corporate culture and CSR approach

Trying to fulfil the expectations of running business in an ethical way corporations pay attention to certain document. Code of conduct and ethical code are becoming more and more popular among firms. For example 93% of American firms have got a document concerning ethics. Similar situation is in Europe. It can be observed also on the institutional level, like activity of European Business Ethics Network. EBEN can for example give an opinion about an investor, which can be helpful for government or local authorities. This attitude is congruent with the idea of reflexive law, which means the procedures which need to be individualised by the firms and corporations. This kind of law understanding is thought to increase the moral consciousness and help to solve particular (often unexpected problems). This corporation self-understanding process can take effects in increasing number of social responsibility attitude and widely understood accountability. Some regulations that have discretionary, not compulsory, character are prepared by the international institutions. One of those interesting initiatives, called Global Compact, was presented in spring 2001 by Kofi Annan (he was then a Secretary-General of the United Nations). This document in opinion of its authors should be helpful in creating business with a human face. The records concerning e.g. respecting of human rights, elimination of discrimination, resignation of child work, sustainable development.

Ethical codes or codes of conduct should be created with employees' participation. Those documents should not be treated only as a contemporary requirement according to rule: *Everybody has code so we also have one*. It has to be something more than sophisticated ornament hanging in the CEO office or published on the company website. It should be created in the deliberative perspective. The company (usually PR department) is bound to gather as much information about the employees' mood, expectations and remarks as it is possible. Proper internal PR (as well as external) is based on two-way communication. The crucial meaning has a feedback from our workers. They have to understand that documents like code of conduct are ought to serve employees' and employers' purposes. Codes have to mold employees' consciousness and attitudes from different organizational levels. The process of these documents creation should be balanced between bottom-up and up-down standpoint. Another important issue is the language of document. It should be rather communicative than formal because it has to be well understood. When the paragraph is associated with workplace behavior and duties it should be also

precise with no doubts in any context. Well prepared code of conduct has to be helpful in decision making process and in eliminating clash of interests. Professionally shaped document infixes in company's communication strategy. That is why it can significantly increase enterprise credibility.

The problem of internal and external public relations is connected with the idea of corporate social responsibility. Social surveys show that the public opinion is divided when it comes to big companies activity evaluation.

In fast developing countries are the positive opinions are dominating. Different situation is for example in so called "old" members of the European Union. In those cases, the level of acceptance is significantly lower. It may be correlated with postmaterialist values orientation in old Europe (Inglehart 1977). Their societies expectations are concentrated not only on material values like e.g. higher salaries, job offers, cheaper products, but they are also focused on sustainable development, fair trade, ecology, equal rights of men and women. One particular exception is Finland but it may be the case of Nokia. Europeans are also quite sceptical when asked if the big companies contribute to improvement of poor people's situation.

It is hard to say if there is an expectation connected with big firms' higher involvement in society life. The highest index is in Argentina, the lowest is in Japan. In most countries the public opinion is divided. So we cannot speak about a social pressure yet. Researchers did not find any explanations of this problem that were appropriate to all cases.

Table 1. Opinions about big companies contribution for society (Do you agree that big companies contribute in building better society for all?)

Continent	State	YES (%)	NO (%)
Asia	China	59	37
	India	59	36
	Japan	38	62
	South Korea	51	48
	Saudi Arabia	80	15
Africa	Kenya	67	23
	Nigeria	73	23
	RSA	63	20
Australia	Australia	34	60
Europe	Finland	49	46
	France	38	58
	Germany	30	66
	Great Britain	33	60
	Italy	27	67
	Poland	42	37
	Russia	35	45
North America	Canada	41	55
	USA	38	58
South and Latin America	Argentina	23	61
	Brazil	57	40
	Chile	42	50
	Panama	44	50
	Mexico	30	53
	Salvador	38	57

[Hard to say - skipped]

Source: CBOS, Corporate social responsibility/social survey, 33 countries, BS/49/2006 [this survey was coordinated by GlobeScan].

Table 2. Opinions about big companies strategies (What, in your opinion, should the big firms firstly do?)

Continent	State	Establish high ethical standards and do more then law expects to create better society (%)	In the middle of those two opinions (%)	Concentrate on high profit, pay taxes and create job offers in the limits of law (%)
Asia	China	39	22	35
	India	28	18	50
	Japan	15	68	13
	South Korea	39	37	24
	Saudi Arabia	18	57	15
Africa	Kenya	36	21	22
	Nigeria	38	17	36
	RSA	40	26	17
Australia	Australia	39	44	15
Europe	Finland	34	37	26
	France	34	32	29
	Germany	30	30	28
	Great Britain	27	46	22
	Italy	45	27	25
	Poland	18	47	22
	Russia	29	19	29
North America	Canada	34	45	17
	USA	29	50	17
South and Latin America	Argentina	51	12	22
	Brazil	36	16	44
	Chile	42	31	20
	Panama	35	14	43
	Mexico	40	36	19
	Salvador	33	17	45

[Hard to say - skipped]

Source: CBOS, Corporate social responsibility/social survey, 33 countries, BS/49/2006 [this survey was coordinated by GlobeScan].

CSR can be described as an corporate activity in an ethical context, which is constructed of: ethical intents, ethical means and ethical achievements. To put it another way, the company should do good and should do it well. The company needs to build a CSR strategy. Firstly, it should find the social aim, which is important for the community (public) and acceptable for the stakeholders who wait for the profit. It is good when the chosen problem is inspirational for employees. They should be part of that project. Secondly, the company should establish the maximum level of financial involvement. The CSR project has to be a part of our business strategy but it cannot be too risky. The company should not resign from its business goals because of social responsibility. Thirdly, the company has to decide what kind of activities and action will be applied. The company should be also ready to explain to shareholders why it is spending their money. There are different kind of activities in the field of CSR. The simplest way is to spent some money on charity. The company should not forget about workers voluntary. For example in Poland the award of Volunteer of the Year won one of the banks, which employees could allocate a few of their working hours to the beneficial activities for local community (e.g. house repair, coaching).

Some of business analytics are against this theory but it seems that CSR idea rooted quite strong in businessman minds. *Proactive corporations will tend to move toward a strategic CSR perspective, leveraging CSR to more efficiently or effectively create and renew competitive advantage. A strategic CSR perspective helps immunize the firm from subsequent pressure from NGOs, and allows the firm to exploit its investments in CSR for the development of distinctive competencies, resulting in superior, sustainable performance* (Munilla, Miles 2005, p.385). Corporate social responsibility should meet both legal and ethical expectations that society have of that kind of industry or service (Parsons 2004).

Internal public relations are crucial activity focused on the employees. Public relations practices suggest that any PR activity should begin at home – which means that the company has to concentrate on its workers. Top management can use the variety of tools. It can be motivational programme (based on financial and non-financial incentives, intranet). The process of analyzing the internal environment of organisation should be focused on different areas, which seem to be crucial for the company success. Firstly it is company performance, which includes all the goods and services provided by the organisation. Secondly, it can be helpful in understanding what kind of niche (speciality) make the organisation different form similar institutions. Thirdly, it is useful for the description of organisational structure. The company, and especially its managers have to answer if they are interested in including public

relations as a part of company policy. The PR strategy has to be treated as management function. *This procedure also inventories organizational resources that can be marshaled for the communication program, including personnel, equipment, time and budgets. No decisions or commitments are being made at this point as to what resources to use; during the audit stage, you merely are identifying the organization's available resources as they relate to the situation to be addressed* (Smith 2005, p. 31). Fourthly, it identifies important impediments and obstacles inside the organisation connected with communication, management and human resources.

In the process of communication strategy building information about employee attitude seems to be applicative. Contemporary surveys connected with employee attitudes show some interesting tendencies. Due to statistics data 7,7% of Poles work in more than one place. This index places Poland on the third place in Europe (the highest is in Sweden). The multi-employment phenomenon is connected with low level of salaries especially in public sector. The employees are looking for another job to increase their family budget. This problem can be observed also among specialists (architects, lawyers, translators). Their qualifications are needed on the labour market. That is why we can observe in Poland the reverse logic connected with spare time possession. Different then decades ago, the better qualifications the employee has got the fewer spare time he or she possesses (Walczak-Duraj 2006).

Poles at work are conscious of morality standards (CBOS BS/41/2007). Polish workers condemn coming drunk to work (96%), fake sick-leave (83%), lateness (78%) and doing private things in work hours (67%), working on the side in work hours (65%). But it is not so evident when it comes to workers' behaviour. For example, 40% of workers beginning their work several minutes later then they should do it. Almost 25% of Polish workers are busy with their private things in working hours and one-third is taking away writing materials or use company phone for private calls. This discrepancy is not only characteristic for Poland. It is characteristic for humans.

The inclination towards acceptance of non-ethical behaviour is stronger among younger workers. The age factor is also relevant with working after hours. The older the worker is the more likely to stay at work (or to take work to home) he or she is. The explanation is associated with the problem of employees' identification. The increasing mobility on the labour market can take effect in weaker connections and formal relations between younger employee and employer. Another significant factor is connected with the approach to work. When it is autotelic (work has a purpose in and not apart from itself) employees are following more often ethical standards. When they treat work instrumentally (as a mean to achieve and consume material goods) they are more

tolerant for unethical attitudes. According to those data, employer should be more conscious of the situation inside the workers crew. Managers (especially from the middle level) are supposed to know how employees treat the organisation, what is the level of identification with the company.

One of the most useful tools of internal PR (as well as external) is communication audit. It should be part of an organisation self-awareness process (Kopeck 1982). During this audit you learn more about the structure of organisation, circulation of information, communication needs and capabilities. This method can be helpful for the corporation in the process of communication effectiveness evaluation. The audit should begin with a background research in order to get the answer to the question: Where are we? Then appears goals fixing stage, where the question is: Where do we want to be in the future? In the next step the strategy and plan should be developed: How we can get there?. Another move is related to the on-going analyses that should help the company to establish: Are we going in the right direction? The final stage is evaluation. The company should sum up its communicational undertakes looking for pros and cons.

In two research projects carried out by the author some substantial problems were identified. Audits took place in two medium size enterprises (employment between 150–200 workers). During this project (both based on the same concept) a few different research techniques were used: poll, free interview, document context analyses. The biggest obstacle was the attitude of crews from those companies. They were suspicious because they thought that such interviews might portend group layoffs. Firstly, researcher had to explain the main aim of on audit and convince them of benefits of this project both for employer and employee. Communication audits helped to remove information gap between different levels of management. Researcher managed to find congestions where the proper circulation of information (especially between superior and production worker) was made difficult. Audits helped also to identify best workers and a group of workers thanks to the opinions given by employees. Managers could also improve motivational systems in firms according to a better knowledge about workers' ethos, needs and expectations. As a result of those researches managers can start in a more efficient way the process of building the company image. In appendix of this paper reader can find a questionnaire, which had been used in one of the researches mentioned above. There are questions connected with personal skills that can be helpful in workers assessment and the recruitment procedure.

3. Conclusion

The role of employer branding is becoming crucial. It is not contemporary management mode. It is rather a kind of today's necessity. The development of communication process in present-day society, which is taking place under strong pressure due to media saturation of society, forced on corporation extraordinary activity in media environment.

The process of creating and managing the corporate culture should take under consideration the changing communication environment. One of the most imperative challenges is appropriate governance of so called new free media, especially social media. It is obvious that employees use this type media for multiplication of their opinions about workplace. Sometimes they can be inspired to do so by company authorities. The circulating opinions posted on websites by employees should be treated as a kind of reflection of employer's branding. The social media can be threat or opportunity – it depends on well projected branding policy, which has got a significant influence both on employer's image and employee's attitudes.

It is simply impossible to stop spreading messages around using the social media tools. That is why there are fewer and fewer things which can be described as well guarded corporate secret. They are many examples when social media can be used as PR tool, as well as a tool of smear campaign:

Employee blogs – can be described as an online journal. Blog can be created spontaneously (without employer's inspiration), it can supervised if it was created in agreement with company communication policy (usually this document describes how to broadcast employee thoughts and ideas without causing any trouble related to their company; "what can you say and what you cannot say") or it can be inspired by the employer with fully controlled layout, uploaded messages and pictures.

- Social networks sites like e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Blip, Nasza-klasa, MySpace, You Tube (employees' generated videos),
- Sites which are based on Wiki engines,
- Podcasting, v-casting,
- Forums or e-mail groups.

There are many options how to behave in this dynamic communication environment. All of them are associated with the employees control issue. The process of setting guidelines and policies of proper communication cannot be in contradiction with freedom of speech (The Universal Declaration of Human Rights in Article 19 recognizes freedom of speech as a human right: *Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom*

to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers). Some aspects of this relation can be regulated in an agreement between the company and employee.

The answer for employees' outside communication problem can be a rapid response team. They should scan the Internet to identify negative opinions about the company. These kinds of media simply need a permanent attention. Maybe another issue should be included in the recruitment process, connected with employees' on-line activity. It is important if they want to share with their opinions in the internet with co-workers, potential workers, clients, competitors. People hired in PR department or a team dedicated to employee's activity on communication field should be ready to negotiate and talk about it with employees (*You can talk with me before you post it*). That is also a principle of contemporary internal PR.

Nowadays The Internet is the source of information about the future employer. People who are looking for a job usually are scanning through the web sites, social portals, blogs and forum. They are searching relevant opinions about the company, managers and generally how they treat their workers. It is working both ways of course, because the future employer can easily check the future employee. The employer cannot forget that best source of information for anyone from the outside is an employee. Our workers, due to multiplication theory, propagate the whole spectrum of data about our firm (of course sometimes employer tries to limit this process using for example a ban on speaking about the company outside). Employees also run blogs on the internet (and its different from so called corporate blog, which is a simple PR tool controlled by the employer) where he or she can upload posts that put the company in the negative context.

When the employer brand is well grounded it should not be difficult to present to external audience the employee brand. This is the image presented to an organisation's customers and other relevant stakeholders through its employees. The employee branding process is predicated on achieving and maintaining message consistency throughout the organisation (Miles, Mangold 2007).

Relationship-driven style of management based on a corporate culture cannot be only the idea. It should be put into practice. This approach should be both: obligation and strategy (Kotler 2005). At the beginning it can be costly but in the future it will bring substantial (material and non-material) profits. Apart from normative and community related arguments, one should also remember that ethics simply pays off.

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Appendix

1.	Do you think, that your occupation? [pick one answer]:
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. corresponds to your expectations and it contributes to company development 2. corresponds to your expectations but it doesn't contribute to company development 3. doesn't correspond to your expectations but it contributes to company development 4. doesn't correspond to your expectations and doesn't contribute to company development
2.	What do you think about your job description? [pick one answer]:
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. it is adjusted to my occupation very well 2. it is adjusted to my occupation well 3. it is adjusted to my occupation badly 4. it is adjusted to my occupation very badly 5. hard to say
3.	Do you want to involve your future and career with current company? [pick one answer]:
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. yes 2. no 3. hard to say
4.	Which opinion describes you better? [pick one answer]:
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I prefer to do job deputed by my superior 2. I prefer to plan my job on my own
5.	What is opinion about the way of company communication with employees e.g about the company strategy? [pick one answer]:
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. very good 2. good 3. average 4. unsatisfactory 5. bad 6. very bad
6.	Which opinions describe your work style (you can pick more than one):
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I work in rivalry conditions well 2. I like to accomplish hard and tough tasks 3. I appreciate when other workers are being informed about my work effects 4. I expect appraisal for my work given by the superiors 5. I like team work

7.	In your work you figure on? [pick one answer]:						
	1. opinions of your co-workers/colleagues 2. opinions of your superiors 3. opinions of other are not important						
8.	Are you superiors authorities for you? [pick one answer]:						
	1. yes 2. no						
9.	How can you describe your realtions with superior?						
		Shift master	Supervisor master	Technical department manager	Production manager	Board	
						President	V-ce President
	very good						
	good						
	average						
	bad						
	very bad						
10.	What your superior should be (you can pick more than one answer)?:						
	1. fair 2. professional 3. exacting 4. experienced 5. punctual 6. accessible 7. communicative 8. assertive 9. motivational skills 10. reliable 11. workers oriented 12. corporate oriented 13. strict rules 14. honest						

	15. friendly 16. consistent 17. patient 18. creative 19. understanding 20. austere 21. fair minded 22. authority 23. knowledge 24. management skills 25. others.....						
11.	What is your opinion about your superiors?						
	Characteristics	Shift master	Supervisor master	Technical department manager	Production manager	Board	
						Presi- dent	V-ce President
	Fair						
	Professional						
	Exacting						
	Experienced						
	Punctual						
	Accessible						
	Communicative						
	Assertive						
	Motivational skills						
	Reliable						
	Workers oriented						
	Corporate oriented						

	Production Manager			
	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; width: 100%;"> 123456 </div>			
13.	Do you know who you should inform?			
		Yes	No	Hard to say
	1. when you want to give an opinion about improvement connected with your work place			
	2. when you want to inform about mistake or defect			
	3. when you want to inform about nuisances at your work place			
	4. when there is a conflict in your team/crew			
	5. when you need additional info about your duties			
	6. when you see unethical behaviour in company			
	7. when you can not make the decision on your own			
14.	How often conflicts between superiors and subordinates take place? [pick one answer]			
	1. very often 2. often 3. rare 4. very rare			
15.	Do your superiors accomplish their occupation duties? [pick one answer]			
	1. yes, defenetely 2. yes 3. no 4. no, defenetely 5. hard to say			

16.	How can you estimate superiors mentioned here?				
	Shift master	Supervisor master	Technical department manager	Production manager	Board
17.	What in your opinion should you direct superior change in his or her behaviour?				
18.	What positive opinion you give about your direct supervisor?				
19.	Who do you think is your direct superior (name the occupation)?				

20.	What can you say about your superiors mentioned in the table below?						
		Shift master	Supervisor master	Technical department manager	Production manager	Board	
						President	V-ce President
	He/she is a good manager, he/she organises work very well						
	He/she is professionalist, he/she always knows what to do						
	He/she controlls the situation in team						
	He/she gives clearly instructions						
	He/she knowns how to motivate workers						
	One can realy on him/her						
	He/she can admit that he/she made a mistake						
	He/she can qucikly make decisions						
	He/she has got good contact (realtions) with workers						
	He knows what is the crew mood						
He/she treats subordinates fair							

Streszczenie

KULTURA KORPORACYJNA I JEJ ZWIĄZEK Z ZEWNĘTRZNYMI I WEWNĘTRZNYMI DZIAŁANAMI PUBLIC RELATIONS

Głównym celem artykułu jest zaprezentowanie wpływu jaki wywiera charakter kultury korporacyjnej na związanych z przedsiębiorstwem interesariuszy (stakeholders). W artykule zasygnalizowane zostały główne tendencje wyznaczające charakter komunikacji między organizacją a jej wewnętrznym i zewnętrznym otoczeniem. Tekst koncentruje się na dwóch kwestiach: społecznej odpowiedzialności przedsiębiorstwa (corporate social responsibility) i budowanie wizerunku pracodawcy (employer branding), które zaprezentowane zostały jako efekty określonego modelu kultury organizacyjnej.