

# **Knowledge Management in Event Organisations Instructor's Manual**

## **6: Cultural Elements of Knowledge Management**

This is the instructor's manual produced to accompany the book *Knowledge Management in Event Organisations*, by Raphaela Stadler, 2021, published by Goodfellow Publishers Ltd.

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## Chapter 6: Cultural Elements of Knowledge Management

### Lecture 8

#### Learning objectives

- Define organisational identity, organisational vision and organisational culture
- Understand the importance of creating an open, collaborative culture to support knowledge practices
- Explore motivation and trust within event organisations as crucial factors underpinning the knowledge management process
- Discuss the importance of collaboration and co-creation in work tasks as well as for effective knowledge practices

#### Introduction

Lecture 8 is all about the 'soft' factors of knowledge management: cultural elements of an organisation that enhance motivation, trust, collaboration and co-creation. In the wider knowledge management literature, successful knowledge management initiatives tend to be based around 5 key principles:

- ◆ Knowledge sharing is regarded as the norm within the organisation;
- ◆ Staff members have a strong sense of organisational identity;
- ◆ There is a high level of trust and respect between staff members;
- ◆ Organisational processes are regarded as fair and transparent; and
- ◆ Staff members have a high level of trust in management.

Key elements contributing to this are therefore the organisational identity, organisational vision, and organisational culture. They provide the wider context in which knowledge is practised. We therefore need to understand this context in order to improve the different elements of it, so they can contribute to a 'knowledge-friendly' culture.

#### Organisational identity

Organisational identity is constructed from three characteristics: (1) the essence of the organisation; (2) what distinguishes the organisation from other organisations; and (3) continuity over time. It helps employees say and explain, 'I am a member of the organisation and it is important to me'. It is therefore a fuzzy concept as it includes the way we *feel* about the organisation as a whole, which might be difficult to explain to others or to newcomers to the organisation. But by identifying with the organisation, people feel positively about their membership and are emotionally invested in being part of the organisation. It helps employees articulate their values, goals, beliefs, as well as knowledge, skills and abilities that shape their behaviours and practices within the organisation.

In terms of knowledge management, the organisational identity therefore helps us understand knowledge practices that are central to *why* people join a certain organisation, *how* they approach their work and *how* and *why* they interact with each other when performing their work and tasks.

## Organisational vision

The organisational vision is closely related to this, as it is the manifestation of an organisation's identity, but describes more specifically a shared meaning of what the organisation does and what it stands for, as well as a shared context for knowledge to be created and transferred. It is usually expressed in bold terms and summarises what the organisation would like to achieve. The organisational vision is communicated internally as well as with external stakeholders with an attempt to create this shared understanding for everyone. External stakeholders can – and indeed, should – therefore be included in knowledge practices that come out of this vision.

For a student task, prepare the following before the lecture:

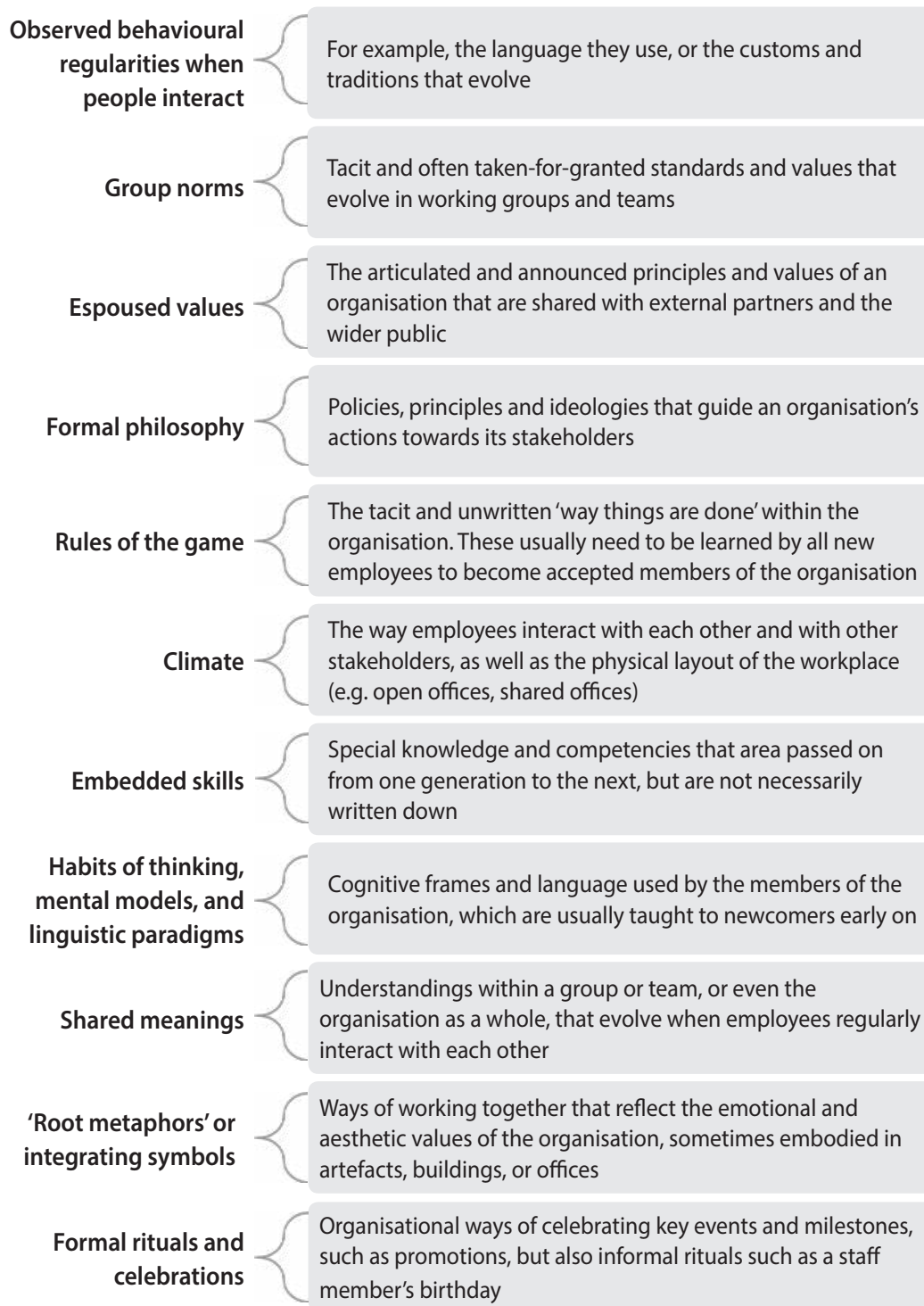
Look up about 10-15 event (or related) organisations and collect and print out their vision statements. Cut them into little strips of company/organisation names, and strips of their vision statements. Then shuffle and distribute them among groups of students and ask them to match them up again (potentially with a prize for the quickest team and/or the team with the most correct answers?). Some examples could be:

Event	Vision statement
Special Olympics	To transform communities by inspiring people throughout the world to open their minds, accept and include people with intellectual disabilities and thereby anyone who is perceived as different.
FIFA	To promote the game of football, protect its integrity and bring the game to all.
Glastonbury Festival	To encourage and stimulate youth culture from around the world in all its forms, including pop music, dance music, jazz, folk music, fringe theatre, drama, mime, circus, cinema, poetry and all the creative forms of art and design, including painting, sculpture and textile art.
Edinburgh Fringe Festival	To bring audiences and artists together from all over the world
Disney	To make people happy
Instagram	Capture and Share the World's Moments.

Students can also be asked to discuss which events they would like to work for and why, purely based on the 10-15 selected vision statements. This can be related back to the earlier discussed 'organisational identity', the way students *feel* about these organisations and why they are important to them, in order to reinforce how the two (organisational vision and identity) go hand-in-hand.

## Organisational culture

While the organisational identity defines 'who we are' as an organisation, organisational culture describes the 'way things are done' within the organisation. It includes ideas and values, beliefs and acceptable behaviours, which all need to be learned when first joining the organisation, and hence they are part of acquiring the necessary knowledge of 'how to' do certain things and 'how to' perform ones role within the organisation. Figure 6.1 provides an overview of elements and categories of what constitutes an organisation culture. It can be seen that most, if not all, of these categories describe tacit ways of doing things or tacit ways of working with others, and therefore comprise some of the 'soft' factors for knowledge management:



**Figure 6.1:** Categories of organisational culture

### Other soft factors for knowledge management

Any knowledge management initiative should be embedded in these values and beliefs, otherwise employees will not buy into it. Students can be asked to identify positive and negative examples of organisational cultures they have experienced and how these enhanced/inhibited knowledge sharing. They will most likely present positive and negative examples related to motivation, trust, and collaboration/co-creation, which can then be used to go into a more in-depth discussion of any (or all) of them. A suggested additional reading here is:

- ◆ Du Plessis, M. (2006). *The Impact of Organisational Culture on Knowledge Management*. Oxford: Chandos Publishing

Alternatively, the Queensland Music Festival case study in the book can be used as the link at this stage between organisational identity – vision – culture and the implications of this for knowledge management in terms of; motivation, trust, and collaboration and co-creation.

### **Sample short-answer questions:**

- ◆ It is said that a strong organisational identity can create loyalty among employees. Explain why this is particularly important in event organisations when aiming for effective knowledge management.
- ◆ Thinking about an event organisation you have worked for, what were some 'ways of doing things' within this organisation and how did you learn them? Did your knowledge of 'how things are done' in that event organisation change over time?
- ◆ Trust within an organisation can easily be misused. Discuss how this could affect knowledge sharing practices within a work team or group.

### **Sample long-answer or essay question:**

- ◆ Suggest to event managers how they can bring together some of the structural elements of knowledge management discussed in Lecture 7 with the cultural elements discussed in this lecture.

A very good answer here will combine specific structural elements with specific cultural factors and provide an example for this: such as, how would collaboration/co-creation play out differently in a top-down, bottom-up or middle-up-down type of organisation and what does this mean in terms of knowledge management. Or, the impact of certain HR strategies (e.g. recruiting and training staff) on organisational culture and therefore motivation to share knowledge. Or, the creation of interdisciplinary teams and what this means in terms of developing trust among the team to use and share knowledge, as well as to create new knowledge together.