

Corporate Culture

Learning Objectives

In this unit, you will learn

- to understand the meaning and the forming of corporate culture;
- to get basic information about business etiquette;
- to master the new words and expressions related to business etiquette;
- to transform active and passive voice in translation;
- to grasp the skills in writing typical characters of different types of literature.

Section A / Lead-in

What does the picture describe and what information can you get from it?



Section B / Readings

Pre-reading Questions

1. What, in your opinion, is corporate culture?
2. What is the function of corporate culture?
3. What kind of corporate culture do you like?



Corporate Culture, 即企业文化, 亦称组织文化, 是由一个企业的价值观、信念、仪式、符号、处事方式等组成, 被企业成员认同并共同遵循的基本信念和认知。本文论述了企业文化的内涵、体现方式、企业文化与社会环境的关系以及企业文化的种类, 指出了积极企业文化对企业的重要作用。

Text A

What Is Corporate Culture?

Corporate culture is a set of characteristics that define a business. These characteristics involve employee attitudes, standards (policies and procedures), and **rites** and **rituals**. The culture of a company is connected to the characteristics found in the surrounding society, but it also has some **traits**, such as a hierarchy system, which are unique¹. It can be negative, neutral, or positive, and although some businesses like to portray corporate culture as **static**, in most cases, it changes over time.

The attitude of those within a company is perhaps the most fundamental element of corporate culture. When **rank and file employees**, executives and managers are all **on the same page** as far as basic corporate values, it becomes possible to have general agreement on the relationships that must be **in place** to **accurately** reflect the desired set of characteristics for the business².

People in a business use their **collective** attitude to set standards that govern the operation of the business. Companies typically express these standards through the policies and procedures that define how the business will operate³. These policies and procedures include how different departments or functions relate to one another in the production process, the line of communication established between management and departmental employees, and rules governing acceptable employee conduct. Additional elements can be developed based on the policies and procedures adopted.

Corporate culture usually includes some rites or rituals. Examples are an annual holiday bonus, a week in the summer when the entire company **shuts down**, or even the naming of an employee of the month. Such rites help to **bond** people **together** and provide a sense of collective identity. Rites are not always a part of formal policy, but they become routine and expected due to an overall acceptance by those in the workforce.

In some ways, corporate and outside general cultures are connected. The society in which a business is located shapes the individual attitudes employees have **to a large extent** and it is those attitudes that are the foundation for the corporate environment. This is one reason why corporate characteristics vary so **drastically** from one region to another; the business is **socialized** and structured based on what people think and do outside of work—these activities vary by geographical region.

At the same time, the cultures found in businesses have traits that are not common to groups outside companies. Most businesses value a hierarchy system, such as low-level employee, manager, and CEO. The duties and **purviews** of each level of the hierarchy are often strictly **enforced**, and people tend to acknowledge that they must follow particular paths to move **upward** in the company. Outside of businesses, however, promoting equality and eliminating a class or **hierarchical** structure is usually a favorable goal. People often prize independence and the ability to approach different situations, problems, or goals from different **perspectives**.

When a company's personnel management team needs to hire an employee, they consider the culture of the business in addition to the candidate's skills and experience. The goal is to find employees who will be a good fit—that is, whose beliefs and behaviors **coincide with** those already present in the company. Members of management tend to believe that such consideration reduces the

chances of conflicts and makes it more likely that the new employee will **assimilate** and contribute efficiently. Two very similar candidates can be **set apart** when such considerations are integrated in the hiring process.

There are many ways of classifying corporate environments, but overall, the simplest way to rank them is as negative, neutral or positive. The label of “negative” usually means that workers do not feel comfortable, acknowledged, or supported. It is also associated with activities or policies that **go against** the outside general culture because **transition** between the two conflicting characteristic sets can be stressful. Another common issue is that the rites or policies **routinely** change and such changes can result in **confusion** or **inefficiency**. Such an environment may lead to both direct or indirect conflicts between employees.

The label of “neutral” means that the business neither supports nor hinders its employees. Productivity and subsequent market share are not impressive but are high enough to allow the company to continue operating⁴. This type of environment often occurs because there is no clear leadership in the business.

Companies with a “positive” corporate culture tend to see employees as their most valuable asset. They have clear objectives and push employees to meet them, but they are sensitive to personal and group needs. Collaboration is a hallmark with employees demonstrating high productivity and company **loyalty**.

Business environments are **rarely** static — they evolve over time as the attitudes of employees and the circumstances surrounding the company change. The changes sometimes happen very slowly and are not intentional, although, in other cases, business leaders make a conscious decision to make **modifications** in the company, such as giving employees more ways to provide their own input or feedback in order to foster a sense of collaboration and respect. Some employees have trouble with cultural shifts if they happen **abruptly** so most businesses are careful to provide a period of adjustment.

(848 words)

New Words and Expressions

rite /raɪt/	<i>n.</i> a ceremony that is always performed in the same way, usually for religious purposes 隆重的仪式或典礼
ritual /'rɪtʃuəl/	<i>n.</i> the ceremony that is always performed in the same way, in order to mark an important religious or social occasion (宗教等仪式的) 程序, 仪节
trait /treɪt/	<i>n.</i> a particular quality in someone's character 人的个性; 显著的特点
static /'stætɪk/	<i>adj.</i> not moving, changing, or developing 静止的; 稳定的; 静态的
accurately /'ækjətlɪ/	<i>adv.</i> precisely, exactly, correctly, truly 准确地; 精确地; 正确地
collective /kə'lektɪv/	<i>n.</i> shared or made by every member of a group or society 集体的; 共有的; 全体成员的

drastically /'dræstɪklɪ/	<i>adv.</i> extremely and suddenly 大大地; 激烈地
socialize /'səʊʃ(ə)laɪz/	<i>v.</i> to teach people to behave in ways that are acceptable to their society 使适应社会; 使社会化
purview /'pə:vju:/	<i>n.</i> the limits of someone's job, activity, or knowledge (工作或活动的) 范围
enforced /ɪn'fɔ:st/	<i>adj.</i> made to happen, especially by things you cannot control 强迫的; 强制性的
upward /'ʌpwərd/	<i>adv.</i> moving or pointing towards a higher position; increasing to a higher level 上升地
hierarchical /,haɪə'rarkɪk(ə)l/	<i>adj.</i> (people or things) arranged or divided into levels of importance 分等级的; 按等级划分的; 等级制度的
perspective /pə'r'spektɪv/	<i>n.</i> a way of thinking about something, especially one which is influenced by the type of person you are or by your experiences 态度; 观点; 思考方法
assimilate /ə'sɪmɪleɪt/	<i>v.</i> to completely understand and begin to use new ideas, information etc 理解; 吸收; 同化
transition /træn'zɪʃən/	<i>n.</i> when something changes from one form or state to another 过渡; 转变; 变迁
routinely /ru:'ti:nli/	<i>adv.</i> something done as a normal part of a process or job 例行公事地
confusion /kən'fju:ʒ(ə)n/	<i>n.</i> a situation in which you do not understand what is happening or what something means because it is not clear 不确定; 困惑
inefficiency /ɪnə'fɪʃənsɪ/	<i>n.</i> unskillfulness resulting from a lack of efficiency 低效; 无效率; 无能
loyalty /'lɔɪəlti/	<i>n.</i> the quality of remaining faithful to your friends, principles, country etc 忠诚; 忠实; 忠诚度
rarely /'rerli/	<i>adv.</i> not often 很少; 罕有; 不常
modification	<i>n.</i> small change made in something such as a design, plan, or system 修改; 改变
abruptly /ə'brʌptli/	<i>adv.</i> suddenly and unexpectedly 突然地; 意外地
corporate culture	企业文化
rank and file employee	普通职工
on the same page	意见一致; (指某一群人) 团结一心
in place	在适当的位置; 适当
shut down	关门; 停工
bond... together	联系在一起
to a large extent	在很大程度上
coincide with	巧合, 同时发生
set apart	分开; 隔开; 留出 (充当别用)
go against	反对; 违反; 不利于

Notes

1. *The culture of a company is connected to the characteristics found in the surrounding society, but it also has some traits, such as a hierarchy system, which are unique.* 一个公司的文化与它所处的社会环境的特征相关，但同时也有自己的独特之处，比如等级制度。

第一个限定为 found 引导的后置定语修饰 characteristics，另一个为 which 引导的非限定性定语从句，对 traits 进行补充说明。

2. *When rank and file employees, executives and managers are all on the same page as far as basic corporate values, it becomes possible to have general agreement on the relationships that must be in place to accurately reflect the desired set of characteristics for the business.* 当公司普通员工、总经理和一般管理人员在企业基本价值观上达成一致意见时，就有可能形成大家认可的关系，并通过恰当运用来准确反应公司所需要的特质。

整个句型中运用 when 引导的状语从句表条件，同时主句中又运用了 that 引导的定语从句，对 relationships 进行补充说明。on the same page 意为“意见一致的”，in place 意为“恰当的，合适的”。

3. *Companies typically express these standards through the policies and procedures that define how the business will operate.* 公司通过规定如何使其运行的制度和章程以特别明确这些标准。

that 引导的定语从句中运用了 how 引导的名词性从句作 define 的宾语。

4. *Productivity and subsequent market share are not impressive but are high enough to allow the company to continue operating.* 产量和市场份额都不突出，但是足够维持其经营。

此句中注意不定式的用法：enough to do something；同时不定式中又运用了 allow somebody to do something。

Exercises

Reading Comprehension

I. Answer the following questions according to the text.

- 1) How many kinds of corporate cultures are mentioned in the text and what are they?
- 2) Why does the author say that the attitude of those within a company is the most fundamental element of corporate culture?
- 3) Why can some rites as holiday bonus be seen as corporate culture?
- 4) What is the relationship between corporate culture and outside general cultures?
- 5) When hiring employees, what are the personnel management team's concerns?

- 6) How do employees feel in negative corporate culture?
- 7) What benefits can employees get from positive corporate environment?
- 8) How do business leaders usually do to adapt its corporate culture?

II. Choose the best answer to each of the following questions according to the text.

- 1) What can we learn from the first paragraph of this passage?
 - A. Corporate culture is the same as general culture of a society.
 - B. Corporate culture can decide the running of a business with certain characteristics.
 - C. Corporate culture includes the rules of a company that govern all the people.
 - D. Corporate culture will stay all the same once it was formed.
- 2) In a company, different departments or functions relate to one another based on _____.
 - A. the line of communications between employees
 - B. policies and procedures of a company
 - C. some acceptable behaviors of employers
 - D. the obvious characteristics of a company
- 3) According to the standards of general cultures, which of the following actions is inappropriate?
 - A. We should prize one's independence in dealing with personal matter.
 - B. We should create an equal environment for everyone.
 - C. We should solve a problem with different perspectives.
 - D. We should try to limit our ability to a certain scope (e.g. sex, age or money).
- 4) What does the word "assimilate" in the sentence "...employees will assimilate and contribute efficiently" (Paragraph 7) probably mean?
 - A. Having one's own beliefs and behaviors.
 - B. Taking the company's culture as his/her own.
 - C. Fully using one's skills.
 - D. Sharing experiences with each other.
- 5) It can be concluded from the last paragraph that _____.
 - A. business environment should keep moving slowly
 - B. business leaders should wait for the changing of the world
 - C. most businesses are faced with the trouble of cultural shifts
 - D. business environments are changing with the outside circumstances



Vocabulary

III. Match the English words in Column A with the English explanations in Column B.

Column A	Column B
_____ 1. surroundings	A. to move towards or nearer to someone or something
_____ 2. collective	B. shared or made by every member of a group or society
_____ 3. region	C. happening or coming after something else
_____ 4. enforce	D. the objects, buildings, natural things etc that are around a person or thing at a particular time
_____ 5. approach	E. to make something happen or force someone to do something
_____ 6. subsequent	F. a large area of a country or of the world, usually without exact limits

IV. Fill in the following blanks with the words or phrases given below. Change the forms where necessary.

define	operate	bond together	in addition to
coincide with	classify	go against	demonstrate

- The advertisement was timed to _____ the launch of his newest product, an imprint called pocket books.
- Company finance is to provide funds for the everyday _____ of the business.
- I have emphasized that you can attract anything into your field of potential as long as it does not _____ your highest good.
- _____ the regular punishments, there are still some special forms of economic sanctions.
- You can see how God designed us to _____ in families to love, support and provide for each other.
- The study also _____ a direct link between company's main business and its profits.
- When boundaries between countries are not clearly _____, there is usually trouble.
- Its software can analyze digital images, including video, to recognize and _____ facial expressions.

V. Translate the following paragraph from Chinese into English.

企业文化重要，是因为它能使公司成功，也能让它失败（not only... but also）。公司的企业文化和经营目标吻合、适应性强，那么这个公司就能超越对手（as long as, surpass）。这种结论得到了研究机构的认可（something has been approved），因此你需要考虑你的企业文化方向和具体内容（take something into consideration），并努力促进企业员工的愿景与企业文化相一致（push...to meet...）。

VI. Choose the best sentence to fill each of the following gaps.

Culture is the values and practices shared by the members of the group. Company culture, therefore, is the shared values and practices of the company's employees. Company culture is important because it can make or break your company. 1) _____ Some studies show that this kind of company often lives longer with a better future. 2) _____

Company culture evolves and changes over time. As employees leave the company and replacements are hired, the company culture will change. 3) _____ However since each new employee brings their own value and practice to the group, the culture will change, at least a little. As the company matures from a start-up to a more established company, the company culture will change. 4) _____

Ideally, company culture supports a positive and productive environment. Happy employees are not necessarily productive employees. Productive employees are not necessarily happy employees. 5) _____

- A. As the environment in which the company operates changes, the company culture will also change.
- B. It is important to find aspects of the culture that will support each of the qualities for your employees.
- C. Companies with a proper culture can encourage their employees and outperform their competitors.
- D. If it is a strong culture, it may not change much.
- E. To achieve results like this for your organization, you have to figure out what your culture is and move everyone towards the desired culture.