Corporate Culture

Learning Objectives

In this unit, you will learn

➢ to understand the importance of corporate culture;

➢ to know basic components of corporate culture;

➢ to master the new words and expressions related to corporate culture;

➢ to practice the reading skill—reading between the lines;

➢ to grasp job skill—reading and understanding incident and progress report.

Section A / Lead-in

I. How do you understand the saying by Peter Drucker in the picture?

"Company cultures are like country cultures. Never try to change one. Try, instead, to work with what you've got."

II. Work in groups to discuss the things you're going to do if you have to work with a company culture.

_____

_____

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Section B / Embracing English

Text A

Pre-reading Task: Answer the following questions before reading the text.

1. Why do we have to know something about corporate culture?

2. What examples can you give to explain corporate culture?

3. What can you do to work with corporate cultures?

What Does Corporate Culture Really Mean?

It took a long time for the importance of corporate culture to be recognized as an important factor in business success, or lack of success.[1] Research into many businesses of all **nationalities** then showed a common pattern that successful businesses had developed a strong and positive group culture, which is about management as leadership and not just administration.

How to build a positive corporate culture? Building a positive corporate culture needs "Culture Carriers". "Culture Carriers" are key people, usually managers, who represent and spread the core values of the corporate culture. And **stability** of the group is very important. It is more difficult for a culture to emerge if people are changing all the time.

Positive corporate culture needs stories, and heroes. A group **packages up** its culture into stories which are frequently told and re-told, and which **typify** the values of the group. For example, "the time we all stayed late on Xmas Eve[2] to get the last orders finished and then has an **impromptu** party at the local." Heroes are individuals who typify to an **extreme** the values of the group.

Symbols are important. These may be staff **mottoes**, the corporate mission statement or anything that symbolizes the core values.

Positive corporate culture needs **rites** and **rituals**. Rites are specific occasions, such as the annual office party, when the core values are publicly displayed.[3] Formal award ceremonies are another example.[4] These are especially important for enculturing new staff. Rituals mean a standard pattern of behavior at a specific occasion, such as the office party if things are always done in a particular pattern.

Building a positive corporate culture courses is necessary. Attending in-house courses is an important way of team-building and communicating the core values and this also involves cultural networks. This means the informal contacts between employees where they reinforce core values, especially by passing them from older to younger group members.

Corporate culture can be of different types. For example, there are adaptive cultures. As a core value, these have the ability to adapt to change, especially in response to changing external circumstances. **Inert** culture is another type. This is a "dead" culture totally unable to change. Besides, there are networked organizations. They are very sociable networks of small teams. They are highly creative. But loyalty is low. **Mercenary** organizations are **ruthless** business machines dedicated to work and to success. But sociability is very low. **Fragmented** organizations are really loose alliances of very independent workers, such as lawyers. Sociability and loyalty are both very low. Communal organizations have high loyalty and high sociability. They act like one happy family. Recruiting new staff with similar values is important.

Advantages of strong corporate culture are obvious. Instructions are interpreted in a common way, so work is done to a similar standard and in a similar manner. Loyalty is increased, and replacing workers is an expense to be avoided. Motivation, and therefore productivity, is increased. Management control is increased.

However, corporate culture can meet criticisms. First of all, in a MNC (Multi-National Corporation) there will almost certainly be conflicts between the local national culture and the imported corporate culture. These conflicts are very difficult to manage and there is usually a shortage of managers with the necessary skills in multi-cultural management. For example, in the Middle East, family values are very important and an employee wouldn't dream of staying late to finish work if this conflicted with a family duty. This doesn't mean, however, that their work-ethic is poor. It is just expressed differently and a Western manager would cause a lot of offence by suggesting otherwise.

Secondly, businesses are not places with a **homogeneous** culture. Most businesses are too large for people to identify across the whole organization. Instead, people identify with smaller sub-groups. So a business is, in fact, a mixture of sub-cultures some of which may even be **deviant**. There is also a strong likelihood of conflict between some of the different sub-cultures.

Thirdly, the relationship between a strong corporate culture and improved business performance is, as far as the data can tell, very weak. It may be then that corporate cultures are less about improved

performance and more about making the managers feel they have achieved something; some people might argue that managers like to be surrounded by copies of themselves.

Finally, business is usually not simple and clear enough to use one simple message to express the corporate culture idea. (742 words)

New Words and Expressions

nationality /ˌnæʃə'næliti/	*n.*	a large group of people with the same race, origin, language（构成国家一部分的）民族群体	
stability /stə'biliti/	*n.*	the condition of being steady and not changing 稳定状态	
typify /'tipifai/	*v.*	to be a typical example of something 作为（某人／某事物的）典型	
impromptu /im'prɔmptjuː/	*adj.*	done or said without any preparation or planning 即兴（的）	
extreme /ik'striːm/	*n.*	a situation, quality etc. which is as great as it can possibly be used especially when talking about two opposites 极端	
motto /'mɔtəu/	*n.*	a short sentence or phrase giving a rule on how to behave, which expresses the aims or beliefs of a person, school, or institution 座右铭；箴言	
rite /rait/	*n.*	a ceremony that is always performed in the same way, usually for religious purposes 隆重的仪式或典礼	
ritual /'ritʃuəl/	*n.*	series of actions used in a religious or some other ceremony 仪式；惯例；礼制	
inert /i'nəːt/	*adj.*	not willing to do anything 迟钝的；迟缓的	
mercenary /'məːsənəri/	*adj.*	only interested in the money you may be able to get from a person, job etc. 只为金钱的；图利的	
ruthless /'ruːθləs/	*adj.*	so determined to get what you want that you do not care if you have to hurt other people in order to do it 无情的，残忍的	
fragmented /'frægməntid/	*adj.*	be broken into a lot of small separate parts 支离破碎的	
homogeneous /ˌhəumə'dʒiːniəs/	*adj.*	consisting of people or things that are all of the same type 由同类部分组成的	
deviant /'diːviənt/	*adj.*	different, in a bad way, from what is considered normal 离经叛道的（人）	
package up		整理起；打包（备售）	

Notes

1. *It took a long time for the importance of corporate culture to be recognized as an important factor in business success, or lack of success.* 人们花费了很长时间才认识到企业文化是关乎企业成败的重要因素。

   It takes somebody ... to do something 是个常用句型，表示某人做某事需要付出多少时间、钱、精力等。It 是形式主语，真正的主语是 for the importance ...lack of success，the importance of corporate culture 是介词 for 的宾语。

2. Xmas Eve：即 Christmas Eve，圣诞节前夜，又称 Silent Night，平安夜。

3．*Rites are specific occasions, such as the annual office party, when the core values are publicly displayed.* 庆典，如办公室的年度聚会，是特殊的场合，可以向公众展示企业核心文化。

　　　　such as the annual office party 是插入语，对 occasions 一词做出举例说明。when 引导的非限定性定语从句解释说明 annual office party 是一个什么时间和场合。

4．*Formal award ceremonies are another example.* 正式的颁奖典礼是另外一个例子。

　　　　本句是简单的主系表结构，即 formal award ceremonies （主语）+are（系动词）+ another example（表语）。谓语动词在人称和数上与主语保持一致。

Reading Comprehension

I. Answer the following questions according to the text.

1. What are the basic elements of corporate culture?

2. What is the first need for building a positive corporate culture?

3. What are especially important for enculturing new staff?

4. What are the advantages of strong corporate culture?

5. According to the text, what's the author's attitude toward corporate culture?

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

1. What do cultural carriers refer to?
   A. People who recruit new staff.
   B. People who stayed late on Xmas Eve.
   C. People who organize the annual office party.
   D. Key people who represent and spread the core values of the corporate cultures.

2. What kind of rite is important for enculturing new staff?
   A. Birthday party.
   B. The annual office party.
   C. Xmas party.
   D. Impromptu party.

3. Which organizations have loyalty as well as sociability?
   A. Networked organizations.
   B. Mercenary organizations.
   C. Fragmented organizations.
   D. Communal organizations.

4. Which aspect is the disadvantage of corporate culture?

    A. Instructions.

    B. Loyalty.

    C. Conflicts.

    D. Motivation and productivity.

5. According to the text, businesses are _____ .

    A. places with homogeneous culture

    B. a mixture of sub-cultures

    C. easy to identify across the whole organization

    D. not with conflicts between the local culture and imported corporate culture

✍ *Vocabulary and Structures* ▶

Match the definitions in Column B with the words in Column A.

Column A	Column B
1. positive	A. communication with a person, organization, country etc.
2. impromptu	B. to be a typical example of something
3. administration	C. a state of disagreement or argument between people, groups, countries etc.
4. contact	D. coming from or happening outside a particular place or organization
5. external	E. the activities that are involved in managing the work of a company or organization
6. conflict	F. different, in a bad way, from what is considered normal
7. deviant	G. done or said without any preparation or planning
8. typify	H. good or useful

Text B

Pre-reading Task: Answer the following questions before reading the text.

1. What are the basic components of a great corporate culture?

2. Why is the vision statement regarded as the start of a great culture?

3. If you are the leader of a corporation, what will you do when you reshape the corporate culture?

Components of a Great Corporate Culture

The benefits of a strong corporate culture are both intuitive and supported by social science. According to James L. Heskett[1], culture

"can account for 20%-30% of the differential in corporate performance when compared with 'culturally **unremarkable**' competitors." And HBR writers have offered advice on navigating different geographic cultures, selecting jobs based on culture, changing cultures, and offering **feedback** across cultures, among other topics.

But what makes a culture? Each culture is unique and created by **myriad** factors. It is reported that at least six common components of great cultures have been observed. Isolating those elements can be the first step to build a differentiated culture and a **lasting** organization.

A great culture starts with a **vision** or mission statement. These simple turns of phrase guide a company's values and provide it with purpose. That purpose, in turn, **orients** every decision that employees make. When they are deeply authentic and prominently displayed, good vision statements can even help orient customers, suppliers, and other stakeholders. Nonprofits often excel at having compelling and simple vision statements. The Alzheimer's Association[2], for example, is **dedicated** to "a world without Alzheimer's". And Oxfam[3] envisions "a just world without poverty". A vision statement is a simple but foundational element of culture.

A company's values are the core of its culture. While a vision **articulates** a company's purpose, values offer a set of guidelines on the behaviors and mindsets needed to achieve that vision. McKinsey & Company[4], for example, has a clearly articulated set of values that are prominently communicated to all employees and involve the way that firm vows to serve clients, treat colleagues, and uphold professional standards. Google's values might be best articulated by their famous phrase, "Don't be evil." But they are also enshrined in their "ten things we know to be true". And while many companies find their values **revolve** around a few simple topics such as employees, clients, professionalism, etc., the originality of those values is less important than their **authenticity**.

Of course, values are of little importance unless they are enshrined in a company's practices. If an organization **professes**, "people are our greatest asset," it should also be ready to invest in people in visible ways. Wegman's[5], for example, **heralds** values like "caring" and "respect", promising prospects "a job (they'll) love". And it follows through in its company practices, ranked by Fortune as the fifth best company to work for. Similarly, if an organization values "flat" hierarchy, it must encourage more junior team members to **dissent** in discussions without fear or negative repercussions. And

unremarkable *adj.* 寻常的	
feedback *n.* 反馈信息	
myriad *adj.* 无数的	
lasting *adj.* 持续很长时间的 vision *n.* 远见	
orient *v.* 进行引导	
dedicated *adj.* 献身于某事物的	
articulate *v.* 清楚明白地说（某事）	
revolve *v.* 以某人（某事物）为中心 authenticity *n.* 真实性	
profess *v.* 声称	
herald *v.* 宣布某人 / 某事物即将来临	
dissent *v.* 不同意，反对	

whatever an organization's values are, they must be reinforced in review criteria and promotion policies, and baked into the operating principles of daily life in the firm.

No company can build a **coherent** culture without people who either share its core values or possess the willingness and ability to embrace those values. That's why the greatest firms in the world also have some of the most **stringent** recruiting policies. According to Charles Ellis, as noted in a recent review of his book What it Takes: Seven Secrets of Success from the World's Greatest Professional Firms, the best firms are "**fanatical** about recruiting new employees who are not just the most talented but also the best suited to a particular corporate culture." Ellis highlights that those firms often have 8-20 people interview each candidate. And as an added benefit, Steven Hunt notes at Monster.com that one study found applicants who were a cultural fit would accept a 7% lower salary, and departments with cultural **alignment** had 30% less turnover. People who stick with cultures they like will reinforce the culture that an organization already has.

Marshall Ganz[6] was once a key part of Caesar Chavez's United Farm Workers movement and helped structure the organizing platform for Barack Obama's 2008 presidential campaign. Now a professor at Harvard, one of Ganz's core areas of research and teaching is the power of narrative. Any organization has a unique history—a unique story. And the ability to unearth that history and craft it into a narrative is a core element of culture creation. The elements of that narrative can be formal—like Coca-Cola, which dedicated an enormous resource to celebrating its **heritage** and even has a World of Coke museum in Atlanta—or informal, like those stories about how Steve Jobs' early **fascination** with **calligraphy** shaped the **aesthetically** oriented culture at Apple. But they are more powerful when identified, shaped, and retold as a part of a firm's ongoing culture.

Why does Pixar[7] have a huge open **atrium** where firm members run into each other throughout the day and interact in informal, unplanned ways? Why does Mayor Michael Bloomberg prefer his staff sit in a "bullpen[8]" environment, rather than one of separate offices with **soundproof** doors? And why do tech firms **cluster** in Silicon Valley and financial firms cluster in London and New York? There are obviously numerous answers to each of these questions, but one clear answer is that place shapes culture. Open architecture is more **conducive** to certain office behaviors, like collaboration.

coherent *adj.*（指看法、思想、言语、推理等）有条理的；清楚的

stringent *adj.* 必须遵守的

fanatical *adj.* 狂热的

alignment *n.* 联盟

heritage *n.* 文化遗产

fascination *n.* 入迷
calligraphy *n.* 书法
aesthetically *adv.* 美观可爱地
atrium *n.* 门廊，天井

soundproof *adj.* 隔音的
cluster *v.* 群聚

conducive to *adj.* 有助于；使容易发生的

Certain cities and countries have local cultures that may reinforce or contradict the culture a firm is trying to create. Place—whether geography, architecture, or aesthetic design—impacts the values and behaviors of people in a workplace.

There are other factors that influence culture. But these six components can provide a firm foundation for shaping a new organization's culture. And identifying and understanding them more fully in an existing organization can be the first step to **revitalize** or reshape culture in a company.　　　　　　　　　　(930 words)

revitalize *v.* 使复兴

Notes

1. James L. Heskett：詹姆斯 L. 赫斯克特，哈佛商学院 UPS 基金企业物流教授，《公司文化与经营业绩》合著者之一。

2. Alzheimer's Association：阿尔茨海默病协会。该协会成立于 1980 年 4 月 10 日，是美国非营利性志愿者健康服务机构。阿尔茨海默病即俗称的老年痴呆症。

3. Oxfam：乐施会是一个具有国际影响力的发展和救援组织的联盟，它由 13 个独立运作的乐施会成员组成。1942 年 Canon Theodore Richard Milford（1896—1987 年）在英国牛津郡成立，原名 Oxford Committee for Famine Relief。组成目的是在"二战"中运送食粮到被德国纳粹占领的地区。1963 年，在加拿大成立了第一家海外分会。1965 年起改以电报地址 OXFAM 作为名称。

4. McKinsey & Company：麦肯锡公司是世界级领先的全球管理咨询公司。自 1926 年成立以来，该公司的使命就是帮助领先的企业机构实现显著、持久的经营业绩改善，打造能够吸引、培育和激励杰出人才的优秀组织机构。

5. Wegman's：维格曼斯超市。家族企业维格曼斯超市在纽约州、宾夕法尼亚州和其他美国东海岸 4 个州共有 79 家店铺，年利润达 62 亿美元。在《财富》杂志发布的 2012 年最适宜工作的公司名单中名列第四，2005 年则名列第一，这家公司的成功说明加强员工培训和盈利其实是两不误的。

6. Marshall Ganz：马修•甘兹。哈佛大学肯尼迪政府学院公共政策资深讲师。

7. Pixar：皮克斯动画工作室，是一家美国电脑动画工作室。皮克斯最著名的企业文化就是"以下犯上"，确切地说，在创作领域，皮克斯内部完全没有"上下"的概念。那里好比一个"娱乐无极限"的大型游乐园，到处都是稀奇古怪的玩具和稀奇古怪的员工，任何一个普通动画师都可以提出创意供大家讨论。

8. bullpen：本意指"牛栏"，现引申义为"工作紧张或喧闹的工作环境或地方"。

◁◁◁ *Reading Comprehension* ▷

Directions: For each of the following statements decide whether it is "Right" or "Wrong", if there is not enough information to answer "Right" or "Wrong", choose "Doesn't say".

1. When they are deeply authentic and prominently displayed, good vision statements can even help orient customers, suppliers, and other stakeholders.

　　A. Right.　　　　　　　　　B. Wrong.　　　　　　　　C. Doesn't say.

2. While a vision articulates a company's purpose, values offer a set of guidelines on the behaviors and mindsets needed to achieve that vision.

   A. Right.   B. Wrong.   C. Doesn't say.

3. No company can build a coherent culture without people who neither share its core values nor possess the willingness and ability to embrace those values.

   A. Right.   B. Wrong.   C. Doesn't say.

4. Place—whether geography, architecture, or aesthetic design—has no impacts on the values and behaviors of people in a workplace.

   A. Right.   B. Wrong.   C. Doesn't say.

5. Identifying and understanding the six components more fully in an existing organization should be an inevitable step to revitalize or reshape culture in a company.

   A. Right.   B. Wrong.   C. Doesn't say.

✍ Vocabulary ▶

Fill in the blanks with appropriate words given in the box, change the form where necessary.

intuition	dedicate	articulate	navigation	dissent
cluster	herald	enshrine	revitalize	enormous
reinforce	conducive	recruit	coherent	stringent

1. He seemed to have a(n) _____ awareness of how I felt.

2. I am currently trying to _____ through a whole stack of information on the subject.

3. The Woodland Trust is _____ to preserving our native woodland.

4. Many people are unable to _____ the unhappiness they feel.

5. The right of free speech is _____ in the Constitution.

6. A flash of lightning and a peal of thunder _____ torrential rain.

7. There are some _____ voices among the undergraduates.

8. Reporters _____ around the palace gates for news.

9. The film _____ the idea that women should be pretty and dumb.

10. Many government officials were _____ from private industry.

Section C / Extending Your English

I. Approaching the reading skill: Reading between the lines（理解文章字里行间的含义）1

    到目前为止，在前三册书中我们已经讨论了商务英语中许多重要的阅读技能，从这本书开始，我们要重点学习一些从篇章整体角度出发理解文章的阅读技巧。本单元主要介绍理解文章