

Short Paper: Wizard Brazil- Organizational Culture
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Abstract

Organizational or corporate culture refers to a pattern of basic assumptions that are considered valid and that are taught to new members as the way to perceive, think, and feel in the organization. Culture may influence desired organizational outcomes. Schein (2017) divides culture into three levels: Artifacts, espoused beliefs and values

and basic underlying assumptions. This paper aims to discuss the organizational culture of a language school in Brazil. Based on personal experience as a former employee, a review of artifacts, and an online interview, the author of this paper will highlight the most important findings regarding the culture of the organization in question. Wizard is like an engaged and inspired student that does not stop learning. The organization embraces changes, accepts new challenges, and cultivates training and development programs. Additionally, Wizard is also like a curious student: the organization enjoys learning about new technological additions so it continues catching up with new inventions in order to attract and keep new students. The leadership team believes in the importance of a clear and compelling vision so the organization can gain commitment and drive changes in a more effective way.

Keywords: culture, learning organization, Wizard, changes

Wizard Brazil- Organizational Culture

According to Nelson and Quick (2012), organizational or corporate culture refers to a pattern of basic assumptions that are considered valid and that are taught to new members as the way to perceive, think, and feel in the organization. Additionally, the authors emphasize that culture influences desired organizational outcomes. This paper begins by providing an overview of the three levels of organizational culture. Then, the paper provides the reader with an

overview of Wizard Brazil, a language franchise in Brazil. Next, the paper discusses the culture of a Wizard unity through a review of artifacts and values along with an interview with the school coordinator. Then, the author of this paper suggests metaphors that indicate the culture of the organization. Finally, this author presents the most important points discussed throughout the paper.

Schein (2017) divides culture into three levels: Artifacts, espoused beliefs and values and basic underlying assumptions. Artifacts refer to visible organizational structures and processes; the meaning of artifacts is not always clear and requires a deeper level of understanding. According to Nelson and Quick (2012), artifacts are symbols of culture in the physical and social work environment. They include ceremonies, rites, stories and symbols. Espoused beliefs and values combine strategies, goals and philosophies. Scandura (2016) states that values are the reasons people give for their behavior. “These values can be stated (or espoused), or they may be unconscious and people act them out (enacted)” (p. 366). Basic assumptions refer to invisible and taken for granted values. They are the held beliefs that guide behavior and tell people of an organization how to perceive and think about things. Nelson and Quick (2012) explain that it is important to consider all three levels so one can have a better understanding of an organization’s culture. The authors also state that it is important for leaders to discuss and reinforce different characteristics of each level. For instance, an organization might have rites of enhancement (artifacts) that reinforce the achievement of individuals, such as the awarding of certificates to sales contest winners. When well communicated, artifacts can be effective tools that lead the organization to a better performance. With regards to values, leaders should communicate and demonstrate them in a way that employees, customers and other important stakeholders perceive them as important. Some organizations, for instance, are known

by their support to healthy lifestyle behaviors. The three levels of organizational culture interact with each other and tell people significant aspects of an organization. Next, the paper summarizes the history of Wizard Brazil.

Wizard Brazil

Wizard Brazil is the largest language schools franchise in the world. Wizard has unities in Brazil, Japan, Costa Rica, United States and Paraguay. The history of Wizard began in the 80's, when Carlos Wizard Martins, the founder and now president of the network came to the United States for professional development. Because of his linguistic knowledge, he was invited to teach at the Department of Linguistics at Brigham Young University. The CEO of Wizard developed a methodology that he successfully implanted in Brazil in 1987 when he founded the first school (Wizard.com.br, 2017). The educational objective of the pedagogical Wizard methodology is to promote the complete development of communication skills: speaking, listening, reading and writing. Through advanced teaching techniques, students develop personal, cultural and academic aspects as well as leadership and self-motivation skills. Thus, they are encouraged to express themselves freely, overcoming their inhibitions and blockages during learning. Employees are encouraged to participate in trainings and staff development courses at least once a year. Students are encouraged to study abroad to live a different cultural experience and receive cross-cultural training for this purpose. This author interviewed a school coordinator from one of the Wizard unities. Next, the paper discusses the most important findings based on an online interview with the school coordinator. It will also review artifacts of the organization.

Interview and Review of Artifacts

The author of this paper asked the school coordinator from Wizard Cianorte (Paraná, Brazil) questions regarding vision, changes, staff, and students. The first question referred to the

vision. The coordinator stated that the organization believes in the importance of formulating a strong vision. According to the coordinator, the purpose of the school is to promote professional, cultural and social development of all employees and students through a modern program of language training and a constant appreciation of human being. The author of this paper has worked for a Wizard location in Brazil. As a school coordinator at that unity, she participated in a technological implementation process. Due to globalization and technological advancements, Wizard felt the need of catching up with new inventions in order to attract and keep new students. The change process met with resistance, but the organization was able to deliver a compelling vision through communication, new strategies and support. One of the most challenging responsibilities in leadership is to guide and facilitate the implementation of a change. The process can be hard if the organization does not present a powerful and persuasive vision. An articulate vision will help an organization implement a change successfully.

According to Yukl (2013), “in the hectic and confusing process of implementing change, a clear vision helps to guide and coordinate the decisions and actions of many people in widely dispersed locations” (p.89). Leaders who communicate the vision in a way that followers will perceive the sacrifices and hardships will be worthy as they will achieve a better future, will have more chances to implement a successful change. Yukl (2013) argues that there are some desirable characteristics for a vision, such as: 1) a vision needs to be meaningful; 2) a vision should address the ideals, needs, values and hopes of organization members and stakeholders; 3) a vision should allow initiative and creativity and 4) a vision should be communicated in a simple and clear way. Guidelines for formulating a vision include: 1) involve key stakeholders; 2) identify common values; 3) identify strategic objectives with attractiveness; 4) identify important characteristics in the old ideology; 5) connect the vision to core competencies and also to prior

achievements and 6) continually assess and refine the vision. Yukl (2013) also states that “to be inspiring, the vision must include strong ideological content that appeals to organization members’ shared values and ideals concerning customers, employees, and the mission of the organization” (p.101). A strong vision and meaningful purpose were important to drive changes and they are still fundamental elements of the organization, according to the current coordinator. Another question was about the staff and what the organization does to keep employees motivated and committed. The coordinator told this author that Wizard has a solid foundation. The school adopted the culture of trust by establishing an open communication. At Wizard, there is no formal mentoring program but the culture of mentoring is cultivated. Managers pair the new employees with top leaders. The school also believes in the importance of pairing up, occasionally, teachers with marketing leaders, customer service representatives with marketing directors. This cross-learning helps employees to embrace the values of the school and make them understand how the school works holistically. Wizard methodology is composed of 10 books. At Wizard, new teachers teach the elementary books when they first start at school. Once they understand (through mentoring and practice) how the methodology works, what the company wants to deliver to customers, they are invited to teach the advanced level books and can become mentors to new teachers. Through this process, mentors help their mentees to achieve their goals by guiding them, listening to them, giving right feedback and mostly important by encouraging them. Additionally, leaders pair up teachers with more experience in teaching with teachers who have more experience in technology so they can learn from each other. By gaining commitment through open communication, support and training, Wizard team has been able to drive changes, gain commitment, and promote effective performance. According to Nelson and Quick (2012), educating employees on new procedures can be challenging, and

yet rewarding. The authors argue that mentors and mentees both derive benefits from going through the process of organizational change together. A third question referred to students and how the school motivates them to continue engaged in their learning process. Students choose Wizard because the school deliver fun and practical classes. Additionally, they have different activities that engage the students to express themselves in the target language. Students are also encouraged to study abroad to live a different cultural experience and receive cross-cultural training. Ferraro and Briody (2013) emphasize the importance of developing cross-cultural mindset so individuals become ready to enter the global market.

Artifacts

Artifacts are symbols of culture in the physical and social work environment (Nelson & Quick, 2012). The symbol of Wizard Brazil has changed over the years; that change speaks volumes about the culture of the organization: an organization that evolves and embraces changes. According to Wizard website (2017), technological additions are some of the most important advantages the franchise offers; Wizard has innovation in its DNA and introduced a creative learning experience: *Wiz.me* (a technological personal assistant) that enables students to experience an exclusive learning tool. The tool allows students to practice pronunciation, review grammar exercises, listen to new words, etc. Besides *Wiz.me*, Wizard schools partnered with global schools so students could communicate with students from all over the world.

According to Nelson and Quick (2012), culture can be understood, in part, through an examination of the behavior of organization members. Modeled behavior is a powerful tool at Wizard. As mentioned previously, the organization has a mentoring program that allows individuals to learn by observing others and sharing experiences. Experienced employees clarify

what is important and coordinate the work of others, in effect negating the need for close supervision.

Wizard as Learning Organization

Wizard is like an engaged and inspired student that does not stop learning. The student mentality of the leadership team allows the organizations to be one of the most important language schools in Brazil. Hodges and Gill (2015) explain that a learning organization is an organization that has developed continuous capacity to adapt and change. Additionally, there are five pillars as the basis for a learning organization: 1) vision; 2) infrastructure; 3) culture; 4) learning dynamics and 5) training and development. Vision refers to the ability people in an organization have to define and communicate a valid and appealing vision of the future; vision also specifies direction, provides a motivational force and a basis for developing new norms and structures. Infrastructure refers to the accessibility of knowledge and information. Culture refers to shared values as a core theme and practice. Learning dynamics refer to continuous learning in organizations where errors are accepted and training and development enable an organization to be more flexible in order to enhance learning (Hodges & Gill, 2015).

Mentoring is a culture adopted by Wizard that aims to activate collaboration among employees. Hodges and Gill (2015) explain that training and development enable an organization to be more flexible in order to enhance learning. After the introduction of the technological additions, there was a constant use of training and development courses or sessions, according to the coordinator of the school. Yukl (2013) explains that training programs when well designed tend to be effective. Desirable features for training programs include: clear and objective, relevant, programs should have appropriate mix of training methods and ability to activate self-confidence, etc. Yukl (2013) argues that “training and development are more effective when they are mutually consistent, supported by a strong learning culture, and integrated with other human

resources activities” (p. 402). The coordinator reported that employees participated in training courses that allowed them to learn the new technology and gain self-confidence to apply it in the classroom. This author learned that Wizard posts on different social media platforms on a regular basis nowadays; students are encouraged to access different platforms as part of their homework. Social media platforms are strong tools to create brand awareness. According to Kujur and Singh (2017), social media marketing is not a replacement of the traditional marketing but is an additional marketing channel that could be associated with other strategic elements as a part of a marketing mix which can have a positive impact on brand awareness. The authors explain that an important aspect of online social media is the extent to which it enables brands and consumers to connect, communicate, and engage. Wizard is also like a curious student: the organization enjoys learning about new technological additions so it continues catching up with new inventions in order to attract and keep new students.

Final Considerations

This paper aimed to explore the organizational culture of Wizard Brazil, a language franchise in Brazil. Through an online interview and the review of artifacts, this author discussed important findings about the culture. Wizard is like an engaged and inspired student that does not stop learning. The organization embraces changes, accepts new challenges, and cultivates training and development programs. Additionally, Wizard is also like a curious student: the organization enjoys learning about new technological additions so it continues catching up with new inventions in order to attract and keep new students. Wizard has a strong vision. The leadership team believes in the importance of a clear and compelling vision so the organization can gain commitment and drive changes in a more effective way.

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