

ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AS AN INSTRUMENT OF THE QUALITY MANAGEMENT WITHIN COMMERCIAL FIRMS

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Abstract:

In the knowledge economy, the management efficiency is determined by a series of essential aspects. The modern management followers consider that we should take into account the presence of an integrable theory of management which allows the strategic orientation of firms through planning, organization, coordination and control.

There is a strong connection between the managerial concepts and the culture of commercial firms, given the fact that the organizational culture represents a premise and also an instrument for the ensurance of an efficient leadership of the respective firms.

As an answer to the challenges of the growing globalization of the market, the system of quality has been developed, as it was defined by the Standardization International Organization, in the series of standards no. 9000. The aggressive battle to attract clients on a national scale, but also on an international level, has resulted in an intense preoccupation for the ensurance of the product and service quality. Among the specialists in the TQM field, the general tendency is to take into account an entire culture of quality, due to the inportance of total quality for the consumer.

Key words: *organizational culture, quality management, quality culture*

JEL Classification: *M1*

Introduction

From a systemic point of view, management can be defined as science, art, profession, discipline and it includes a series of concepts, principles, methods and techniques which are specific for the leadership position in order to efficiently administer an enterprise. Peter Drucker, the creator of modern management, views efficiency as the quality through which the leadership is

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distinguished. In the knowledge economy, the efficiency (the ability to reach and eventually surpass the established goals) of management is determined by five major aspects: time management, focus on the contribution to the firm's activity, identification of the moment and of a way to capitalize on the strong points in order to obtain a maximum effect, establishing adequate priorities and combining all these elements with an efficient decisional process². Therefore, the modern management followers (P. Drucker, R. Owen, E. Mayo, H. A. Simon, Th. Peters, R. Waterman, H. Mintzberg, K. Ohmae, R. Mathis)³ consider that we should take into account an integrable theory of management which allows the strategic orientation of firms through planning, organization, coordination and control.

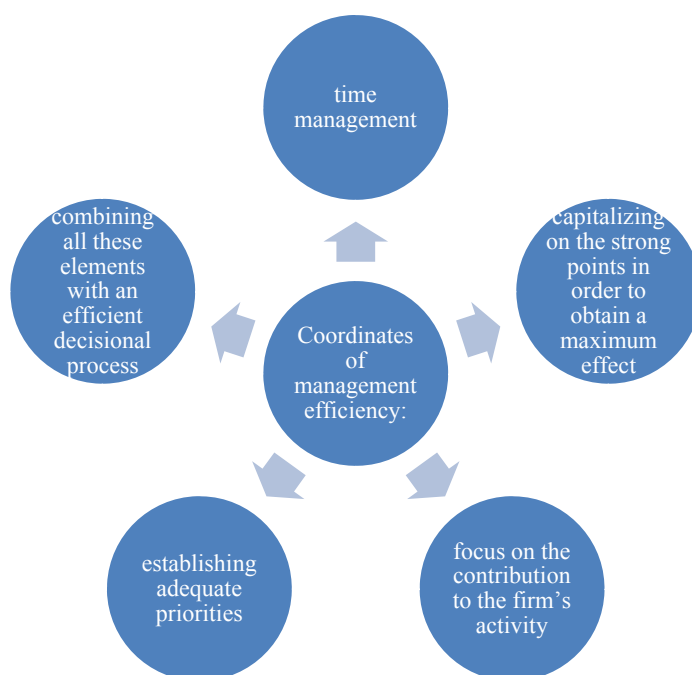


Fig. no. 1

The coordinates of management efficiency in the knowledge economy

² Drucker P., „Despre decizie și eficacitate”, Editura Meteor Press, București, 2007

³ Hinescu A., „Management-marketing”, Tipografia Departamentului pentru Învățământ la Distanță a Universității „1 Decembrie 1918”, Alba Iulia, 2007, p. 11; Nica P. C., Sasu Ctin., Prodan A., Iftimescu A., Coste V., Ciobanu I., „Managementul firmei”, Editura Condor S.R.L., Chișinău, 1994, p. 37

The modern society has become a society made of organizations of the type company-project and of enterprise networks, which should ensure the increase of life quality by promoting total quality within their activities; also, the innovating spirit and creativity are just as important as leadership. Within this framework, the major objective of commercial firms leadership is in fact their fundamental resource: the employee as a culture bearer. The leaders should act in such a way that the values, aspirations and traditions become productive in order to obtain performance. Hence, although there are concepts and principles of leadership, however, leadership represents also culture (managerial culture) and a system of values and ideas⁴.

1. The coordinates of organizational culture within commercial firms

There is a strong connection between the managerial concepts and the culture of commercial firms, given the fact that the organizational culture represents a premise and also an instrument for the ensurance of an efficient leadership of the respective firms. Managerial culture is not identified with management, but serves as an essential tool in the increase of its efficiency. Management as the art of accomplishing things through people⁵, can profit from the scientific acquisitions of organizational culture by knowing, explaining, predicting, changing and controlling the behaviour of people at work.

The organizational culture, form under which a commercial firm manifests itself, can be viewed in two ways: as a *product*, result, expression of the respective firm, as a creation, move, action, symbolizing the active role of individuals within a commercial firm, aware of the conflict of interests and of their situation in the respective organization and also of the major changes that take or can take place⁶.

Most specialists agree regarding certain composing elements that define the complex phenomenon of organizational culture, namely values, beliefs, attitudes, expectations, norms, rules, myths, heroes, role models, artificial products. In this sense, the definition provided by O. Nicolescu is edifying: "the

⁴ M. Popescu, in the work „Tratat de Management Comercial”, coordinated by D. Patriche, Ed. Universitară, București 2007, p. 283

⁵ Gary J., „Comportament organizațional”, Editura Economică, București, 1996, pp. 9-10

⁶ Popescu - Nistor M., „Cultura afacerilor”, Editura Economică, București, 2003

organizational culture is found in the ensemble of values, beliefs, aspirations, expectations and behaviours outlined throughout time within each organization, which prevail in the respective organization and which directly and indirectly condition its functionality and performances"⁷.

Influenced by a series of internal (owners, founders, work groups, managers, organizational characteristics, beneficiaries, tradition, the firm's past, motivation system) and external factors (national culture, economic, political, technological, demographic, social and cultural, natural and institutional factors), the organizational culture is more than the sum of its components⁸.

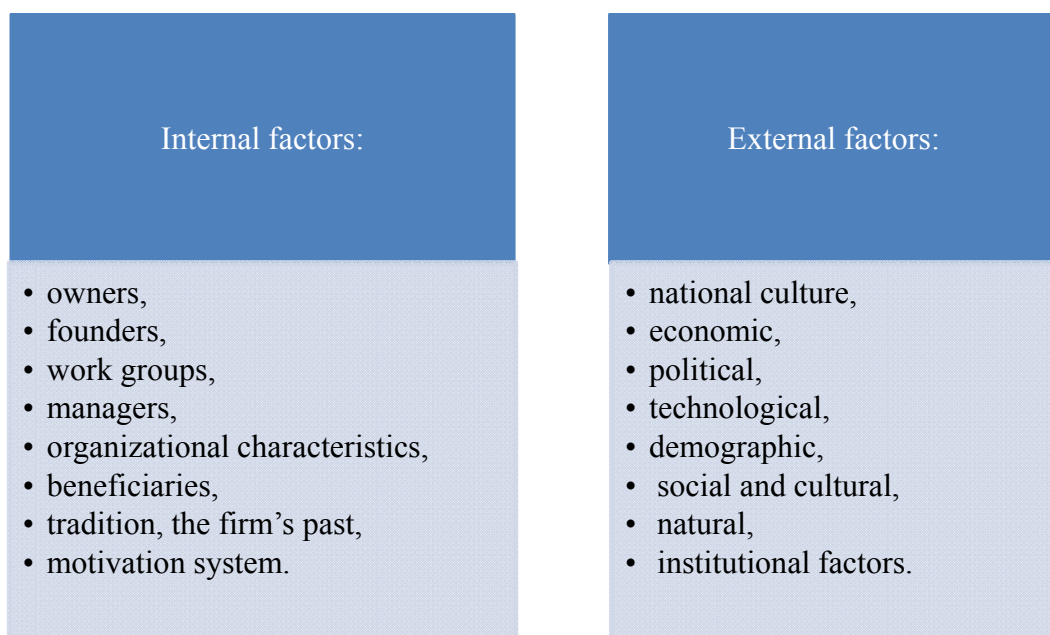


Fig. No. 2

The typology of factors which influence the organizational culture

2. The Management – Quality – Organizational Culture relationship within commercial firms

As an answer to the challenges of the growing globalization of the market, the system of quality has been developed, as it was defined by the

⁷ Nicolescu O., Verboncu I. „Fundamentele managementului organizației”, Editura Tribuna Economică, București, 2001, p. 273

⁸ Popescu - Nistor M., „Cultura afacerilor”, Editura Economică, București, 2003, p. 33

Standardization International Organization, in the series of standards no. 9000⁹. The aggressive battle to attract clients on a national scale, but also on an international level, has resulted in an intense preoccupation for the ensurance of the product and service quality. Therefore, knowing the consumers' needs and especially satisfying these needs is an important competitive advantage. In this sense, a proactive behaviour is needed from the part of the firms, as well as the prediction of the needs, prior to the sale process, during and especially after the sale. Thus, the client becomes an equal partner of the manufacturer and merchant, being the main supplier of the demands which a product or service should reach. In order to obtain these advantages, many organizations have started to obey and apply the principles of the management of quality or even to have an approach concerning total quality.

In the literature we find many definitions for the management of quality. J. Juran¹⁰ defines the management of quality through its functions. In the opinion of J. Kelada¹¹, the management of quality represents the ensemble of planning activities, coordination, organization, control and quality ensurance, aspects which have as a goal the accomplishment of the established objectives by optimally using the resources. This specialist considers that firms have certain strategic objectives which are reached through accomplishing the operational goals, such as: obtaining the products which correspond to the demands, in the solicited quantity, at the established deadline and which are available on the desired market, but in the conditions of minimum costs. In his opinion, each of the firm's functions should try to meet these objectives.

Taking into account all of the above, we can state that the management of quality is an important component of the firm's management and the organizational culture is an instrument of the management of quality. In other words, within the managerial culture there is a quality subculture.

Among the specialists in the TQM field, the general tendency is to take into account an entire culture of quality, due to the importance of total quality for the consumer. The quality culture¹² comprises a series of quality norms, the

⁹ Păunescu C., „Quality management”, Editura ASE, București, 2006

¹⁰ Juran J. M., „Handbuch der qualitätsplanung” (p. 20-26), in M. Olaru, „Managementul calității”, Editura Economică, București, 1995, p. 53

¹¹ Kelada J., „La gestion integrale de la qualite, pour une qualite totale”, Edition Quafec, Quebec, 1990, p. 27

¹² M. Popescu, in the work „Tratat de Management Comercial”, coordinated by D. Patriche, Ed. Universitară, București 2007, p. 303

necessary technologies in order to make certain products with a quality that meets the demands, ceremonies and rituals necessary to the organization and the planning of the quality, heroes in ensuring the total quality, slogans regarding the total quality of the firm (for example, "zero flaws"), symbols, myths and events concerning the ensurance and continuous enhancement of quality, value systems, which influence the firm's concept of total quality.

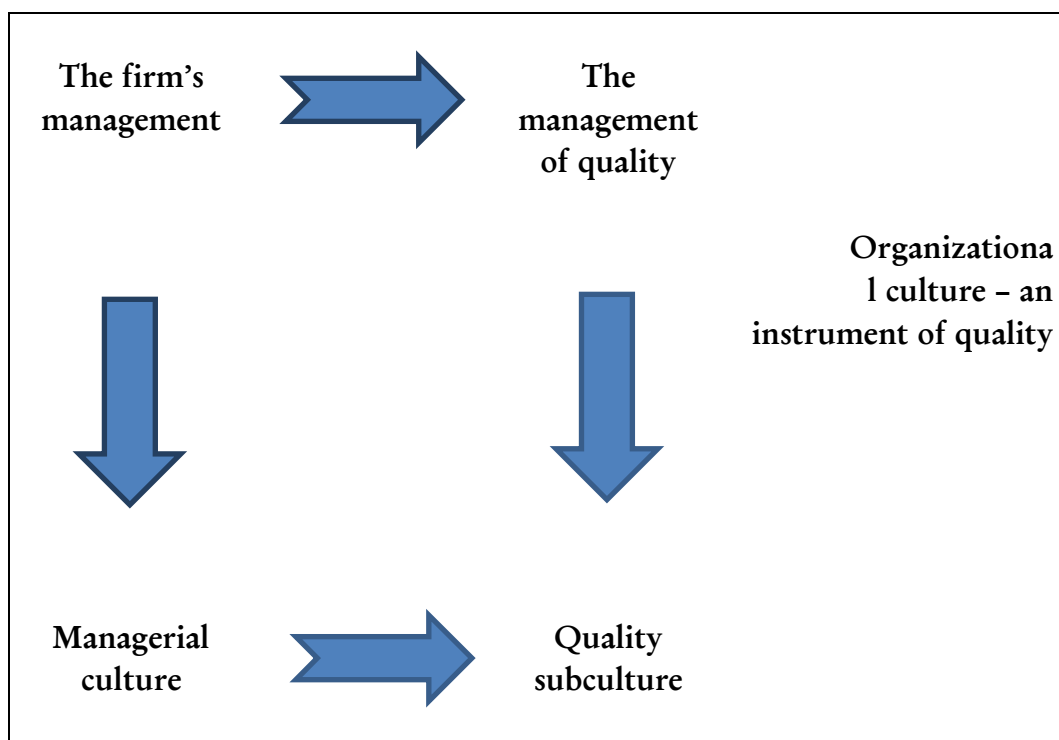


Fig. No. 3

The Management – Quality – Organizational Culture relationship

For the vast majority of authors, TQM represents a new philosophy, a new model of culture for the commercial firm, having as a goal the client orientation of all its activities and processes and their optimization, so that it contributes to the increase of the firm's efficiency. In this aspect, the client becomes the main preoccupation of the entire staff, starting with the managers and collaborating with all the firm's partners. Therefore, the repositioning of the client in the center of the commercial strategy becomes necessary, through the realization of the main functions of the quality and consumption leadership. The ways in which this desideratum is realized include: being at the client's

disposal, participating in the elaboration of quality standards for products and services, seeing that these standards are respected and reacting to their violation, trying to permanently satisfy the client.

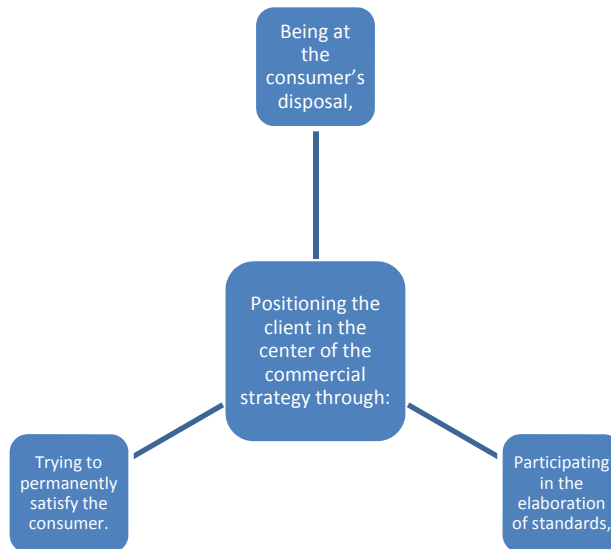


Fig. No. 4

**Key elements in the positioning of the client in the center
of the commercial strategy**

- *Always being at the institutional or individual consumers'/clients' disposal* means that certain mechanisms function in order to ensure the permanent dialogue with them and to make possible the highlight of the present and future demands, on the long and short run. Such mechanisms refer to: studying the suggestions, the client's complaints by creating and promoting some international circuits (well printed addresses of the suppliers of products and services on the packages, advertising messages, suggestion and complaint notebooks), the direct contact with clients in the retail commercial units, public alimentation units, service provider units, the permanent dialogue with the consumer associations, local, regional and national public authorities for consumer protection, making periodical marketing researches in order to measure the client satisfaction.

- *Participating in the elaboration, infliction and sanctioning of the quality standards violation* for products and services involves: elaborating the tasks and

standards for projecting the products and services, seeing that these normative acts are obeyed, respecting the procedures and work methods in the operative commercial units, permanently analyzing (by sampling) the quality of the products in specialized and impartial labs, compensating and informing the clients in accordance with the damage, taking off the market the flawed products or taking action in order to modify them, permanently offering objective information to the consumers regarding the composition, functioning and usage of the products through the label, assembling instructions, etc.

- Consequently, *permanently satisfying the client in enterprises represents a component of the management of quality*. The respective objective of commercial firms' culture can be realised through: permanent professional training and perfecting the personnel in enterprises by organizing module courses (consumer's rights, hygiene and quality, politics, tactics and enterprise strategy in this field, etc.), informing the staff regarding new normative acts resulted from the study of consumer complaints and suggestions, the main results of the marketing research concerning the consumers' present and future behaviour through monthly bulletins, specialized magazines, researchers' reviews, articles, excerpts from the legislation, the periodical study of the commercial units' image in the consumers' opinion, using certain evaluation criteria for the assessment made through consumer segments or ensemble.

The concept of quality culture is more and more frequently encountered within enterprises which promote the total quality in the service of the consumer. In this spirit of all of the elements presented above, **the culture of quality comprises the ensemble of the components of an organization, which places the client at the center of its preoccupations, in order to obtain, ensure, enhance and continuously redesign the quality.** The commercial enterprises for which the quality culture is a desideratum should accomplish certain goals: their entire activity is focused on the client, the care for their own employees, their resources and the promotional policy should reflect the reality.

It is important to highlight a certain fact, namely that the cultural change within firms, in order to place the total quality at the consumer's disposal, cannot be realized in a hostile business environment and it needs a large amount of time, depending on the way in which the past has been put aside. In this sense, for a relevant culture change within an enterprise, some steps should be taken: identifying and understanding the history of the present

culture (past, tradition, policy towards clients and employees, etc.), enhancing the present systems within the firm (firstly understanding the way in which work is done within the firm, what is done wrong, why and how it can change), listening and carefully observing any phenomenon, process, action, manifestation within the firm, involving in the change process all those who are affected by it.

Table no. 1 The coordinates of the enterprise which has as a desideratum the "culture of quality"

The characteristics of the enterprise which has as a desideratum the "culture of quality"	<i>Focus on the client</i>	~ treating the clients as partners with full rights; ~ permanently studying the needs and the wishes of the clients; ~ informing the consumers regarding the new products;
	<i>Care for the employees</i>	~ educating and training the employees in order to obtain quality; ~ compensation and promotion based on the employees' contribution to the continuous enhancement of quality and putting it at the consumer's disposal; ~ involving and authorizing employees; ~ team work;
	<i>Judicious allocation of resources</i>	~ allocation of sufficient resources where and when it is necessary in order to permanently ensure the enhancement of quality; ~ always checking the way in which the resources have been used;
	<i>Promotional policy reflects reality</i>	~ the firms messages and slogans reflect the reality.

Understanding by organizational values those principles that guide the policies and the processes of the organization, the result of the cultural change of enterprises should include in its organizational values the total quality in the service of clients. Therefore, the enterprises, their partners and their clients will always be pleased and satisfied by the results of their collaboration. Satisfied clients mean a bigger profit for firms and viceversa, the big profit allows, among other things, adopting a client oriented policy and the total satisfaction of the clients/consumers respectively.

Conclusions

Hence the idea that there are no organizations as such, but individuals, namely individuals who have national, professional, economic and social

particularities and who are at a precise moment in their existence. So, *any firm has its own identity because the personality and the image of each organization are mainly created by the people who form it.* They come into an organization with their own values, beliefs, attitudes towards the world and life and meeting the values, beliefs, attitudes, habits, norms from the organizations, they either assimilate them or impose their own. However, it is certain that from the mix of values, beliefs, norms, ideals, behaviours, etc., the culture of the organization is born and developed. Therefore, developed from a variety of sources, the culture of the organization reflects more often than not the direction and image of the individuals involved in the firm's activities. The culture of the organization exists to satisfy numerous human necessities, such as: the need to mean something, the need to believe in something, to have a goal, a direction, a meaning in life, the need for stability and to feel secure, the need to control individual life.

Comparing the individual's personality and the personality of the firm, we can state that what gives a firm vision, essence, direction and synergy for vitality and evolution is the culture of the organization.

The concrete ways in which the client can be repositioned in the center of the commercial strategies of firms are possible if the managers identify and know the culture of the firms that they lead. Simply defined by some managers as the every-day manifestation of the enterprise, through which its values and traditions are highlighted, the culture of the organization, by its elements (values, rituals, habits, symbols, slogans, role models, etc.) can contribute to the permanent satisfaction of the client under all its aspects (product quality, informing the consumers, protecting the consumers, etc.).