

## Organisational Culture in the World of Remote Working

Szilárd Malatyinszki<sup>1\*</sup>, Renáta Szebenyi<sup>2</sup>, Henriett Károlyi<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Habil, Ph.D, Doctoral Supervisor, John von Neumann University Doctoral School of Management and Business Administration, 10 Izsáki út, Kecskemét HU-BA-6000, HUNGARY, e-mail: [malatyinszki.szilard@nje.hu](mailto:malatyinszki.szilard@nje.hu), <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1624-4902>, e-mail: [malatyinszki.szilard@gmail.com](mailto:malatyinszki.szilard@gmail.com), WoS: KHU-1059-2024, Scopus: 58992302300, Google Scholar: AB0dJWgAAAAJ, MTMT: 10014004*

<sup>2</sup> *Student, Kodolányi János University, Faculty of Economics*

<sup>3</sup> *Ph.D. Student, John von Neumann University Doctoral School of Management and Business Administration, 10 Izsáki út, Kecskemét HU-BA-6000, HUNGARY, e-mail: [karolyi.henriett.hu@gmail.com](mailto:karolyi.henriett.hu@gmail.com)*

\*Corresponding Author: [malatyinszki.szilard@nje.hu](mailto:malatyinszki.szilard@nje.hu), [malatyinszki.szilard@gmail.com](mailto:malatyinszki.szilard@gmail.com)

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### ABSTRACT

In my research I analysed virtual organisations, paying particular attention to their structural characteristics, management functions and organisational culture. I emphasized the role of organizational culture as an integrating force and used the iceberg model to examine the fit between the individual and the organization. I defined organisational culture in terms of beliefs, values and attitudes. The practical analysis focused on a well-known telecommunications company, where I used oral and written interviews and online questionnaires. My aim was to explore the visible and hidden cultural dimensions and to examine the alignment between individual and organisational goals. My hypotheses were confirmed by considering culture, as well as managerial and structural characteristics. My first hypothesis focused on maintaining cohesion by strengthening the organisational culture during remote working. I sought to answer how culture can help increase cohesion between remote teams. I found that good leaders are able to motivate their employees and that providing appropriate communication channels is key. Based on the interviews, I see that communication in the company is generally good, but there are some gaps in the interaction with external agencies. My second hypothesis explored the effects of organisational culture on information flow and collaboration. My research revealed that, in addition to video conferencing and chat applications, collaborative projects help teams achieve their goals. My third hypothesis focused on employee motivation and effectiveness. I found that joint programmes and events, such as online games and workshops, strengthen team spirit. At the same time, I missed opportunities for social responsibility, which could help bring teams together and increase empathy. The results of my research show that organisational culture plays a key role in the success of remote working. A strong culture fosters a sense of community, motivation and increased efficiency. Companies that take these factors into account can increase their competitiveness and become attractive employers. My research has not addressed the legitimacy of different organisational forms, but it is clear that these models are an integral part of the economy. In future research, it would also be worthwhile to look more deeply into the issue of maintaining trust and reciprocity.

**Keywords:** Virtual Organisations, Organisational Culture, Remote Work Cohesion, Leadership and Communication, Employee Motivation and Collaboration

## INTRODUCTION

Network thinking is not a feature of today's modern world. Society and the economy already functioned as a system of relationships between individuals and different groups. Business organisations use networks to manage the environmental impacts of accelerating change. What is specific to the modern age, however, is the degree of technological progress the world has made in recent decades (Erdős et al., 2025). The internet, teamwork applications, email, mobile communications and even wireless connectivity enable collaboration and virtual interaction across continents. Space-time barriers are no longer an issue in the 21st century (Crossman-Lee-Kelley, 2004).

And organisational culture is the system created by such management organisations, which plays a key role in the life of companies today. Today, there is a growing recognition that organisational culture is crucial to the success of companies (Kolozsár et al., 2024). A strong and positive culture can increase employee motivation, engagement and performance. It can also help to attract potential employees looking for a job where they can receive a high level of support and development opportunities. The Covid epidemic has led to more companies introducing remote working, which has remained in place even after restrictions were lifted. But this changed working environment required a new organisational culture.

I started working for a telecoms company in Germany in March 2020, just as the epidemic started. My traineeship lasted 6 months, during which time I never had the chance to meet my colleagues in person. It was an extremely difficult start, as I had a lot of questions and the physical absence slowed down my tasks quite a bit, so I was often left to my own devices to solve them. During this time, we received many messages about online programmes to participate in, which allowed us to see each other and exchange a few words, if not in person, then via the Internet.

## MATERIALS AND METHODOLOGY

Finally, I focused my investigation on a telecommunications company that was founded more than twenty years ago. After working there for two and a half years and gaining experience, the case of the company and through it the study of the culture of virtual communities, proved to be an interesting topic.

The first part of my research is the theoretical background to the topic. I will begin the explanation of the theory by defining and analysing organisational cultures in virtual organisations. I then explore virtual organizations along the lines of structural characteristics and managerial characteristics. In examining organizational culture, I draw fundamentally on a model, none other than David McClelland's iceberg model, which distinguishes between visible and invisible levels of organizational culture. In the analysis of this model, I will focus much more on the details below the surface, due to the specificities of virtual organisations. In the last chapter of the first part, I will turn to the analysis of the organisational culture of the company, which I will examine through the iceberg model.

The second part of the research was based on oral and written interviews with the heads of various departments and on an internet questionnaire sent to employees. The aim was to gain an insight into organisational culture, including both visible and less visible levels. In addition, similarities between individual and organisational goals and values were observed. After reviewing the planned literature (in Hungarian and foreign languages) and internet sites, the following research questions were addressed in my research:

*How to maintain a sense of belonging and community among remote workers by strengthening the organisational culture?* - Here, I was looking for an answer to the question of whether organisational culture can really strengthen the sense of belonging between teams, even if they work thousands of kilometres apart. What methods are needed from leaders to help align the goals of colleagues and the organisation. The virtues of a really good leader are also reflected in their ability to boost the motivation of their employees, so that they can achieve higher performance. From the point of view of an organisation, we can talk about motivation when employees are able to make individual efforts to ensure the success of the organisation.

*How can organisational culture support information flow and collaboration between remote teams in a remote environment?* - At this point, I looked at what kind of tools are used for day-to-day communication by staff in different departments, i.e. what is the common practice within different teams. In addition to working electronically, to what extent can managers coordinate their teams and meet face-to-face in the office for live interaction.

*What measures and initiatives can be put in place through organisational culture to increase employee motivation, engagement and effectiveness in remote working?* - In my last hypothesis, I wanted to find out what tools, programmes and training opportunities management can use to increase employee motivation in their daily work. What are the ways in which employees can be re-energised and their commitment can be strengthened.

These are the ideas that I hope to be able to explain by the end of my research through my interviewees, my interviewees, my added literary knowledge and my personal experience. I hope that my research will confirm to

the reader that team spirit and togetherness do exist to achieve common goals, even if we are hundreds or thousands of kilometres apart. In today's alienating society, technology is driving us further and further apart, but a strong foundational organisational culture can combat this.

## Results

### *Virtual, Networked and Organic Systems*

This chapter shows how networks, virtual and organic organisations work and relate to each other. This is a rather broad topic, so I will only touch on the issues required by this thesis.

In recent decades, there has been a significant increase in the number of publications on this subject, not only in the fields of mathematics, physics or biology, but increasingly in the role of networks within firms (Barabási, 2003). The emergence of networks of an economic nature has several reasons: *the growth of social demands, the power of information and the pressure of rapidly increasing technological development*. As a result, economic actors are forced to share their carefully guarded knowledge and skills, and thus attach increasing value to the network of relationships (Virág, 2006).

*The network of the company* is made up of employees, their groups and the formal/informal relationships between them. Their formation depends on the characteristics of the industry, the environment, the primary hierarchy and the amount of information available to the organisation. While the primary hierarchy provides the framework for the emergence of a networked organisation, it can also be the shaper of the formal organisational structure (Flower, 2006).

Rapidly evolving communication technologies have made it possible to carry out activities across borders. Whether it's an organisation, a country or even a continent, there are no longer barriers to getting things done. Organisations based on virtual collaborations are emerging, such as virtual offices, banking services, educational forms, in which people are mostly in contact through electronic devices (phone, laptop, tablet, smartwatch, etc.), either with one other person or with a robot (Tianfeld and Unland, 2002). The organisation also works in a similar way, so that both hierarchical and organic structures are present within the organisation.

*Organic organisations* reflect the dynamism of the relationships between people, technology and the environment (Anonymous, 2005b). They therefore have a degree of flexibility that would not be possible in a traditional organisation. In organic systems, there are no product lists, but supply and demand meet (Drótos-Nemeslaki, 2005). Organic forms can not only be networks of economic organisations in the traditional sense, but they can also be operated by creating an extensive network of workers without any information or technological support (e.g. handmade goods of Transylvanian artisans) (Drótos-Nemeslaki, 2005). Nowadays, most organic organisations still operate within a legal framework, but they represent values close to their counterparts in other sectors, i.e. they produce and produce services/products for individual or community use.

### Structural Characteristics

The differences between organisational forms are illustrated by structural characteristics, which are grouped as follows:

1. Division of labour
2. Impact sharing
3. Coordination tools
4. Configuration (Dobák, 1996).

### Division of Labour

Division of labour refers to the division of complex tasks, their subdivision into sub-tasks and their assignment to units, jobs and persons (Dobák, 1996). In organic environments, work processes are defined rather broadly.

All employees accept responsibility for their results, but the process for deviating from the results is not governed by operational and procedural rules. The "how" question is answered by themselves. The kind of work that is formulated without the need for detail carries a more flexible, open approach and makes it easier to solve new problems. However, because of the interdependent relationship, tasks and responsibilities can often change, but the decision to do so is always based on mutual agreement (Hofler, 2005). Professional competence is of paramount importance, there is no great difference in the knowledge of the team. Within the organisation, the aim is mainly to achieve a balance of contributions and shares (Drótos-Nemeslaki, 2005). The division of labour is therefore free-flowing, i.e. it can be done by anyone within a department who has the time and competence. Everyone wants to do their maximum and help the team the best. Multi-directional, ongoing communication is crucial to avoid redundancy.

## Impact Sharing

Its meaning involves the assignment of authority to different powers, units and persons. It depends to a large extent on the allocation of decision-making and instructional powers. It must be consistent with the division of labour, since the appropriate designation of the competent person is essential for the proper performance of tasks (Dobák, 1996).

*Organic organisations* are also characterised by a focus on problem solving, flexibility and continuity of innovation. This, of course, requires free choice and experimentation by members in each process. Decentralisation of decision making, i.e. the authority to make decisions is delegated to the first person to encounter the problem, so that the necessary reaction time can be significantly reduced.

In the following, I will analyse a diagram comparing *hierarchical (centralised - decentralised)* and *organic organisations*. In the hierarchical models, in both cases, the instruction goes from top management to subordinate units, i.e. task designation and upward reporting is shown. In both cases, the process is the same, with the difference that the instructions are received on one or more threads (Dobák, 1996). In organic organisations, it is the opposite. Instead of a hierarchy, a co-ordinate relationship is the characteristic. The 'nodes' in the networks can be seen as a kind of hub, but their role is more of a connecting and supporting rather than an instructing one.

## Coordination

Report on bringing the departments together and coordinating them to achieve organisational goals. The means of doing this are divided into *technocratic* (policies, procedures, plans, frameworks), *structural* (committees, teams, projects) and *people-oriented* (effective conflict management, organisational culture, internal values) groups (Dobák, 1996).

*Organic organisations* are characterised by a low level of formal regulation, few rules and regulations, i.e. they do not use technocratic instruments. Organisational culture, values and

The personality of the "nodes" is what defines the organisation. Faith, trust and close cooperation drive the group forward. However, no organisation is perfectly rule- and hierarchy-free. It needs loosely defined structures to avoid total decentralisation - chaos. In organic organisations, however, individual and group control is more important than managerial or hierarchical control. Quality control is the responsibility of everyone within the team (Hofler, 2005).

Everyone does what they do best, which is to focus on 'core competences' within the organisation.

## Configuration

The meaning of the configuration can be described by the size of the units and the depth and width of the organisation. It is a derived structural characteristic whereby the division of labour and authority, the means of coordination, determine the skeleton of the structure of the organisation, i.e. the configuration (Dobák, 1966).

The boundaries between *hierarchical* and *organic organisations* can sometimes become blurred. It is possible for some units (development and research) to operate organically, as long as the rest of the firm operates with relatively stable environmental influences (Hofler, 2005). Ideal structures can adapt to environmental conditions, organisational size, technology, employee characteristics and goals (Kieser, 1995).

As we have seen in the last figure, instead of hierarchies, so-called "nodes" may develop in organisations, but career paths hardly ever do (Drótos-Nemeslaki, 2005). Their development is the result of a natural selection, leading to greater acceptance and recognition. These central people, the

"*super nodes*" play a special role in the life of the organisation, and later become the leaders (Anonymous, 2005a). In such systems, power distances are smaller and these nodes are closer to each other and to other market actors. In such a situation, the leader has to accept this kind of new role and it is the recognition of the community that motivates him (Drótos-Nemeslaki, 2005).

## Functions of Leadership

This chapter is a very important factor in the functioning of organisational culture, and it gives meaning to the word. I think it is important to mention that two of the management functions, communication and motivation, are also of particular importance, and I will therefore discuss them in more depth at this point.

## Organic Organisational Leadership

In this kind of organisation, management is experimental, with immediate use of experience and learning from mistakes. I would describe this as a kind of voyage of discovery rather than a predetermined course of action, so that leadership emerges organically. Self-direction is a feature of the operation, and the founding requires a person who can firmly represent the 'creed' of the community (Drótos-Nemeslaki, 2005).

The role of leaders, nodes in the operation, is more mentoring, supportive of colleagues, the community and innovative ideas (Anonymous, 2005a). Their role is to articulate the mission, to seize new opportunities within and

outside the community. Since in organic organisations everyone tries to do their best, this can help to respond quickly to a problem that arises, but it can also compromise the effectiveness of the group by dispersing resources. For this reason, it is important for leaders to allocate resources carefully and to continually adapt them (Mikulás, 2000).

### Communication

Communication is an extremely important factor in other management functions, as it is an integral part of information flow, information sharing, planning and control (Dobák, 1996). In addition, of course, the ways in which information is exchanged in virtual organisations and the communication paths that may exist in the 21st century are also important issues.

In today's organisations, the basic expectation is that information belongs to everyone and knowledge sharing is an expected process, as this is where networks derive their benefits. This is supported by trust as a core value that reinforces the value of belonging to a community and motivates employees to share information. Multi-way, informal communication allows ideas to spread easily and quickly. This avoids duplication of effort, which can lead to a dissipation of resources.

In virtual organisations, communication channels are extremely easy to operate, as there are already many ways (email, phone, Teams, Zoom, Skype, etc.) to interact with colleagues. The final decision is mostly taken by the manager, but for smaller sub-tasks, communication between colleagues has become quite free. However, their responsibility is extremely important in identifying threats or informing about different options and making everyone aware of the main objectives.

In his book more than twenty years ago, Zuboff (1988) also wrote about how the development of technology and the spread of computers changes the culture of an organisation. Electronic communication has made it possible for employees to connect across geographical distances. Differences of hierarchy have also been eliminated through the use of different network forums. Information spreads faster, so that employees can see not only their own department but the whole organisation. The combined effect of these factors is to increase employee motivation and commitment to their organisation. New communication channels have made knowledge sharing more effective, so that it is no longer just position that counts, but more and more the possession of information and knowledge (Flower, 2006).

### Motivation

One of the virtues of a really good leader is the ability to motivate his or her employees, so they can achieve greater performance. Motivation is a set of individual goals, aspirations, values and needs. From the point of view of an organisation, motivation occurs when the employee is able to make individual efforts, the organisation success of the organisation. of course, the alignment of the employee's and the organisation's goals is a prerequisite for this (Bakacsi, 1996). Maslow's pyramid is a physiological. It also shows that the real motivating forces within an organisation are the importance of belonging to the community, recognition and self-actualisation, which are also located at the top of the pyramid.

Herzberg's theory, which distinguishes between *hygiene* (maintaining overall satisfaction) and *motivation* (motivation) factors, also places workplace conditions as a cornerstone of success and satisfaction (Dobák, 1996).

#### Hygiene Factors:

- Status
- Community
- Working conditions
- Surveillance
- Payment
- Security

#### Motivational Factors:

- Responsibility
- Development opportunities
- Go to
- Recognition
- Performance expectations (Dobák, 1996).

In *hierarchical organisations*, employees work for the company on a contractual basis, in *organic organisations*, networks are based on a presumed community of interests, while in flexible networks, mutuality and trust are the

basis of operation. In this way, the intrinsic motivation of employees is automatic, which puts enthusiasm in the foreground, to the detriment of income generation. With more broadly defined jobs and tasks, there is no fear of members getting bored in their own positions. They become autonomous actors during the work process, thus ensuring the possibility of constant development and challenge at work (Flower, 2006).

### Analysis of Organisational Culture

Corporate culture is not so long ago, as this type of system became the focus of interest of those involved in the theory and practice of organisation and management in the early 1980s. There are several explanations for its origin and subsequent consolidation:

- *Globalisation*, the emergence of ever-renewing technologies and fiercer international competition have placed increasing emphasis on people as a potential factor of competitive advantage.
- A group of symbolist researchers, formed *in organisational theory* and later organised into a school, who came from sociology or anthropology rather than from the humanities.
- *The success of Japanese companies*, which highlighted the advantages of different cultural characteristics and the historical, cultural embeddedness of corporate operations.
- Later on, a methodological debate emerged within the *organisational sciences*, in which the traditional quantitative (positivist) approach was confronted with the application of qualitative, time-oriented methods. One of the origins of this is an article by Andrew M. Pettigrew (1979), published in the *Administrative Science Quarterly*, in which he first conceptualised organisational culture as a concept (Bokor, 1993).

The combined effect of these factors has led to a major explosion of organisational culture into the public consciousness. It is no longer simply a fundamental concept, alongside structure, strategy and control (Hofstede et al, 1990), but has entered the consciousness of managers as a key factor in corporate success. There are many different interpretations of the subject, both in terms of how culture is understood and the problem areas that are examined in relation to it. The two components of organisational culture are *organisation* and *culture*, two separate concepts that have yet to be universally defined. The reasons for this may be the 'things' that are not perceived by organisations (Sandelands and Srivatsan 1993), i.e. as many theoretical approaches as there are interpretations and research operationalisations. Morgan (1986), for example, traced back to the different paradigms and metaphors behind the theories, *the organisation* as a theoretical concept and its different interpretations (Bokor, 2000).

*Culture*, the other component, is one of the most common concepts in both the vernacular and in scientific language. In the various human sciences, such as anthropology, it refers to everything that defines us as human, in addition to genetically inherited factors. A survey from the 1960s shows *164 different interpretations of the word culture*, which also reveals the diversity of the concept (Kroeber and Kluckhohn 1963, in: Gordon and DiTomaso 1992). In view of this, it is not surprising that many disciplines are rightly sceptical about the concept of culture in relation to other definitions (Bokor 2000).

Organizational culture can also be approached theoretically, which the authors have divided into separate schools of thought based on the publications on the subject:

1. **Smircich's** (1983) theory - distinguished between research that interpreted culture as an organisational variable and research that considered organisations as a whole, as a culture.
2. **Martin and Meyerson's** (1988) theory - based on their model, they distinguish between differentiation, integration and free-market schools of corporate culture.
3. **Martin and Frost's** (1966) theory - decades of research into organisational culture have been described as a war. They divide them into two major groups: the value-engineering approach, represented by management consultants, which is characterised by integrity, and the differentiationists, which are also divided into two separate groups: ethnographic-managerialists and critique-managerialists. These are later joined by two other groups, which follow the principles of fragmentation and postmodernism (Bokor, 2000).

There are other research approaches besides these theories. Khun (1984), for example, introduced the concept of paradigms into the philosophy of science, and Schultz (1955) distinguishes three different paradigms in his study: *symbolic, functional and rational*. In contrast, Hatch (1997), taking into account broader philosophical theories, also divides his definition of the subject into three parts: *symbolic, modern and postmodern* (Bokor, 2000).

These kinds of interpretations and groupings show that there are countless conflicting or even overlapping principles possible from different authors. And depending on this, I can conclude that there are no proper classifications of culture research, but rather theoretical categorizations of it (Bokor, 2000).

### The Iceberg Model

Organisational culture can raise the question of what are the tangible and invisible characteristics of the system that newcomers to the organisation can relate to other people.

Related to this is P. Mürri's model, which compares the organisational culture to an iceberg, the above-water part of which is clearly visible and can be examined, while the underwater parts remain unnoticed in the depths. This does not mean, of course, that we should ignore the unexplored parts and just 'move on the surface', because then we will never understand the real, underlying causes of things. The real organisational culture is to be found in assumptions, beliefs, values, feelings and attitudes (Bakacsi, 1996).

Regular events such as team-building sessions, anniversaries and even lunches together reflect what is really important to employees, the level of cohesion and the importance managers place on keeping the community together.

The way you look, the symbols, the way you dress or the working environment can tell you a lot about the culture of an organisation. It's also important to note that the consistency of these values reinforces the credibility of the company and increases its trustworthiness. These visible elements of culture give a true picture of the values, attitudes and feelings that characterise the organisation and the daily lives of its employees. This is also important because it helps new members to orientate themselves and then to follow them subconsciously in the future.

### Structure of the Organisational Culture

The elements of organisational culture are grouped as follows:

- **Economic Environment:** the culture of a company cannot be separated from the existing social and economic environment in which it has been operating for years. Its impact in shaping culture is indisputable. It is the economic environment that determines how we succeed. It is a completely different culture for a service company that is already in a monopoly position in the market (global companies, no longer really understood in the classical sense of monopoly, but still with such market dominance that their territory cannot be called a competitive market. This is *the* case of *Google*, for example, which can be replaced by other web search engines, but it is not certain that the user will find what he or she is looking for (ite.hu, 2021), as is the case for a player that has been formed in a fiercely competitive environment (Bing, Yahoo, etc.). The environment can therefore naturally shape the more bureaucratic organisation.
- **Values:** an organisation's culture can only work if it is organised around values that are shared by all and that fully permeate every aspect of work life. Naturally, the manager makes these values clear to everyone, and explains to employees where they come from and how they relate to the company's policies. Programmes for new employees teach them how to find the right answers in critical decision-making situations (innovation, consumer focus, respect for quality and tradition, etc.).
- **Heroes:** The meaning of this unusual adjective symbolises leaders and people who have done something extraordinary for the organisation. They embody the values of the company itself, serving as an example and a motivator for all. In general, we prefer to think of "*heroes*" as company founders, managers and developers. Such employees are talked about and legends are spread long after they have left the workplace, so that they are known even by people who have never had the chance to meet them in person.
- **Cultural Network:** the meaning of informal channels of communication implies the medium of dissemination of cultural elements, the network. It is through these channels that managers are informed about what their employees are concerned about and what changes are expected. It is also from the same network that newcomers learn the most important information they need to fit in, from corporate heroes to taboos and failures. This system also filters rumours, which are an important flow of information for management.
- **Ceremonies, Ceremonies:** regular events are an essential part of the life of any company, to strengthen the bond between employees and last but not least, they keep alive the traditions and values of the company. These types of events are all surface manifestations of some kind of value. As a result, management can make good use of such occasions to communicate values and new ideas. It is, of course, very important that these family days, meetings, outings, etc. become a regular feature of the organisational calendar (Heidrich, 2017).

### Organisational Culture in Virtual Organisations

At the end of this topic, and before evaluating the results of my research, I would like to analyse the organisational culture in relation to the topic of virtual organisations. *Trust* is the most important point in organisations in general. Since, due to its virtual nature, there is not always the possibility for personal interaction and continuous feedback, the dependence on others is equally present, as the success of an activity depends on the smaller larger contribution of people. Trust in the organisation, in the community, in the goals, is an indispensable condition for the effective functioning of an organisation (Drótos - Nemeslaki, 2005). *Mutuality* is also an important driving force. Shared goals, the possibility of self-fulfilment and recognition by the community can also encourage members to continue working together. It is openness, not only towards new members, but also towards all

innovative ideas. Employee initiative is common and accepted in this type of organisation. Diversity and diversity of resources are seen as core values (Flower, 2006).

According to Collins (2005), as a firm grows, its organisation becomes more complex. The disorganization that originally supported entrepreneurship is now leading the company towards chaos. This is where *bureaucracy* comes in, and the oblivion is to create order. Collins (2005) argues that as soon as the right people are brought into the firm, chaos disappears with them. Who is the right person for a particular position is not necessarily determined by their knowledge, but rather by their intrinsic qualities. The closer the individual and organisational goals are aligned, the less the need for control and other disciplinary methods. A culture of discipline therefore embodies responsibility and freedom within a system. For an organisation to function effectively, it needs employees who can identify with all elements of the system, while at the same time being able to decide and act freely (Collins, 2005).

Even in the case of virtual and organic operations, there is no possibility to screen individuals in the recruitment process according to their fit with the corporate image, as such processes of human resource management are often missing in different organisations. However, in the course of my research investigations, I myself found that this kind of matching often occurs between employees and the organisation. In other words, a community unconsciously attracts people in whom the essential characteristics are a given. If one or the other party has misjudged the situation, this will soon surface as expectations, goals and norms emerge from the 'deep' (Flower, 2006).

From the above, it can be seen that the details hidden under the iceberg model are emerging significantly in the case of virtual organisations. The emphasis on assumptions, values, feelings, beliefs and attitudes can compensate for the relative absence of visible signs of personal interaction and culture. By embedding values and goals, it allows for intrinsic motivation and commitment to the organisation. In the case of the organisation, I also found that although there were events, ceremonies and stories whose role was by no means negligible, they were much less frequent due to the specific nature of the virtual organisation. On the other hand, in the case of goals and values, there was a stronger awareness and team spirit.

### **Primary Research and Results**

The company's research was based on oral and written interviews with the heads of various departments and online questionnaires completed by employees.

My aim was to understand the organisational culture, both at the visible and less visible levels. I also wanted to find out to what extent each employee's values fit with the organisation at the beginning of their employment and how much they have changed since then. All three face-to-face interviews were conducted over coffee in the Munich office, but the other two interviews were sent to the subjects online due to lack of time, which did not influence the final result in any way. The interviews were also audio-recorded. This research method was a good choice because it was the only way to really get to know personal assumptions, beliefs and values. It was important for me to construct the questions in such a way that the respondents themselves could guide the conversation. The order and content of these questions also varied according to the values and priorities of the respondent. For those who could only be interviewed online, I created a more specific set of questions to avoid misunderstandings.

My online questionnaire was composed of 10 questions related to the topic, which I wanted to ask at least 50 people. The questionnaire was filled in by one by one by people working in the company who are directly involved in the organisational culture of the company. I would like, after the interviews, the research and the acquisition of the relevant knowledge, to make future suggestions and ideas that could be of help to organisations of this kind, even later on.

### **Structural Characteristics**

#### ***Division of Labour***

In the early years of the company, the hybrid working model was a completely unknown term among the management. The Munich office was packed with employees every day, and working from home was out of the question. In 2020, an experimental approach to bypass the Covid epidemic has become a key policy for the company.

The benefits of virtual collaboration, flexible working arrangements and environmentally friendly habits have also led to a more effective division of labour, based on the needs of the individual and the contribution to society. Quality has always been a core principle of the organisation. In virtual organisations, too, there can be qualitative and quantitative errors, as the definition of control in this type of work has changed considerably, but these are overcome in most cases by professionalism and team spirit. As a decision is made through several rounds (departments), the rate of elimination of errors is quite high. The organisation that comes from hierarchy, defined job roles and workflows helps the organisation through difficult situations.

External colleagues also have specific roles and responsibilities, which may be related to proofreading, format production or programming. Their tasks are assigned by internal colleagues who also control the final result of

their work. How they do them is not controlled by anyone, it is optional. *"The key success factors for the changed way of working are a changed framework and the right balance."* (Nicole Gerhardt, Deputy Chief Human Resources Officer)

The job generally covers the job description. The tasks are varied, but as technology develops, needs change and new opportunities arise, providing more opportunities for personal development and learning. Since the emergence of AI, we have been able to learn how to use it in a number of workshops and online meetings, which simplifies and speeds up the work. The flexibility of working hours and the ability to work from home also seem to reduce overwork.

### **Impact Sharing**

The company is working on several projects and collaborations at the same time, so there are many activities going on in parallel within the different departments. If the tasks and the different authorities are allocated correctly, the tasks are handled more efficiently and a lot of time can be saved.

The CEO of the company has an overall view of the company's affairs and current activities. However, only the employees concerned have detailed information about their own area, including external colleagues. Problems and possible questions are answered in daily meetings or in 1:1 conversations (direct meeting with the manager). Decision-making authority is delegated to those who are responsible for the issue in question, so no one feels they have to overstep their own authority. This kind of trust facilitates joint work and a high level of cooperation.

The division of powers in the organisation under review is now being influenced mainly by the huge increase in technological development. Digitalisation and AI are helping to create new departments and teams, but work may also be reduced in the light of this. Generally speaking, the next decades will decide whether life in this kind of company will change positively or negatively as a result of technology. People will use existing knowledge wisely or, as is usually the case, voraciously and recklessly.

### **Coordination**

To a large extent, the organisation brings together the activities of the different departments on the basis of an *existing set of rules*, in order to achieve the organisational objectives. It is characterised by *person-oriented means of coordination*, which creates a more family-like atmosphere within the teams.

However, with the explosion of digitalisation, the person is more likely to be left alone and members learn less about each other. Distance also leads to less internal communication, which can increase the number of errors. If personal relationships are strong, there is intrinsic motivation and members are moving in a similar direction (which I experience in my work), they can move in the same direction without much alignment. All members of the team can identify with the *"Can Do"* attitude to life, so that common and individual goals are aligned.

The credibility, mission and personality of the founders and leaders are also a cardinal aspect of a well-functioning entity. As employees have high expectations of their own work, close management control becomes unnecessary. *Structural coordination tools* are most evident in teamwork. It is important for everyone to be able to work and think together as one. Conflicts that arise during the work process are usually the result of overload and lack of internal communication, and the result to be achieved is not clear to everyone. *"The patience, empathy and intelligence that I have in my colleagues allows me to solve problems quickly,"* says my former boss Murat Yavuz. Problems should be discussed as soon as they arise so they don't grow.

### **Configuration**

The organisation's team, which now represents more than 113,000 employees worldwide, is a community without which the mission statement would not be possible. The community is made up of external and internal staff, student workers, students in dual training and, of course, customers (370 million). One in two people use the company's services, giving the company a responsibility that implies greater choices. Digitalisation would hardly be possible without mobile communications: smart networking of cities or even networked factories require high performance networks. The biggest challenge is therefore climate change, which can only be solved by digital networking. The company is a network operator in whose infrastructure half of all German households rely, so it has a big responsibility. This is why customer feedback is so important, as it is through customer feedback that the company can continue to grow and learn from its mistakes.

While positive feedback is used to reinforce the rightness of a company's actions, employees are challenged with criticism and additional ideas. There are a lot of comments, both on various online platforms and during face-to-face meetings, so it is important to incorporate constructive criticism into operations, while letting offensive and malicious comments go.

### **Motivation**

Initially, the management did not realise how many people would be able to meet their different needs through new initiatives of this kind (5 bold moves) during the Covid epidemic. The basic human desire is to benefit the environment and the rise of digitalisation has not changed that.

Exploiting the potential and innovation impact of AI was mentioned by all of them as a motivating factor during the interviews.

"We're at the beginning of this period, so I wanted to help this kind of technique spread faster and better in our country," says my team leader, Gesche Sanders.

Another important motivating factor is that people can do something that has value and benefits for society. The entries in the guest book give a direct feedback on the activities of the organisation, so that the shop workers can be assured that their work is important for society. In addition to personal feedback, the company has several official pages, which serve to continuously build the social network.

"We are constantly reviewing our offer and checking whether we can open new channels to meet the needs of our target group. "In addition to external platforms, we also successfully maintain our own platforms, which we focus on under the motto *Think on our own channels first.*" - said one of our employees (Social Media Manager).

In the company under study, employees are motivated by a number of factors to make a variety of efforts to achieve organisational goals. *A sense of mission* is what can be described as the primary motivating factor. The majority of them identified with the company's principles at the time of joining the company, taking into account the social and individual benefits of its activities. There are plenty of opportunities for professional development, provided by free (intern) workshops and courses, as well as plenty of learning opportunities within the team, which are adapted to the continuous evolution of information technology and changing user needs. New ideas are always welcomed with an open mind, which encourages employees to think creatively and communicate openly. Most of the motivational factors mentioned during interviews are related to professional specificities. It is in our nature to want to use the professional skills we have already acquired in the workplace, and the company provides a suitable environment for this. Positive customer feedback is therefore a huge motivation for employees. Some of them put their loyalty to the company first and mentioned flexible working hours as a motivating factor.

"Some people run or cycle in their free time, I look at the company's platforms and look for new ways to improve them." (Group Manager - OC Data Technologies)

## Communication

According to my colleagues' responses, communication is mostly done through chat (Teams) and email (Outlook). These channels are well-liked and used by all, but more people think that more face-to-face interaction is needed, especially between team members. Electronic mail has both advantages and disadvantages, but it is up to each person to decide when and to what extent to communicate with the other, which can be retrieved later, i.e. they are permanent and can be referred to.

Communication with Managing Director Marcus Haas, but mostly with his assistant, is in the form of emails, due to the many meetings and management meetings. Living in Germany, with staff working from all over the country, face-to-face meetings are impossible to arrange. If there is an urgent matter, he can be reached by telephone. It takes more time and energy to work together, but in today's fast-paced world, it is the most productive way of working in large companies. At the big events (*Grosses Kino*), when the company and employees are evaluated and team-building programmes are organised within the company, it is possible to have a few words with him in person.

Electronic mailing lists serve several purposes. They can be used to discuss company-related issues, inform employees about upcoming internal programmes and vacancies, assign tasks within the team, or even report sickness to the team leader and other colleagues. The list is not public and can of course only be viewed by those who have received the letter or to whom it has been forwarded. Each department has a separate group on the mailing list, so often it is not necessary to enter the names individually in the *mailing* section, but after entering the group name, it is automatically sent to all participants. In addition, newsletters and other promotions sent out via the official email address of the organisation being surveyed are also of great interest to customers.

In the company, there is a perfect balance between informal and formal (in this case, professional) communication. There is an appropriate formal framework for discussing professional issues, which can be discussed in 1:1 meetings with senior managers. There are regular (weekly/monthly) discussions of this kind, i.e. formal areas can be separated from informal communication. Even with all the stresses and strains of the workplace and the many tasks to be done, there is still a need to provide a space for open and effective communication, which can be a key factor in the success of a company.

## Organisational Culture in the Organisation under Review

### "This is just the tip of the iceberg"

In the case of the company, the *ceremonies* are linked to both online and face-to-face meetings, although in almost all cases they communicate or keep in touch virtually.

The different events can be divided into two parts: professional and team-building events. The last one was in June 2023, when the whole company was invited to Düsseldorf for the "*Sommerfest*": live music, sports, food and drink, raffles and concerts until the next morning.

The aim was to bring the company together, relieve work stress and build relationships. Around 200-300 people attended, the rest unfortunately were unable to make it due to illness or family reasons. Many people were very happy to have this opportunity, as it is very rare that colleagues from all over the country can meet and talk to each other live. After processing the questionnaire filled in by the staff, it became clear to me that there was a great need to complement the virtual contact with some kind of face-to-face interaction. This is important if only so that others can see how other colleagues work, i.e. what they are part of.

September is the month of "*Oktoberfest*" in Bavaria, which of course our company also celebrates "properly". The company has its own tables and anyone from the company who wants to come for a session is welcome. Of course the food and drink is free, good fun is guaranteed and an important rule is that there is no mention of work in any form.

The Google "*Gen A.I. Session*" will take place in October, where we can learn in detail how we will be able to work with artificial intelligence in the future and how we can integrate it into our everyday lives. This workshop has been advertised in two cities (Munich and Hamburg) and anyone who wishes to attend (free choice of programme) but lives elsewhere will have their travel expenses fully covered by the organisation. We received the invitation through the mailing list, and they tried to find a time (16:00-18:00) when most of the people have already finished work, but they don't have to stay late.

There are also regular (daily/weekly) meetings between the different departments and teams, even on a smaller scale. These can be extremely useful, as they provide a more relaxed opportunity to review where the team is, what they are lagging behind on, what future goals they would like to achieve.

The company holds a (mandatory) "*Can Do Meeting*" twice a year (at the beginning of the year and in the summer), where they analyse the sales figures, what they want to achieve and what new solutions and tools they will use to achieve this. These are usually 1-1.5 hour online or live meetings, or if it's a face-to-face meeting, catering and a half-day programme.

For more personal gatherings, such as birthdays and the birth of a child, the team in the department always prepares gifts and even a cake. These are occasions that bring colleagues closer together and give them the opportunity to get to know each other better and discuss other topics besides professional matters.

During the interviews, it seemed to me at the beginning that people didn't really gossip within the company walls. German society tends to be more private, only talking about what's going on on the surface and not discussing personal issues. That was the belief. I was wrong. The knowledge of secrets within the group, up to the director's problem in many cases, is an open secret within the company. Apart from these, of course, most of the *stories* are related to a campaign and not about digging into the lives of others. It is about the mistakes made by external agencies in certain projects and how they could be avoided in the future, or how companies could be found and brought in for the job.

The *jargon* associated with virtual operations within a company is a rather interesting aspect of our corporate culture. When I first joined the company and had my first formal meeting with the analytics team, I was very intimidated. I thought that after the English and German language exams, I would have no problem communicating within the company. I was wrong again. They call it a kind of "*denklisch*" and mix English and German words in their speech, which is a completely accepted and used tool by all members of the company. It took me some time to get the hang of the slang here and that's when I joined the marketing campaign team. Everyone speaks and uses *abbreviations* in emails that I had never heard before. So the department created a special "dictionary" (*Bubble Vocabulary*) with all the abbreviations and it took me months to understand what my colleagues were talking about in the daily meetings. When you get into this kind of environment, it can seem at first that everyone is speaking a new language to each other. Newcomers who don't have a marketing background often have to ask others for help with these terms. Abbreviations such as *DS* (*Digital Signage*), *CuMa* (*Customer Marketing*), *FCF* (*Free Cash Flow*) or *MaFo* (*Marktforschung - Market research*) are used by colleagues in as many forums as possible to get them into the public consciousness as quickly as possible.

Anyone who works for the company knows exactly what the term *Can Do* means, and it has become a way of life. The meaning that everyone can push their own limits and there is no impossible is something we experience regularly in relation to the amount of work we do. Both the symbol and the website have undergone several design changes over the years, so the image that has emerged today is a cleaner, younger, more modern look. A large number of users interact with the organisation exclusively through the website, so it is important that it meets their expectations in every respect. These kinds of changes cost a lot of money, of course, but the huge competition (Vodafone, T-Mobile, Mnet) means that we have to keep up with the others.

Office attire for staff is usually *business casual*, but senior managers wear suits to work. On each floor there are lockers with keys to keep bags and personal belongings. The office is open plan, so everyone can see everyone else.

If someone is having a meeting, there are different meeting rooms where you can talk in privacy and without disturbing others with loud talking.

### **What you cannot see from the iceberg (individual-organisational fit)**

It is the feelings, values, assumptions, attitudes and related organisational goals that play a crucial role in the life of an organisation. They bind the community around the company together and drive initiatives forward. The mission of the company includes both professional and individual goals. One of its main objectives is to solve the climate crisis - that is, to create applications that can help the world solve this problem through digitalisation. To this end, they have created, among other things, the *"World of Purpose"*, a virtual event where all company customers and employees can connect with their smartphones from anywhere in the world. This allows all members to attend live events and learn about the organisation's purpose from the mouths of its leaders, live. So it's a win-win situation for all parties: employees who can identify with what the company stands for see more meaning in their work. *"My aim is to create a working environment for my colleagues in which they feel as comfortable as possible, so that they can achieve what the organisation is all about. I'm driven by the need for a varied job, and to ensure that while solving daily problems and issues, our team is not missing out on the joy of working"* - Martin Biendl, Finance Associate. And customers appreciate brands that contribute to the environment and society in a sustainable way.

Advances in technology are driving change in all companies. It's their job to pave the way, research the future and experiment with a wide range of technologies. The company's ambition is to become the number one telecoms company in 2024 - a pioneer of its kind. No operator in the market today connects more people or transports more data over its network than the organisation under review. Multiple award winner in its field. It is also growing faster than Deutsche Telekom and Vodafone in terms of revenues, mobile subscribers and data traffic. But Marcus Haas (CEO) has his eyes on more than one goal.

This year's Oktoberfest was a record-breaker: more than 7 million people came to enjoy Bavarian beer and white sausage. Through the company's high-speed Wi-Fi network, visitors shared their experiences in stories, posts, videos and pictures. During the first weekend, more data flowed through the organisation's network than during the entire Oktoberfest 2018, amounting to around 212,000 gigabytes. The company was therefore honoured to be asked by the event organiser to conduct the anonymised visitor flow analysis in Munich this year.

According to the company's employees, they identify with the values and goals of the company under investigation before they even set foot in the office. The sense of innovation, technological progress and *Can Do* was in them from the start. Within the departments there is a relaxed, communal atmosphere that facilitates conversations considerably. I felt a sense of team spirit and togetherness everywhere I worked. Own values and feelings bind the team of the organisation together.

The activities of the company under review clearly reflect its aims and mission. In addition, the various events, workshops, online and live training sessions provide an excellent opportunity to present our services and our various projects, and to raise awareness of the objectives and mission. They are also featured as speakers at many professional events and university courses, where there is an opportunity to exchange ideas and join our team. In the case of the company, the goals and mission clearly indicate the organisational and individual factors that lie beneath the surface. This level of organisational values is also made more transparent by the fact that the core values are clearly represented by all community members in their work. Thus, when people join the community, they are most often joined by people who already have a harmony of these characteristics, and the goal and value systems create a sense of commitment from both external and internal staff. This unity creates the intrinsic motivation that makes it unnecessary to bind management tools to organisational interests.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

At the beginning of my research, I gained insights into the functioning and culture of virtual, networked and organic organisations. The interviews and questionnaires led to a number of conclusions and suggestions for improving the culture of virtual organisations.

Organisational culture is the cornerstone of a company's operations and determines the communication and relationships between employees. Especially in an international environment, it is important to develop the right culture, as employees come from different backgrounds. With the rise of the home office, maintaining cohesion presents new challenges for managers.

Communication plays a key role in effective functioning. Virtual tools, such as online video conferencing and chat applications, are essential for keeping in touch. Regular virtual meetings help to maintain mutual respect and intimacy. Open and assertive communication is essential for sharing company news, results and goals. In my research, I have found positively that communication problems are not prevalent in the company in question; regular meetings work well, but there are some gaps in communication with external agencies.

Remote working encourages companies to digitise their organisational culture. In international companies, it is increasingly common for employees to come into the office 2-3 times a week. It is therefore important for companies to share their values and culture on internal platforms to foster a sense of belonging.

Flexible working hours and appropriate working arrangements can help increase staff productivity. Companies need to pay attention to work-life balance, which is essential for employee well-being and satisfaction. If employees' health deteriorates, this can also affect the company's performance. Promoting mental and physical health is essential to the organisational culture as a whole; introducing mentoring programmes can help employees to deal with these challenges.

Regular joint activities and events can strengthen community building and a sense of belonging. These activities can be virtual or face-to-face and help to increase motivation.

Positive feedback and rewards are also key to employee recognition. The company should monitor employee performance, preferably by providing regular feedback. The performance of teams is also evaluated during the mid-year meetings, which helps to identify weaknesses and identify opportunities for improvement. The company's management should set an example in terms of culture change. Without fostering transparency and engagement, no community can function well.

Opportunities for social responsibility can also strengthen team bonding, which provides an opportunity to increase empathy between employees. Companies should pay more attention to such activities.

And promoting diversity and inclusiveness is essential. Every company must ensure equal opportunities and the mainstreaming and expression of diverse cultural influences in the organisation.

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