Culture- IBM V. Trilogy Essay, Research Paper

Whenever two or more people come together with a shared purpose, they form a culture with its own written and unwritten rules for behavior. Our families, workplaces and communities all have cultures. These cultures have a tremendous, though rarely recognized, impact upon our behavior as individuals, and as groups.

Each cultural environment provides a somewhat unique set of standards to which we must adapt. Our behavioral patterns change dramatically from cultural context to cultural context. For example, on the job we are expected to behave in accordance with certain social standards. Expectations about behaviors at work usually differ from what is expected of us in our kitchens and in our bedrooms.

We may not choose to behave in accordance with our cultures, but if we choose not to go along, we must be prepared for ongoing consequences. When we select goals for ourselves that violate the culture, we must either change the culture or endure a never-ending struggle.

I’d like to illustrate the seeming similarities, and the actual differences, between the cultures of two organizations- Trilogy and IBM. This comparison is unique in that it points out the major similarities between two very different organizations. IBM with its 200,000+ employees is a virtual giant compared to Trilogy with just under 1,000 employees. How can these two cultures be so strikingly similar? Current industry recruiting trends follow what’s desirable to college graduates! We’re fast approaching the millenium, and the new buzz-words are PEOPLE, PEOPLE, PEOPLE!!! But, while many companies boast to potential hires of freedom and friendship, many of those same companies fall short of following through with their promises. Realistically, there are limitations that come with having over 200,000 employees. Likewise, there are limitations with having only 1,000 employees. How do these two companies stack up in comparison?

So, what are the desired job traits that college graduates are looking for? To name a few:

? Personal and Professional Growth Opportunities

? Flexible hours and freedom

? Likable teammates

Personal and Professional Growth Opportunities

It’s not surprising that today’s companies place emphasis on employee ‘growth’. As recent graduates, new hires are accustomed to a constant stream of new knowledge and skills. Obviously this learning has led to great success, so why stop there? Recent graduates are well aware of the importance of marketability. To ensure a secure career outlook, continued training and experience are a must.

“Learning happens by leaps and bounds when brilliant minds meet and share their knowledge and experience.” (www.trilogy.com)

When Trilogy talks about leaps and bounds, they mean it. In their own words, “For the first two months at Trilogy, employees spend almost every waking moment learning, working and playing together.” Sure, learning is desirable, but what about personal growth? Bonding with colleagues makes work much more enjoyable, but what about family? Perhaps the message conveyed here is a bit more extreme that most that are seen in today’s market.

“It is a unique culture inside IBM that employee’s career growth goes with the job.” (www.cybrblu.ibm.com/html/lucy.html)

Employees at IBM tend to emphasize the level of career growth that they have experienced. Or, perhaps the quotes featured on the Career web page are biased? Recently during a visit to IBM, I visited a client site with one of my new colleagues. She has been at IBM for a year and a half. She has been working with the same client for her entire time at IBM. Her role has not changed, and she has not experienced the kind of growth that she expected. She is well aware that her situation has not led to very marketable experience. She stated that if things don’t improve soon, she will move to a new company. So, it’s not clear that companies always reach the goals that they advertise.

Flexible hours and freedom

Adjusting to the professional world is not easy. Perhaps one of the most difficult adjustments is working normal hours, rather than pulling all-nighters. Both Trilogy and IBM emphasize the freedom of work hours and work styles offered by their company. Could they be telling the truth? Is it really that flexible?

“If you’re true IBM quality, we won’t let little things like time and space stand in the way of your success.” (www.ibm.com)

This is a strong statement, and tempting to recent graduates. Unfortunately, it leaves out some aspects of the job. Consulting for instance: Monday through Thursday is spent at the client site, frequently requiring a 3 night hotel stay out of town. This is not a particularly flexible situation. It all comes down to choices; on Fridays, employees are expected to work from home. Does this make up for the 4 days out of town?

“For the first two months at Trilogy, employees spend almost every waking moment learning, working and playing together.” (www.trilogy.com)

Again, every waking moment? How much flexibility does this offer? Perhaps at Trilogy, work is so much fun, that it’s not a problem to spend all of your time there. Still, this statement is actually contradictory to Trilogy’s statement that they don’t believe in alarm clocks.

Likable teammates

In order to survive as a business today, companies must rely heavily upon teamwork among employees. Great ideas are generated by teams, and individual productivity benefits from teamwork. Because companies are striving for this goal, graduates are interested in what type of people they will work with. Work can be better or worse, depending on who you are working with.

“Teamwork…the net result is a successful and stimulating work environment” (www.ibm.com)

An organization the size of IBM must pay close attention to the interaction of its employees. It’s important to both the employees and IBM. Success is dependent upon employee performance, and employee performance is strongly affected by relations with colleagues.

“Ask why they love the company. Everyone has the same simple answer: the people.”(www.trilogy.com)

With an average age of 27, the employees of Trilogy are full of energy and ideas. The culture is very unique, with a fast pace, and high stakes. If this is the type of atmosphere that a graduate seeks, the people at Trilogy will make them happy. Again, it’s all a matter of taste.

In conclusion, both companies reflect a very desirable culture on the outside, a culture being sought out by an abundance of qualified candidates. Perhaps the recruiting techniques are a bit misleading, but there is definitely something to be seen from the outside. Excitement and responsibility are common in start-up companies, but how common are they in corporate-giants? Trilogy, with under 1,000 employees, is experiencing the thrill of soaring to the top. IBM, on the other hand, is more concerned with staying at the top. Creating team-felt excitement and pride is quite a task. Imagine maintaining such a culture with over 200,000 employees? Again, both companies are appealing, but who would I rather work for? IBM: People see the company as a smaller one, with the resources and advantages of a much larger organization.

Appendix

Quotes from the Career web pages of Trilogy and IBM

( www.trilogy.com )( www.cybrblu.ibm.com )

The similarities are astounding!! Which is which?

? We offer unlimited personal and professional growth opportunities

? we genuinely enjoy our work and like our teammates

? When employees are asked why they came to work here, the most common response is, “the people.”

? The focus is not on how many meetings you attend or that you show up for work at 7 in the morning every day. It makes the most sense that people work when they are most productive, and only you know when that is.

? …Extreme freedom, major responsibility, and opportunity in spades

? expect big challenges and no limits to how high you can climb

? see the impact of your decisions.

? Ask why they love the company. Everyone has the same simple answer: the people.

? if you’re true \*\*\*\* quality, we won’t let little things like time and space stand in the way of your success.

? diverse and entrepreneurial

? Individuality is encouraged and Fun fuels productivity

? What direction do you want to go? What do you want to achieve?

? We’re about helping you discover what you do best.

? “super-accelerate” your career

? They keep the best working with the best

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