

Defining Corporate Culture

Corporate culture isn't something you can easily define. It's intangible: a state of mind, a feeling, a collective consciousness that's infused into a business and its employees. The important thing isn't which specific adjectives you choose to define the word 'culture,' it's more about learning to appreciate, cultivate and use it to differentiate.

Defining corporate culture can be a tricky business because the spoken and unspoken culture can vary widely. For example, a company may brag about its employees being "empowered," and yet these same "powerful" employees may not be able to get a box of paper clips without filling out a form.

At its most basic level, culture is described as

- The unique personality or character of an organization
- Simply stated, it is "how things are done around here."
- It guides how associates think, act, and feel.
- Corporate culture is a broad term which includes such elements as core values and beliefs, corporate ethics, and rules of behavior.
- Corporate culture can be expressed in the company's mission statement and other communications, in the architectural style or interior decor of offices, by what people wear to work, by how people address each other, and in the titles given to various associates.
- Organizational culture includes everything that makes up the corporation and gives it its unique identity, distinguishing it from other businesses even if they create the same, or similar, products and services.