

Adela Barabasz
Wroclaw University of Economics

Local and Global Factors in Company Management – Case Study

1. Introduction

The article presents the description of a company which is a part of a global organization. The company operates on the Polish market and produces goods distributed worldwide. Two terms were used in the company's description as keywords – organizational climate and organizational personality. Therefore, the result obtained is a sort of a psychological portrayal with the personality of a leader in the forefront; its background consists of cultural elements, defined by the international character of the company. The general manager, while characterizing the company he manages, described it as "...an example of a global company, managed according to local, in this case Polish, conditions."

The presented study illustrates the ways in which the management staff reconciles elements arising from international aspects of the company with the characteristics of the Polish market. The psychological research perspective assumed by the author emphasizes factors which had significant influence on the method of solving the dilemma incurred in the question: how to reconcile what is local with what is brought into organization by the owner or presenting culturally different domain? Applying this approach results in an additional factor coming to light. This factor is the personality of the leader, a crucial person in the organization, the leader who decides about the methods of resolving potential conflicts at the point where the local meets the global – global meaning developed by a foreign owner and the management supervision located outside the country where the analyzed entity operates.

2. Management dilemmas in companies with international range

In the face of globalization processes the researches dealing with the mutual adaptation of elements, which represent two entities with different cultural backgrounds, are becoming more and more useful and indispensable. Majority of publications in literature deals with problems and difficulties which arise in terms of managing international companies, however the ways of solving such problems are analyzed more rarely [Bass 1990; Bartlett, Ghoshal 1992; Deresky 2000; Smith, Petersom 1998]. Usually, what is described is a culturally homogeneous company, which starts to function at the meeting point of various cultures – its own well known culture and the new one, generally at the beginning treated as strange, sometimes with the predominance of a positive attitude due to curiosity and hope for better future; yet in most cases hostility occurs, or at least reluctant attitude, which arises when the unknown is treated as strange, transforming quickly into hostility towards the unknown.

The research on cultural differences conducted by G. Hofstede brought a new understanding of management problems in companies operating on worldwide markets. Three dimensions indicated on the basis of an international research, namely Power Distance, Individualism, and Tolerance of Uncertainty, became useful categories that allow to understand better problems arising in multicultural companies, particularly if these cultures are significantly distant not only geographically but also in terms of their worldview. In this context we can distinguish the special meaning of terms organizational culture and organizational climate. Quite considerable interest in these issues among business world representatives is due to Peters and Waterman work *In Search of Excellence* [1982].

Researchers agree on the idea that the culture influences various characteristics of an organization, including climate, individual attitudes to work and organizational behaviours. Kopelman, Brief and Guzzo [1990] described culture as a factor which forms politics and operational practices of the management staff, which determines the influence on organizational climate, which in turn influences work attitude and organizational behaviour.

Terms like organizational culture and organizational climate have been used and analyzed in studies for several decades, thus their contribution to understanding how organizations function raises no doubts and is commonly acknowledged.

Both culture and climate are considered to be particularly useful in explaining how organizations influence behaviour, attitudes and wellbeing of organization's members. Moreover, culture and climate can be considered as basis for understanding why some organizations are more innovative, easily adopt new technologies and more quickly than others adjust to changes, although it seems that they are equipped with exact the same assets and operate in the same environmental conditions.

Usually researches dealing with the issues of organizational culture and climate are viewed independently. One of the first projects related to the research on mutual relations between these two categories was Schneider's study *Organizational Climate and Culture* [1990]. In researches where those two issues were studied simultaneously in the same organization, it is hard to find enough empirical data, which would allow to state with certainty whether both terms are interchangeable or entirely different effects, characterizing independent aspects of functioning of an organization [Johnson, McIntye 1998; Kirsh 2000; Glisson, James 2002]. A similar problem appeared while realizing research described in this paper.

3. Meaning of psychological factors

The starting point for the author's own research was a report showing that stable and relatively permanent psychological attributes of the key organization members are dominated by factors characterizing the way in which an organization functions: individualistic, neurotic or mature [Kets de Vries, Miller 1982; Miller, Kets de Vries, Toulouse 1982; Mahler, Pine, Bergman 1975; Kernberg 1976].

Many authors emphasize that strategy, structure and organizational culture remain under equal and strong influence of the personality of top management representatives [see: Kernberg 1979; Kets de Vries 1980; Stapley 1996; Bridges 2000]. Kets de Vries and Miller [Kets de Vries, Miller 1984; 1986] point out that members of top management work out and represent beliefs, conceptions and attitudes towards matters crucial for the company which are common for the whole organization. Such concepts are reflected on all levels of organization by means of such psychological mechanisms as identification, projection, but especially by the phenomenon of transference. Not only the top management but also other key people in the organization significantly influence the formation of predominant adaptive behaviour occurring in the whole organization, constituting a kind of a "germ" of predominant mechanisms of adaptation in the whole company. Moreover, the mutual influence of organizational orientations and management disposition is reciprocal. According to Kets de Vries and Miller [1986], mutual causation is the rule.

It can be assumed that hidden mechanisms come out from the bottom of organizational behaviours, determining thoughts, beliefs, behaviour, attitudes and also ways of dealing with difficult situations presented by the organization members. Organizational personality, from the author's point of view, can be understood as internal mechanisms regulating behaviours of organization members arising at the meeting point of their interpersonal relations, submitted to the influence of norms and values; goals, missions and visions of the organization. Functions of personality consist of developing ways of behaviour proper for the goals of organization; of creating and transferring a

system of common beliefs, judgments, assessments and conceptions into the whole organization; and of lowering the level of fear and aggression through the usage of defence mechanisms, also worked out in the whole organization under the influence of its key people. Those mechanisms cause unification of behavior patterns of organization members, the result of which can be described as “organizational personality” [Barabasz 2008].

In accordance with the assumption which is a base to the presented research, if power in an organization is widely spread throughout the whole company (centralized organization), its culture and strategies will be determined by many managers, and then neurotic mechanisms inhered in the personality of one key person will be diminished by the influence of several other members of the management staff. Thanks to that, the correlation between neurotic functioning style and potential organizational pathology becomes weaker. Since top management members have usually stronger influence on the organization, they were the main object in the research, a part of which is presented in this paper.

4. Case study – company X

The presented company, further called X, is a manufacturing enterprise being a part of the worldwide corporation with the headquarters in the USA, subordinated to the board on the European level. The mother-company was established on the American market at the beginning of 20th century. In 1980s it started expansion to international markets, which resulted in the extension of product range and economical position enhancement. In the middle of 1990s American corporation became a part of a huge European company, leading on the market of products produced by the American company. Currently this company employs 35 thousand people in 20 countries. The Polish branch employed approximately 300 people in the time when the research was conducted, at the moment there are 400 employees. Manufacturing entities and sales and distribution centres are also spread throughout Europe and employ the total of 3000 people. The European head office is based in Belgium. Assuming that the global company is the one the operation of which crosses not only borders but also geographical and time zones [Lovelock, Yip 1996, p. 65], the company covered in this research, being a part of internationally spread organization, meets the above mentioned criteria.

Vital elements characterizing the company from the research point of view are these embedded in the organizational culture of the company. These elements are expressed by goals and values effective in the company, captivated in the form of “the diamond of business”. The diamond of business consists of 6 elements: Value Creation, Customer Satisfaction, Citizenship, Growth, People Development, Market Leadership (*based on company’s internal documentation*).

Company X launched manufacturing activity in Poland in 2001. At the starting point of the research, in February 2007, the company employed around 240 employees in manufacturing positions and 50 employees in administration. The company's management estimate that around 50% of currently employed have been working in this company since the very beginning of its operation. Considering the age of the employees – young people are in majority. All the employees and members of the management are Poles. They are subordinated to the general manager, who has managed the company since it started operation on the Polish market, moreover, he is also a member of the board on the European level. Management staff representatives of particular entities in Europe have regular contact with their co-workers in the same counterpart position in other branches of the corporation. The contact with the central board of directors in the headquarters in Denver (USA) is quite rare and definitely can be considered as occasional. The Polish branch has in its structure the Research and Development department which, according to plans, is currently intensively developed, which makes employees proud and satisfied.

5. Procedure and research tools

Research presented in this article was conducted as a part of a larger research project dedicated to verifying the idea of the organizational personality. The characteristic was developed on the basis of studies conducted between February and May 2007, with the usage of two questionnaires analyzing the organizational climate, W. Bridges' personality questionnaire (OCI) and on the basis of conversations conducted with company's management staff. The results were gathered basing on quantitative qualitative analysis of the data gained from 77 employees, among whom 11 employees were management staff representatives, so effectively 30% of the whole staff took part in the study. The questionnaires were completed by all management staff representatives, the general manager included, and also the majority of employees from the administration and operations (maintenance, logistics and warehouse) departments. If it comes to the manufacturing department, correctly completed questionnaires were received from only 26 employees.

After conducting preliminary conversations, the research was conducted in two phases. The first stage was a questionnaire study using the tools analyzing organizational climate (D. Kolba questionnaire and standardized in the Polish studies W. J. Paluchowski questionnaire) and W. Bridges questionnaire analyzing organizational personality OCI (*The Organizational Character Index*), which was completed by all the research participants. The management staff representatives were also examined by means of two additional personality tests. One was the MBTI questionnaire (*Myers-Briggs Type Indicator*), compatible with questionnaire analyzing organizational personality (OCI), the second test was the personality test defined by E. Mittenecker and W. Toman.

The organizational personality questionnaire OCI (*The Organizational Character Index*), defined by W. Bridges and used in the study, is based on four opposing dimensions which K. Briggs and I. Myers separated according to the personality concept defined by C.G. Jung, and created MBTI (*Myers-Briggs Type Indicator*) questionnaire, which resulted in describing 16 types of personality [Bridges 2000, pp. 13–31].

In both questionnaires analysis is performed basing on the following dimensions:

- *E – Extraversion – I – Introversion*, that is organizational orientation, interest orientation, source of energy. This dimension explains whether organization on the primary level is directed externally at the market, competition and rivalry (E), or is directed internally – at its own technology, culture, realization of leaders needs (I).
- *Sensing – S – Intuition – N*, this dimension reflects methods of gathering information; refers to what is essential in the organization, how the reality is perceived. It shows whether organization focuses mostly on the present, on details, on current situation (S) or on the future, on planning, on defining potential existing in given situation (N).
- *Thinking – T – Feeling – F*, this dimension refers to the method of compiling information, evaluating situation, decision making. It shows whether the organization operates impersonally, makes decision based on such priorities as logic, competency, efficiency (T); or whether it operates on the basis of personal choices dependent on such values as individualism, common good, creativity (F).
- *Judging – J – Perceiving – P*, this dimension explains whether the organization has a tendency to get involved in the external world. Judging organizations tend to use Thinking or Feeling, which are the Judging functions, to deal with their outer world, while perceiving organizations use Sensing or Intuition, the so-called Perceiving functions, in dealing with their outer world. An organization with the predominance of evaluation (Thinking dimension and cognitive functions) prefers definite decisions, clear defining of businesses and explicit definition of tasks realization criteria. An organization with the predominance of observation (preference for Feeling and Intuition dimensions) seeks for a larger number of data, lets the business run its own course, prefers procrastinating when making decisions and choices.

The questionnaire concerning organizational climate, which was used in the study and defined by W. J. Paluchowski [1998], allows to extract information about such aspects of organization's functioning as superior—subordinates relations, tolerating risk and conflicts, sense of solitude, access to information, identification with the work team, punitive competition, general attitude to organization. The second questionnaire analyzing organizational climate consists of six-degree scale which reflects following dimensions: responsibility, requirement, rewards, self-organization, warmth and efficient management.

Personality test of E. Mittenecker and W. Toman allows to evaluate the personality, adaptation capabilities, moreover indicates the direction of development and the character of potential dysfunctions of analyzed participants.

The second stage of the study is a semi-structured interview, focused on such issues as the perception of external and internal surrounding, relations with the corporation board, conflicts and methods of solving problems, identification of threats and methods of coping with them, defensive mechanisms used in difficult situations, attitude to changes, communication. The interviews were conducted individually, and also recorded with each participant's approval. The average length of an interview was 60 minutes (yet there were interviews lasting 40 minutes and 150 minutes).

6. Results of research

The results obtained within all subject areas distinguished in W. J. Paluchowski's questionnaire do not differ from the average values, starting with the evaluation of superior-subordinates relation, through the access to information, and ending up with the identification with the work team (Table 1). The result slightly lower than the average was received in the area of risk and conflicts tolerance, which might lead to the conclusion that the atmosphere in the company is perceived by employees as disapproving of conflicts and risky decisions. Additionally, the area described as the general attitude to an organization was evaluated slightly lower than the average, although the result does not exceed the standard deviation range. The data acquired from the questionnaire do not explain the causes of such a situation, although this can be done by evoking to the type of personality of the researched company.

Table 1. Results of organizational climate questionnaire by W.J. Paluchowski

Area	Standard deviation	Norm	Min result	Max result	Result in company X
Positive relation superior-subordinates	9,10	39,56	12	60	39,37
Risks and conflicts tolerance	3,57	15,12	5	25	12,78
Sense of loneliness	2,45	13,17	4	20	12,45
Access to information	3,26	20,55	7	30	20,68
Identification with the team	3,96	21,23	6	30	21,20
Punitive competition	1,25	6,98	2	10	6,87
General attitude to organization	7,03	30,20	10	87	26,52

Source: own findings.

Furthermore, the results of the organizational climate questionnaire according to D. Kolb oscillate around the average values, although it seems significantly important that the questionnaire concerning organizational climate was completed only by blue collar workers. They evaluated the remuneration system in the company relatively low (Table 2).

Table 2. Organizational climate (according to D. Kolb)

Area	Mean indicator value on the scale 1-10
Responsibility	5,92
Requirements	5,97
Rewards	4,37
Organization	5,76
Warmth and endorsement	5,89
Managing	5,39

Source: own findings.

Table 3 presents the results of MBTI questionnaire, which diagnoses types of personality among managers and the type of personality of analyzed organization, established on the basis of OCI. The next table reflects the way the personality of a company is perceived by employees in four various areas of operation, i.e. management staff representatives, employees working in departments supporting manufacturing (logistics, traffic management and warehouse), manufacturing workers, human resources and materials development employees.

Table 3. Type of personality of Company X and key persons (management staff representatives)

Analyzed object	Type of personality
Company X	ESTJ
General Manager	ISTJ
Key person 1 - P	E/INTJ
Key person 2 - P	ENTJ
Key person 3 - P	E/INTP
Key person 4 - WP	ENTJ
Key person 5 - WP	ISTJ
Key person 6 - WP	INTJ
Key person 7 - R	ESTJ
Key person 8 - HR	ENTJ

Caption: P – manufacturing, WP – manufacturing support, R – material development, HR – human resources

Source: own findings.

The combination of results in table 4 shows that employees working in the three of separated areas of the analyzed company, are agreeable in terms of perception of their company, and they characterize its personality as type E-S-T-J. In addition to that, only the employees working strictly in manufacturing perceive the company in a slightly different way.

Table 4. Type of company's personality viewed by employees of particular functional areas

Analyzed subject/ area of the company	OCI *result				Type of personality
	E-I	S-N	T-F	J-P	
Company X as a whole	20,27	21,45	19,95	21,19	ESTJ
Management staff	20,10	21,60	20,20	20,40	ESTJ
Manufacturing support- WP	19,93	21,73	18,93	20,80	ESTJ
Manufacturing- P	19,33	22,63	19,59	21,93	ENTJ/P
HR + R	20,83	18,17	21,17	20,00	ESTJ

* Particular columns contain average values of results, achieved by employees in particular areas of examined company, regarding following dimensions: Extraversion – Introversion, Sensing – Intuition, Thinking – Feeling, Perceiving- Judging

Caption: P – manufacturing, WP – manufacturing support, R – material development, HR – human resources

Source: own findings.

According to indications of manufacturing workers, the Company X is an E-N-T-J/P type of personality; therefore, it differs from the indications of other employees in terms of two dimensions. First one, that is S – N (Sensing – Intuition), applies to the method of orientation in the reality; whereas the second one is an attitude towards reality, realized either by observation and information gathering (P – *Perceiving*), or continuous (constant) analysis of reality and its evaluation (J – *Judging*). The reasons for this discrepancy can be explained by the personality analysis of managers responsible for the area of manufacturing. Each manager, including a technical director, is characterized by a predominance of N (Intuition) indicator in the individual type of personality. This is the way the company is perceived by manufacturing workers. The predominance of N indicator (intuitive cognition) occurred also in case of two managers from the area of manufacturing support. Other managers, in terms of the personality dimension, represent methods of functioning based on information which can be verified by senses (Sensing). In the P – J dimension (Perceiving – Judging) manufacturing workers evaluated their company as the one which is in balance between the attitude based on observation and information gathering, and the attitude providing constant analysis and evaluation in that matter. In this

dimension only one of the leaders in manufacturing area (“Key person 3-P”) was distinguished by an observing attitude. A noticeable intensification of this dimension occurred in the results of organizational personality questionnaire (OCI) only among manufacturing workers.

The examined company quite eagerly expose itself to administrative operations and operational interactions. Just after entering the company it is easy to notice clearly assigned boundaries between various areas, even though at first glance one can have an impression that there is an open space with no barriers. The general manager, when asked about the general vision of his company, says:

“I would like to work with people, who know what they are doing, so I could only correct situations requiring my intervention; I could live as a pensioner who just enjoys spending time at work”.

About relations with the American owners and their influence on the functioning of the Polish branch:

“What is very important in the American culture is the auto-presentation and auto-promotion of results. I manage to do it in a good way, but there are managers who have not enough auto-promotion skills; maybe it is also my fault... There were some people in this company with great potential in this field, but as soon as they learned something, they would leave the company to search for new challenges...”.

The managers who took part in the research expressed the following opinions about influences and pressures from the European head-office:

Key person 4 (WP): “...In the corporation we are just one small part. I feel like a small local company, totally separate. I am in contact with other external companies (which are the part of the corporation), but I don’t feel any pressure. And neither do manufacturing workers, I think. We do what we have got to do, and that’s it...”

According to another manager (Key person 2 – P): “... we are a Polish company, with our own, Polish way of operation. The European or worldwide character of the company can be noticed only in procedures. I have to admit that procedures are helpful in many cases, so this procedural aspect is important, although sometimes very time consuming...”

When it comes to a conflict between people having significantly different points of views, it can be observed that they are striving for a common standpoint. Working out a common standpoint might be improved by regular meetings run with various groups of employees and with various frequencies; namely, among others, daily, weekly and monthly meetings of particular managers, conferences of managers from different cooperating departments, meetings of managers with employees responsible for completing specific tasks, and regular meeting of managers with subordinates working on a given shift (in manufacturing area). It is easy to observe that there is a division of responsibilities and pressure on adhering procedures, which should be coherent.

One of the managers from manufacturing support states his opinion about communication: "In terms of communication there is always room for improvement. However, there are more problems on the level of individual contacts, than on the level of solutions applied in the whole company. People sometimes just do not want to meet half way...During daily meetings we talk through all the problems. At the end of the meeting the director decides who should do what."

What is neglected in the company, from the perspective of the manufacturing workers, is the flow of information - why they should do what they were told to do. At the same time, they believe that there is space for criticism, sometimes even sharp conversations, which are treated as an element of a decision making process. Strict abiding by applied norms, standards and rules of behaviour is very important in the company, which derives from the manufacturing regimes, established not only on the local board level, but also on the level of the whole corporation board. In terms of personality type E-S-T-J, it is acceptable to do everything, however on condition, that it will be consistent with the set procedures and applicable standards. Complying with the established regulations is obligatory not only because of the requirements of manufacturing quality system, but also due to the safety of employees. During the research, the slogan: "As many days with no accident as possible" caused a lot of emotions among not only manufacturing workers but others as well.

Risky decisions are rarely taken in the researched company. There are a few reasons for that; among these the manufacturing character of company as well as a formal position in the corporate structure, which quite strongly imposes the choice of particular solutions, are relevant. Moreover, the I-S-T-J personality type of a general manager is a quite significant factor. The manager with such personality attributes is precise, pragmatic, steady, well organized, dutiful and at the same time decisive and realistic. These qualities are very important, especially in unforeseen situations that happen in almost every company. The ability to deal with such situations effectively depends on the competency and abilities of company's managers.

The attitude towards changes is important in every company. A company with the proved personality type does not change quickly, rapid changes are not welcome, however, if a change happens all employees are actively engaged in the change process. The general manager of the company states: "...The power of a company is its stability... What is specific to our company is that we make an effort to operate in a good and honest manner. No significant change can be successfully implemented in the company without involving its top management. Otherwise changes always face the lack of enthusiasm. Then, after some, time change disappears. It has happened here before... Resistance towards changes derives from the belief that a change is an additional responsibility, and there is the lack of belief that the change can improve the situation. So, people make

an assumption that the change is a nuisance, not help. Moreover, the majority of people can be characterized as naturally passive... There is a significant lack of managers on various levels. They are in the company, but there are not enough of them. In addition to that, there are wide needs in terms of strong dynamics of the environment. We make many attempts to introduce changes, some are successful, some are not. The organization went through various stages of transformation – from a patriarchal company to the Stock Corporation, from hierarchical to matrix... At the moment, we undertake fewer initiatives, but the majority of undertaken ones are successful, although people do not understand that what is happening is a process, not an incidental event... The employees tend to treat the task as an action, not an element of a process... Nonetheless changes arise on various levels, in various departments of the company. Although they are mostly evolutionary changes, we can also notice revolutionary changes and these are dependent on groups of people... and there are definitely fewer of them”.

The company with personality type E-S-T-J has usually difficulty with accepting changes, because the idea of a change is somewhat directed against its attributes and values, that is against stability, persistency, constancy and predictability. People who fit this type of company very well are realists, who respect predictable reality, do not trust emotions and sudden spurts and feel well in explicit and clearly hierarchized structure. Additionally, what is most important for them is keeping given promises, which is quite well aligned with the way of acting and values of company’s general manager.

Manufacturing workers perceive the company as effective in realization specific operations, characterized more as temporary and operational than long-term and strategic. When there are troubles in the company, as soon as the nature of problem is defined, quick action is taken, even if not all elements of the situation are taken under consideration. Sometimes, even if there are premises indicating that the source of problem lies elsewhere, previous assumptions are still realized, which is often a reason for frustration and the decrease of effectiveness.

In terms of management functions, it is worth remembering that an extroversive (E) – sensing (S) organization responds with strong resistance towards planned changes, especially if employees do not understand their significance and meaning for the whole company. Development plans of the company related with launching a new department (research and development) are a perspective for the appearance of a new unit the specific character of which might stand out in the current structure, plans, procedures and, consequently, the strains might occur between particular departments and the leaders. Therefore, the CEO might be required to take actions in order to ensure that the new department has leeway in functioning and to protect it from the excessive formalization.

7. Final conclusions

The presented case of Company X seems to reveal primarily the necessity of making an effort to create new, common culture, and this should be provided by top management representatives who will speak on behalf of different cultures. However, the described case shows explicitly how significantly meaningful and influential for the company is the personality of executive managing the company. Therefore, it can be initially assumed that neither automatic reception of what comes from the outside, nor exorbitant and excessive adherence to what is local (meaning “ours”) lead to optimal solutions; because the most important factor is the personality of key persons and their influence on adjusting mechanisms underlying the system of organization’s functioning.

Despite the fact that, at this stage, it is not explicitly explained how the psychological mechanism, determined by the personality of particular executives, influences the whole organization, still the number of data is sufficient to state that the influence exists [Miller, Kets de Vries, Toulouse 1982]. The relations between variables studied on the unitary level and variables effecting the whole organization (such as the climate, organizational culture and organizational personality) require application of statistical studies. This would allow to evaluate the relation between variables operating on various levels of the organization’s functioning. The presented results of the qualitative research provide input into further research including statistical relations between individual variables, and variables occurring throughout the company as the whole.

Abstract

This article presents a psychological portrayal of a company presented in terms of organizational personality and organizational climate. The assumed psychological research perspective emphasizes factors which significantly influenced the approach to problems concerning a company being part of an international corporation. The important factor in the following case study turned out to be the personality of a general manager in a Polish branch of an international corporation. The article was composed on the basis of empirical research concerning organizational personality.

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