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W501: *Management of Organizations*

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Management Basics

09-04-25 Saturday

Definition of Management:

Management is a fundamental and indispensable activity in all organized human efforts. It involves systematically coordinating resources and people to achieve desired goals **effectively** and **efficiently**.

Management is the efficient utilization of resources (physical, financial, human, and informational) to achieve organizational goals. It is a continuous process that involves planning, organizing, leading, and controlling resources to achieve specific objectives.

Widely Accepted Definitions:

- **Henri Fayol (1916):** “To manage is to forecast and plan, to organize, to command, to coordinate and to control.”
- **Mary Parker Follett (1926):** “Management is the art of getting things done through people.”
- **Koontz & O'Donnell (1976):** “Management is the process of designing and maintaining an environment in which individuals, working together in groups, efficiently accomplish selected aims.”

Key Elements of Management:

1. Goal-oriented process
2. Group activity
3. Continuous process
4. Dynamic function
5. Resource coordination

Example:

A *hospital* managing doctors, nurses, and medical supplies to deliver quality healthcare effectively and efficiently.

Why Management:

Management is crucial because it transforms organizational chaos into structured progress. Without proper management, organizations lack direction, coordination, and control.

Importance of Management:

1. Achieving Goals
2. Optimal Resource Utilization
3. Establishing a Dynamic Organization
4. Creating Team Spirit
5. Ensuring Growth and Stability

Example:

In a *manufacturing firm*, management ensures raw materials are efficiently converted into finished products while maintaining labor management, productivity, and quality standards.

Supporting Data:

A 2022 study by *McKinsey & Company* revealed companies with strong management practices were **30% more productive** and had **20% higher profitability** than poorly managed firms.

Management Levels:

In organizational structures, management operates through hierarchical levels to ensure proper supervision, decision-making, and resource allocation. Each level has distinct responsibilities and authority.

Types of Management Levels:

1. **Top-level Management:**
Also known as *strategic management*, this level sets organizational vision, long-term goals, policies, and overall strategic direction.

Characteristics:

- Formulates policies and strategic plans.
- Represents the organization externally.
- Makes long-term, future-oriented decisions.
- Bears final accountability for organizational performance.

2. Middle-level Management:

This is the *administrative management* tier, acting as a bridge between top and lower levels. It implements policies, coordinates departments, and supervises lower managers.

Characteristics:

- Translates top management policies into departmental plans.
- Coordinates cross-departmental activities.
- Provides direction to lower-level managers.
- Responsible for tactical decisions and resource allocation.

3. Lower-level Management:

Often termed *operational or supervisory management*, this level directly oversees operational activities and workforce performance.

Characteristics:

- Directly supervises workers and daily operations.
- Maintains discipline and work quality.
- Reports operational performance to middle management.
- Handles short-term operational decisions.

Example:

In a *bank*:

- **Top-level:** Managing Director (MD), Board of Directors.
- **Middle-level:** Branch Managers, Regional Managers.
- **Lower-level:** Cash Officers, Teller Supervisors.

Definition of Organization:

An organization is a deliberate and structured social unit, composed of people, working together to achieve specific goals. It involves systematic coordination of activities and allocation of responsibilities to attain common objectives.

Widely Accepted Definitions:

- **Chester I. Barnard (1938):** “An organization is a system of consciously coordinated activities or forces of two or more persons.”
- **James D. Mooney & Alan C. Reiley (1931):** “Organization is the form of every human association for the attainment of a common purpose.”

Characteristics of Organizations:

1. **Group of People:** Requires at least two or more individuals.
2. **Common Goal:** Exists to pursue agreed-upon objectives.
3. **Defined Structure:** Clear authority, roles, and hierarchy.
4. **Coordination of Efforts:** Integrated and aligned activities.
5. **Deliberate Design:** Structured system with purposeful arrangement.
6. **Continuity:** Organizations exist beyond individual members.
7. **Others:** Can be autonomous or not, can be financial or non-financial. Can have social value.

Examples and Classification:

- **Political Party:**

Yes, it is an organization. It has a formal structure, group of people, defined leadership, common goals (political power, policy advocacy), and coordinated activities.

- **Cricket Board:**

Yes, it is an organization. It operates with a formal administrative body, specific objectives (governing cricket affairs), a structured hierarchy, and organized activities. (There's a contradictory thoughts about cricket team. It is not an organization, but a team.)

- **Jewelry Shop on Facebook:**

No, typically it is not a formal organization unless it possesses structured operations, a formal business plan, a registered identity, designated roles, and systematic coordination. Most small-scale informal online sellers lack these essential organizational characteristics.

- **University:**

Yes, it is an organization. It consists of people (faculty, staff, students), follows a hierarchical structure, has formal objectives (education, research), and coordinated processes.

- **Family:**

No, a family is a social institution, not an organization in the formal managerial sense. It lacks formal objectives and deliberate coordination for commercial or public goals.

Effectiveness and Efficiency:

In management, both **effectiveness** and **efficiency** are essential performance measures. While closely related, they focus on different dimensions of organizational success.

Effectiveness: Effectiveness refers to the extent to which an organization or individual achieves its desired objectives or outcomes. It emphasizes *doing the right things*.

Example:

A hospital successfully treating 95% of its patients represents high effectiveness.

Efficiency: Efficiency is the ability to accomplish a task using the least amount of resources — such as time, money, or effort. It emphasizes *doing things right*.

Example:

A hospital reducing treatment costs by optimizing medical resources while maintaining quality indicates efficiency.

Relationship between Effectiveness and Efficiency: Both are complementary but not identical. An organization must be effective to survive and efficient to remain competitive. Achieving one without the other can harm long-term success.

Key Relations:

- An organization can be effective without being efficient (achieving goals but wasting resources).
- It can be efficient without being effective (optimal resource use but failing to achieve desired goals).
- Ideal management seeks a balance — achieving goals with optimal resource use.

Differences between Effectiveness and Efficiency:

Effectiveness	Efficiency
Focuses on achieving organizational goals.	Focuses on optimal use of resources.
Concerned with output quality and goal fulfillment.	Concerned with input-output ratio and minimizing waste.
Represents <i>what is done</i> .	Represents <i>how it is done</i> .
Can exist without efficiency.	Can exist without achieving effectiveness.
Long-term strategic importance.	Operational and tactical significance.

Example for Comparison:

A school achieving 100% pass rate (effectiveness) by employing excessive resources and overtime is less efficient. Conversely, minimizing teaching resources and costs but having only a 50% pass rate is efficient but ineffective. True managerial success lies in achieving both.

What Managers Do

13-04-25 Saturday

What Managers Do:

Managers are responsible for coordinating and overseeing the work of others to accomplish organizational goals. Their activities have been explained through different theoretical frameworks proposed by notable management scholars.

Three Approaches to Describe What Managers Do:

1. Functions Managers Perform (Henri Fayol, 1916):

Fayol identified five primary managerial functions, which modern theorists have synthesized into four core functions:

- **Planning:** Involves defining organizational goals, establishing strategies for achieving them, and developing comprehensive plans to integrate and coordinate activities. Planning reduces uncertainty and sets a clear direction for the organization.

Example: A manager prepares an annual business plan outlining production targets, marketing strategy, and financial forecasts.

- **Organizing:** Entails determining what tasks need to be done, who will do them, how the tasks will be grouped, who reports to whom, and where decisions are to be made. It ensures resources are properly allocated and workflow is streamlined.

Example: Assigning teams for product development, marketing, and logistics based on skills and responsibilities.

- **Leading:** Involves motivating, directing, and otherwise influencing people to work hard to achieve the organization's goals. Effective leadership fosters cooperation and commitment.

Example: A manager holds regular motivational meetings and one-on-one coaching sessions.

- **Controlling:** The process of monitoring activities to ensure they are being accomplished as planned, and correcting any significant deviations. This ensures objectives are met efficiently.

Example: Tracking monthly sales performance and adjusting marketing tactics if targets are not met.

Characteristics:

- Sequential yet overlapping and continuous.
- Applicable at all levels of management.
- Essential for achieving organizational efficiency and effectiveness.
- Forms the foundation of modern management theory.

2. Roles Managers Perform (Henry Mintzberg, 1973):

Mintzberg conducted empirical studies and identified ten managerial roles grouped under three categories:

Interpersonal Roles:

- *Figurehead:* Performing ceremonial and symbolic duties on behalf of the organization. Predominantly a top-management responsibility.
- *Leader:* Guiding and motivating subordinates, ensuring performance and development. Important at all levels.
- *Liaison:* Building a network of contacts inside and outside the organization to gather information and maintain relationships.

Informational Roles:

- *Monitor:* Actively seeking and gathering internal and external information relevant to the organization.
- *Disseminator:* Sharing relevant information within the organization to support decision-making and coordination.
- *Spokesperson:* Communicating information about the organization to external stakeholders such as media, government, and other interest groups.

Decisional Roles:

- *Entrepreneur*: Initiating and managing change to improve organizational performance.
- *Disturbance Handler*: Addressing unexpected problems and crises to minimize organizational disruption.
- *Resource Allocator*: Deciding where the organization will expend its efforts and resources.
- *Negotiator*: Participating in negotiations with individuals or groups to secure favorable outcomes.

Characteristics:

- Reflect real-world dynamic managerial behavior.
- Roles are interrelated and often performed simultaneously.
- Applicable to managers at all levels, though emphasis varies.
- Ensures a balance of social, informational, and decisional responsibilities.

3. Skills Managers Need (Robert L. Katz, 1974):

Katz proposed that managerial performance is determined by the following three essential skill sets:

- **Technical Skills**: The ability to apply specialized knowledge and expertise in specific work methods and techniques. Crucial for first-line and lower-level managers who work directly with operational processes.

Example: A plant manager knowing how to operate and troubleshoot machinery.

- **Human (Interpersonal) Skills**: The ability to work with, understand, motivate, and lead individuals or groups. Essential at all levels as it determines how well managers can communicate, resolve conflicts, and build effective teams.

Example: A department head resolving conflicts among team members through effective communication.

- **Conceptual Skills**: The ability to analyze and diagnose complex situations and visualize how different organizational elements fit together. These skills enable strategic decision-making and long-term planning, making them increasingly vital for top-level managers.

Example: A CEO evaluating market trends and realigning organizational strategy.

Characteristics:

- **Technical skills**: Predominantly required at lower levels.
- **Human skills**: Equally vital at all levels.
- **Conceptual skills**: Most important for top executives.
- The relative importance of each skill shifts across the managerial hierarchy.

Summary Illustration:

Approach	Key Focus	Key Contributors
Functions they perform	Planning, Organizing, Leading, Controlling	Henri Fayol
Roles they perform	Interpersonal, Informational, Decisional roles	Henry Mintzberg
Skills they need	Technical, Human, Conceptual skills	Robert L. Katz

Grapevine: Definition and Example

The grapevine refers to the informal, unofficial communication network that exists within an organization, outside of formal channels. It is often referred to as the "rumor mill" as it involves the spread of information, whether accurate or not, through interpersonal interactions. The grapevine typically flourishes in environments where formal communication is limited, and its influence can be both positive and negative.

Example: An employee hears through colleagues that the company is planning to lay off a large number of staff. This information is not yet confirmed by the management, but it spreads quickly through informal conversations and can lead to anxiety and rumors within the workforce.

Why Fayol and Mintzberg are Complementary

Henri Fayol and Henry Mintzberg are often regarded as complementary scholars in management theory due to their distinct yet complementary perspectives on what managers do. Fayol's theory focuses on the **functions** that managers perform, while Mintzberg's approach examines the **roles** managers take on in the course of their work.

Fayol's framework, developed in the early 20th century, emphasizes a prescriptive approach to management, suggesting that managers must execute certain key functions like planning, organizing, leading, and controlling. Fayol's work is centered around the structural side of management and provides a clear, systematic model that managers can follow to ensure the organization's operations run smoothly.

On the other hand, Mintzberg's work is more descriptive, identifying specific roles that managers play on a daily basis, based on empirical research and observations of managers in real-world settings. Mintzberg's theory reveals the complexity of managerial work, with its dynamic, multitasking nature, and how managers balance interpersonal, informational, and decisional roles.

These two approaches are complementary in the sense that while Fayol provides a structural guide to what managers **should** do, Mintzberg shows how managers actually **do** it in practice. Fayol's functions can be seen as the foundation for the roles Mintzberg identifies. For example, a manager performing the "leader" role (Mintzberg) might also be engaged in "leading" as one of Fayol's functions, and similarly, the role of "entrepreneur" could align with the function of "planning."

Example: A project manager in an organization might simultaneously engage in the "monitoring" role (Mintzberg) to gather progress data, while also executing the function of "controlling" (Fayol) by adjusting resources or strategies based on this information to keep the project on track.

Thus, Fayol and Mintzberg together provide a comprehensive framework for understanding management from both a theoretical and practical perspective. Fayol's focus on function offers a blueprint for effective management, while Mintzberg's analysis of roles captures the real-world application of those functions.

¹Grapevine communication often serves as a crucial source of information for employees, although its reliability varies. Research indicates that while grapevine communication can serve as a faster alternative to official communication, its lack of accuracy can lead to confusion and mistrust within the organization.

History of Management

22-04-25 Saturday

Historical Evolution of Management

The development of management thought is deeply rooted in the emergence of large-scale organizations and the industrial revolution. One of the earliest comprehensive schools of thought is the **Classical Management Theory**, which emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This school emphasizes efficiency, productivity, and rationality, and is primarily divided into three key branches:

1. Scientific Management (Frederick Winslow Taylor, 1911):

Often regarded as the “father of scientific management,” Taylor sought to improve industrial efficiency through systematic study of work methods. His principles were designed to replace rule-of-thumb practices with scientifically proven techniques.

Core Principles:

- Use of scientific methods to define the “one best way” to perform a task.
- Careful selection and training of workers.
- Division of work between managers (who plan) and workers (who execute).
- Performance-based incentives to increase productivity.

Example: In a steel plant, Taylor demonstrated that breaking tasks into smaller units and standardizing tools and procedures could significantly increase output per worker.

Criticism: While Taylor’s approach increased efficiency, it was often criticized for treating workers like machines and ignoring their social and psychological needs.

2. Administrative Management (Henri Fayol, early 1900s):

Fayol focused on the organization as a whole, rather than individual tasks. He proposed 14 principles of management and identified five primary managerial functions (later summarized to four).

Contribution: Provided a top-down, structural framework for managing organizations that is still foundational in modern management theory.

3. Bureaucratic Management (Max Weber, 1922):

Weber introduced the concept of an ideal organization governed by a rational legal authority system known as **bureaucracy**. This form of management aimed to bring order, fairness, and predictability to organizations.

Key Features:

- A well-defined hierarchical structure.
- Division of labor and specialization.
- Clear rules and procedures.
- Impersonality in decision-making (decisions based on logic and rules, not personal preference).
- Employment based on technical qualifications.

Example: Modern public administration and government agencies typically follow bureaucratic principles, ensuring uniformity and fairness in service delivery.

Criticism: Weber’s model was seen as too rigid, leading to inefficiency, delay, and lack of innovation in rapidly changing environments.

Conclusion: The classical approach laid the groundwork for the formal study of management. While criticized for its mechanistic view of human behavior, it brought a much-needed structure, rationality, and scientific foundation to management practices that continue to influence contemporary theories.

Behavioral Management Theory: Human Side of Organizations

Emerging as a reaction to the limitations of classical theories, the behavioral approach shifted focus from structure and productivity to understanding human behavior in organizational settings. This school emphasizes the importance of motivation, group dynamics, leadership, and communication.

1. Hawthorne Studies (Elton Mayo and associates, 1924–1932):

Conducted at the Western Electric Hawthorne plant in Chicago, these experiments marked a turning point in management thought. The studies explored how different working conditions affected employee productivity but revealed deeper insights into human and social behavior.

Key Experiments:

- **Illumination Experiment:** Tested the effect of lighting on worker output. Surprisingly, productivity improved even when lighting was dimmed, suggesting psychological factors were at play.
- **Relay Assembly Test Room Experiment:** Focused on a small group of female workers assembling telephone relays. Changes in work hours, breaks, and wages were tested. Results showed that productivity rose due to increased attention from researchers and a sense of participation.
- **Bank Wiring Observation Room:** Revealed informal group norms that influenced individual performance—some workers slowed down to fit in with group expectations.

Conclusion: Productivity is influenced not just by physical conditions or financial incentives but also by social and psychological factors. This gave rise to the concept of the informal organization and paved the way for the Human Relations Movement.

2. Douglas McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y (1960):

McGregor proposed two contrasting views of worker motivation and behavior:

- **Theory X:** Assumes employees are inherently lazy, dislike work, and need to be coerced or controlled.
- **Theory Y:** Assumes employees are self-motivated, enjoy work, and seek responsibility.

Managerial Implications:

- Theory X leads to an authoritarian management style.
- Theory Y supports participative and democratic leadership.

Example: A company embracing Theory Y may adopt flexible schedules and team-based projects, believing that employees will take ownership of their work.

Significance: Encouraged managers to reflect on their assumptions about people and adapt leadership styles accordingly.

3. Quantitative Management Approach (Post-WWII Era):

Also known as management science, this approach applies mathematical models, statistics, and algorithms to decision-making and problem-solving in organizations.

Key Techniques:

- Linear programming
- Queuing theory
- Simulation
- Forecasting
- Inventory control

Applications:

- Scheduling airline flights and crews
- Managing supply chains
- Optimizing production and logistics

Limitations: Though powerful in structured scenarios, this approach often overlooks human and behavioral aspects critical to effective management.

Conclusion: Behavioral theories emphasized the psychological and social dimensions of work, fundamentally altering how managers view employee motivation and team dynamics. In parallel, quantitative management introduced precision and analytical rigor. Together, they enhanced both the humanistic and scientific foundation of modern management.

Comparative Summary of Traditional Management Approaches

Aspect	Classical Approach	Behavioral Approach	Quantitative Approach
Core Focus	Structure, efficiency, authority	Human behavior, motivation, group dynamics	Decision-making using math and stats
Key Contributors	Taylor, Fayol, Weber	Mayo, McGregor, Maslow	Operations Researchers, Mathematicians (Post-WWII)
Assumptions	Workers are economically motivated, need supervision	Workers are socially driven, seek meaning	Problems can be solved with quantitative models
Strengths	Clear hierarchy, standardized procedures, improved productivity	Recognized social needs, improved morale and leadership	Precision, optimization, better forecasting
Limitations	Ignored human and social needs	Lacked empirical rigor, overemphasis on social harmony	Ignores human and emotional aspects

Modern and Evolving Perspectives in Management

1. Systems Perspective:

The organization is viewed as an *open system* composed of interrelated and interdependent parts working together toward common goals. It receives **inputs** (resources), transforms them through **processes**, and delivers **outputs** (goods/services). Feedback mechanisms help in adjustment and adaptation.

Key Concepts:

- Synergy: Whole is greater than the sum of its parts.
- Subsystem coordination is critical.
- External environment affects internal operations.

Example: A university includes subsystems such as admissions, academics, administration, and alumni—all interdependent.

2. Contingency Perspective:

There is **no one best way** to manage. Effective management practices depend on situational variables like environment, technology, workforce, and strategy. Managers must analyze context and adapt accordingly.

Key Ideas:

- Flexible and adaptive decision-making.
- Organizational structures vary with complexity and uncertainty.
- Contextual intelligence is essential.

Example: A tech startup may thrive under a flat structure, while a defense firm needs hierarchical control.

5. Contemporary Issues in Management:

Modern managers operate in an increasingly complex, dynamic, and boundary-blurring environment. Several key themes are shaping contemporary managerial practice:

- **The Rise of the Boundaryless Organization:** Traditional hierarchical structures are giving way to flexible, networked forms. Cross-functional teams, partnerships, and digital platforms allow organizations to collaborate across departments, geographies, and even organizational borders. *Example:* Tech giants like Google or Microsoft adopt matrix and project-based structures that transcend conventional boundaries.
- **Emphasis on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI):** Organizations now recognize the ethical and strategic necessity of promoting diverse workforces and inclusive cultures. Managers must mitigate bias, support equitable practices, and harness cognitive diversity for innovation. *Example:* Firms like Salesforce and Accenture publish diversity scorecards and integrate DEI into performance metrics.

- **Decision-Making in a VUCA World (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, Ambiguous):** Managers are increasingly required to make decisions in unstable environments with incomplete data. Strategic agility, scenario planning, and real-time analytics are critical in navigating VUCA contexts. *Example:* The COVID-19 crisis tested organizations' ability to pivot rapidly amid global disruption.
- **The Rise of the Contingent Workforce:** The gig economy is reshaping employment patterns. Freelancers, remote contractors, and platform-based workers offer flexibility but challenge traditional HR practices regarding motivation, integration, and loyalty. *Example:* Platforms like Upwork, Fiverr, and Uber have normalized non-traditional labor markets.
- **Balancing Agility and Stability:** Modern firms must remain agile enough to adapt quickly yet stable enough to maintain core identity and operational consistency. This paradox requires ambidextrous leadership—capable of fostering innovation while sustaining reliability. *Example:* Amazon combines high-speed experimentation with a disciplined supply chain backbone.
- **Sustainability and Ethical Governance:** Stakeholders increasingly expect businesses to pursue sustainable practices and socially responsible governance. Managers must align business objectives with Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) goals. *Example:* Unilever integrates sustainability into product innovation and strategic planning.
- **Digital Transformation and Technological Disruption:** Rapid advances in digital technologies—from blockchain to generative AI—demand constant upskilling, reengineering processes, and managing digital risk. *Example:* Adobe shifted from product-based sales to a cloud-based subscription model using data analytics and AI.

Summary Insight: Contemporary management is no longer confined to optimizing internal processes—it involves navigating complexity, fostering adaptability, and aligning purpose with performance across fluid ecosystems.

4. The Rise of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Management:

AI is revolutionizing management by enabling **data-driven decision-making**, **automation**, and **predictive analytics**. AI tools help in:

- Talent recruitment (using AI screening algorithms)
- Customer service (chatbots, NLP systems)
- Strategic planning (data analytics, machine learning)

Challenges:

- Ethical concerns: bias, transparency, privacy.
- Human displacement and changing skill needs.

Future Outlook: Managers must develop hybrid skills—combining technical literacy with emotional intelligence and ethical awareness.

Background: Netflix, founded in 1997 as a DVD rental service, successfully transformed itself into a global digital streaming platform and original content producer, redefining entertainment consumption.

Contemporary Management Practices:

- **Boundaryless Organization:** Netflix adopted a flat organizational structure encouraging open information sharing across departments. Its culture of “freedom and responsibility” allowed decision-making autonomy at every level.
- **Emphasis on DEI:** Netflix’s inclusion initiatives ensured storytelling from diverse backgrounds. Their DEI report is transparently published, aiming for representation across all levels.
- **Navigating VUCA Environment:** In 2013, Netflix pivoted to original content creation (e.g., "House of Cards") predicting competition would intensify. This strategic foresight enabled resilience amid new entrants like Disney+, Apple TV+.
- **Contingent Workforce Management:** Netflix works with independent producers, freelance directors, and content creators globally, balancing quality control with creative freedom.
- **Balancing Agility and Stability:** Rapid innovation cycles (new genres, interactive films like "Bandersnatch") were balanced by a stable backend of world-class recommendation algorithms and efficient streaming infrastructure.
- **Commitment to Sustainability and Governance:** Netflix set targets for net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by the end of 2022 under its “Net Zero + Nature” initiative.
- **Harnessing Digital Transformation:** Through predictive analytics, machine learning algorithms for personalized recommendations, and cloud computing (AWS partnership), Netflix became a model digital enterprise.

Key Learning: *Netflix illustrates how modern organizations must simultaneously embrace innovation, social responsibility, and technological disruption to thrive in contemporary markets.*

Managing the External Environment

23-04-25 Wednesday

Shareholders vs Stakeholders

- **Shareholders:** Shareholders (or stockholders) are individuals or entities that legally own one or more shares of a corporation's stock. Their primary interest is financial return on investment (ROI) through dividends and stock price appreciation.
- **Stakeholders:** Stakeholders are any groups or individuals who can affect or are affected by the organization's objectives, policies, and actions. This includes shareholders, employees, customers, suppliers, government, communities, and even future generations.

Key Differences:

Aspect	Shareholders	Stakeholders
Primary Concern	Financial returns	Broader interests (social, environmental, financial)
Ownership	Own shares of the company	May or may not have ownership
Scope	Narrow: Focus on investment value	Broad: Includes many groups impacted by firm's actions
Example	Investors in Apple Inc.	Employees, customers, suppliers, communities of Apple Inc.

Task Environment:

The task environment includes external forces that directly affect an organization's ability to achieve its goals and are influenced by the organization in return.

Key Elements:

- Customers
- Competitors
- Suppliers
- Distributors
- Strategic Allies
- Regulatory Agencies

General Environment:

The general environment (also called the macro environment) includes broader societal forces that affect the task environment indirectly.

Key Elements:

- Economic Forces (inflation, unemployment, economic growth)
- Technological Forces (innovation, automation)
- Sociocultural Forces (values, lifestyles, demographics)
- Political-Legal Forces (laws, regulations, government stability)
- International Forces (globalization, cross-border trade policies)
- Environmental Forces (climate change, sustainability movements)

Case Study: Starbucks Corporation

Task Environment for Starbucks:

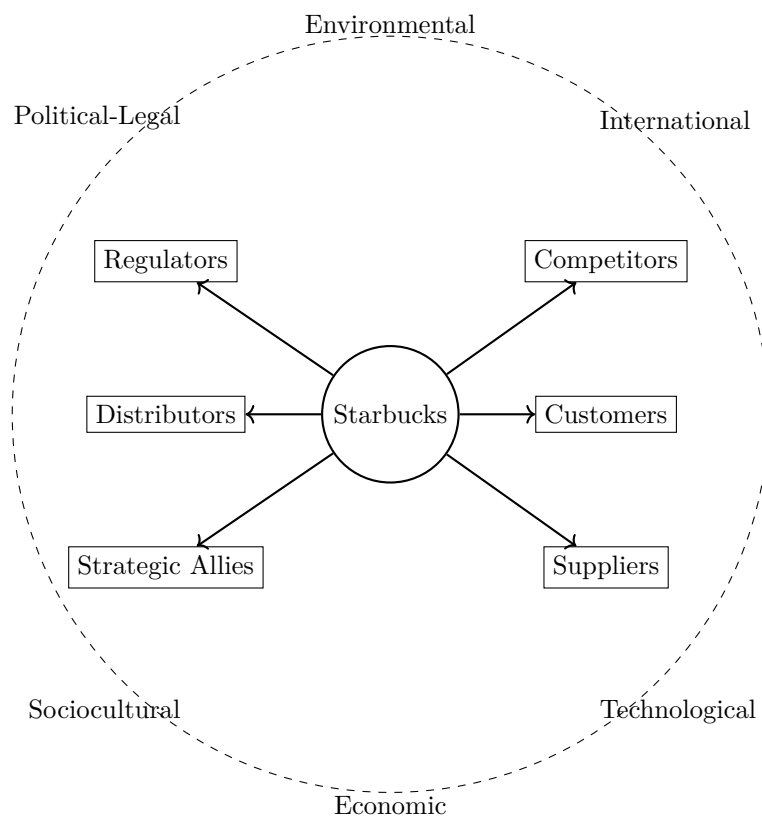
- **Customers:** Coffee drinkers seeking premium experiences.

- **Competitors:** Dunkin', McDonald's McCafé, local artisanal cafes.
- **Suppliers:** Coffee bean growers, dairy providers, logistics companies.
- **Distributors:** Retail outlets, online delivery platforms.
- **Regulators:** Food and Drug Administration (FDA), labor authorities.
- **Strategic Allies:** Partnerships with Nestlé for distribution.

General Environment for Starbucks:

- **Economic:** Global recession risks affecting luxury spending.
- **Technological:** Mobile app development for ordering and payment.
- **Sociocultural:** Increasing demand for ethically sourced coffee.
- **Political-Legal:** Changing labor laws affecting wages.
- **International:** Currency fluctuation impacting global revenue.
- **Environmental:** Push for eco-friendly cups and recyclable materials.

Graphical Representation: Task and General Environment of Starbucks



Note: The task environment (rectangular nodes) directly interacts with Starbucks, while the general environment (outer dashed circle) creates broader, indirect influences.

PESTEL:

The PESTEL framework is a strategic tool used to analyze external macro-environmental factors that could impact an organization's performance. It includes six dimensions:

- **Political:** Government policies, political stability, taxation, trade restrictions.

- **Economic:** Economic growth, interest rates, exchange rates, inflation rates.
- **Sociocultural:** Cultural trends, demographics, social attitudes, lifestyle changes.
- **Technological:** Technological innovations, R&D activities, automation.
- **Environmental:** Ecological concerns, environmental regulations, climate change.
- **Legal:** Laws related to employment, consumer protection, health and safety.

Case Study: Impact of External Environment on Nokia

Nokia was once the global leader in mobile phone manufacturing. However, it failed to adapt swiftly to external environmental changes, particularly:

- **Technological:** Rapid smartphone innovation led by Apple and Android ecosystems.
- **Sociocultural:** Changing consumer preferences towards touchscreen devices.
- **Economic:** Global economic recession (2008) reduced spending on luxury devices.
- **Legal:** Intellectual property battles in the smartphone industry.

As a result, Nokia's market share plummeted from over 50% in 2007 to below 5% by 2013².

Insight: This case underlines the critical importance of continuous external environment analysis through methods like PESTEL for sustaining competitive advantage.

²Source: Statista, Mobile Vendor Market Share 2007-2013

Managing the External Environment and Organizational Culture

27-04-25 Wednesday

Design Thinking and Its Relation with AI:

Design thinking is a human-centered approach to problem-solving that emphasizes empathy, ideation, prototyping, and testing. It encourages innovation by deeply understanding user needs and iteratively developing solutions.

Relation with AI: Artificial Intelligence enhances design thinking by providing data-driven insights, automating prototyping, and simulating user behavior. AI tools can analyze user patterns, predict preferences, and generate creative alternatives, making design processes more responsive and intelligent.

Example: In retail, companies like Nike use AI to personalize product designs and experiences based on customer behavior, integrating design thinking with machine learning algorithms.

Ways to Manage the External Environment:

Organizations can adopt multiple strategies to adapt to or influence their external environments:

- **Boundary-Spanning Roles:** Appointing personnel or creating units to link and coordinate with external stakeholders (e.g., public relations or customer service).
- **Strategic Alliances:** Forming partnerships (e.g., Starbucks and Nestlé) to share resources and enter new markets.
- **Mergers and Acquisitions:** Acquiring or merging with competitors to reduce uncertainty or gain control over resources.
- **Lobbying and Advocacy:** Influencing regulatory bodies or government policy to favor the organization.
- **Forecasting and Planning:** Using tools like PESTEL or scenario planning to anticipate future changes and prepare accordingly.
- **Flexibility and Agility:** Designing adaptive structures to pivot in response to volatile or uncertain conditions.

Example: Tesla manages supply chain volatility by vertically integrating battery production and forming exclusive contracts with mining firms.

Organizational Culture: How It is Established and Maintained

Organizational culture refers to the shared values, beliefs, norms, and practices that shape behavior within an organization.

Establishment:

- **Founders' Values:** Strong influence from the vision, mission, and personality of founding leaders.
- **Leadership Behavior:** Leaders model and reinforce cultural expectations through decisions and conduct.
- **Recruitment and Socialization:** Hiring individuals who fit the culture and systematically orienting them.

Maintenance:

- **Rituals and Ceremonies:** Reinforce values and identity (e.g., award ceremonies, onboarding rituals).
- **Stories and Myths:** Communicate organizational values and hero figures.
- **Symbols and Language:** Logos, dress codes, and slogans communicate culture informally.
- **Performance Management:** Aligning rewards and evaluations with cultural goals.

Strong vs Weak Organizational Cultures

Strong Culture	Weak Culture
Values are widely shared and deeply rooted	Values are inconsistent or fragmented
High employee alignment with organizational goals	Employees act independently of stated values
Predictable, consistent behavior across the firm	Unpredictable behavior and frequent conflict
Enhanced performance through cohesion and motivation	Poor performance due to lack of direction
Example: Google, Zappos	Example: Companies with high turnover and unclear identity

Factors Influencing the Strength of Culture:**1. Size of the Organization (Inverse Relationship)**

Larger organizations tend to have weaker overall cultures due to the presence of multiple subcultures and decentralized control.

Example: Startups like **Basecamp** (small teams) tend to have strong, unified cultures, whereas large firms like **General Electric** develop varied departmental cultures.

2. Age of the Organization (Positive Relationship)

Older organizations often have more established cultural norms, traditions, and stories that reinforce culture.

Example: **IBM**, founded in 1911, has a deeply embedded culture emphasizing professionalism and hierarchy.

3. Employee Turnover Rate (Negative Relationship)

High turnover leads to instability in transmitting cultural values, resulting in weaker culture.

Example: **Subway**, operating in a high-churn retail industry, struggles to maintain a consistent internal culture.

4. Strength of the Original Culture (Positive Relationship)

Organizations founded with a strong and distinct culture often retain it over time.

Example: **Apple** continues to uphold Steve Jobs' values of innovation and perfectionism even after his tenure.

5. Clarity of Cultural Values and Beliefs (Positive Relationship)

Culture is stronger when organizational values are clearly defined, communicated, and embedded in daily practice.

Example: **Netflix's** "Culture Deck" transparently outlines company expectations like "freedom with responsibility."

6. Leadership Commitment and Role Modeling (Positive Relationship)

Leaders reinforce culture by embodying core values and aligning decisions accordingly.

Example: **Satya Nadella** transformed Microsoft's culture by promoting empathy and a growth mindset.

7. Crisis and Critical Incidents (Mixed Effect)

A well-managed crisis can reinforce culture, while mishandling can weaken it.

Example (Positive): **Johnson & Johnson's** ethical handling of the Tylenol crisis reinforced its commitment to consumer safety.

Example (Negative): **Uber's** 2017 cultural crisis under Travis Kalanick revealed a toxic internal culture that later needed reform.

Benefits and Pitfalls of Strong Culture:

A strong organizational culture is characterized by deeply rooted values, high alignment among employees, and consistent behavioral expectations. Such a culture offers several strategic and operational advantages for organizations:

1. Increases Organizational Commitment

Employees feel a stronger emotional connection to the company when they share its values and vision, leading to lower turnover and higher loyalty.

Example: **Zappos** fosters a culture of customer service excellence, resulting in highly committed employees who go above and beyond for customers.

2. Guides Decision Making

Clear cultural values serve as a compass for employees, enabling faster, consistent, and aligned decision-making without needing micromanagement.

Example: **Google's** culture of innovation encourages employees to take calculated risks and pursue bold ideas (e.g., Gmail started as a side project).

3. Aids in the Recruitment and Socialization of New Employees

A strong culture attracts candidates who resonate with the organization's values and accelerates their integration through clear expectations and shared norms.

Example: **Salesforce** uses its "Ohana Culture" (family in Hawaiian) to attract culturally aligned talent and onboard them effectively.

4. Enhances Coordination and Control

Shared values reduce the need for formal supervision and allow decentralized units to function cohesively.

Example: **Toyota's** culture of lean thinking and kaizen ensures that employees at all levels work toward continuous improvement with minimal oversight.

5. Fosters a Strong Brand Identity (Internally and Externally)

When internal values align with external brand promises, it leads to authenticity and trust among customers.

Example: **Patagonia** embeds environmental sustainability in both its internal culture and public image, building customer loyalty.

6. Drives Employee Motivation and Performance

Employees are more motivated when they find purpose and alignment in their work, boosting productivity and morale.

Example: **Tesla's** mission-driven culture around accelerating sustainable energy motivates employees to work long hours with passion.

7. Supports Organizational Resilience During Change

Strong cultures act as a stabilizing force during periods of transformation or crisis, providing direction and unity.

Example: **Southwest Airlines** maintained its service-oriented culture and employee morale even during economic downturns, avoiding layoffs.

Note: While strong cultures bring numerous benefits, they must remain adaptable and inclusive to avoid stagnation or resistance to change.

Pitfalls: While strong organizational cultures offer many advantages, they also come with potential drawbacks if not managed carefully. These pitfalls can hinder growth, innovation, and adaptability.

1. Resistance to Change

A deeply embedded culture may create inertia, making organizations reluctant or slow to adapt in dynamic environments.

Example: **Kodak** failed to embrace digital photography in time, partly due to its entrenched film-based culture and fear of cannibalizing its core business.

2. Suppressing Diverse Perspectives

Strong cultures may unintentionally stifle differing viewpoints, discouraging dissent or creative conflict that is essential for innovation.

Example: **Uber's** aggressive, win-at-all-costs culture under former CEO Travis Kalanick was criticized for overlooking ethical concerns and employee well-being.

3. Conformity Pressure

Employees may feel compelled to “fit in” by conforming to dominant norms, even if those norms contradict personal values or best practices.

Example: In the **Enron scandal**, the toxic internal culture promoted risk-taking and profit maximization at the expense of ethics, with few employees willing to speak up.

4. Groupthink and Lack of Innovation

When everyone thinks alike due to cultural homogeneity, critical thinking and innovative problem-solving suffer.

Example: **Blockbuster** underestimated the rise of digital streaming, partially due to a lack of divergent thinking within its leadership team.

5. Exclusion of Outsiders

A tight-knit culture may become inward-looking, making it difficult for new employees or outsiders to integrate.

Example: Organizations with long-standing “insider” cultures (e.g., some investment banks or law firms) often struggle with inclusion and onboarding diverse talent.

6. Difficulty Scaling Across Geographies or Units

Culture developed in one location or unit may not transfer effectively to others, creating inconsistency.

Example: **Yahoo! Japan** operated quite differently from Yahoo's U.S. branch due to cultural and strategic misalignments.

Note: To mitigate these pitfalls, organizations should strive to build **adaptive**, **inclusive**, and **reflective** cultures that evolve with internal and external realities.

Six Dimensions of Organizational Culture : Organizational culture can be assessed and understood through several key dimensions. Each dimension reflects a core aspect of how an organization behaves and makes decisions.

1. Adaptability

The degree to which employees are encouraged to be innovative, take risks, and respond to environmental changes.

Example: **Amazon** thrives on adaptability through its continuous experimentation and rapid response to market trends, such as launching AWS or adopting AI in logistics.

2. Attention to Detail

The extent to which precision, analytical decision-making, and thoroughness are valued.

Example: **Toyota** is renowned for its meticulous quality control processes and Kaizen philosophy, which emphasizes attention to detail in manufacturing.

3. Outcome Orientation

The focus on results and achievement rather than processes or means.

Example: **Tesla** emphasizes innovation speed and disruptive product delivery, such as launching electric vehicles ahead of regulatory and industry norms.

4. People Orientation

The extent to which the organization values fairness, respect, and consideration for individuals.

Example: **Google** is known for its people-first policies including flexible work options, generous benefits, and psychological safety practices.

5. Team Orientation

The degree to which work activities are organized around teams rather than individuals.

Example: **Zappos** emphasizes cross-functional collaboration, empowering teams to take ownership of customer satisfaction.

6. Integrity

The emphasis on ethical behavior, trust, and honesty in decision-making.

Example: **Patagonia** maintains integrity by adhering to environmental activism, transparent sourcing, and corporate responsibility.

Note: A well-balanced culture considers multiple dimensions to create a robust and value-driven organizational climate.

Ways of Sustaining Organizational Culture:

Once an organizational culture is established, it must be reinforced consistently through formal and informal mechanisms. Below are key methods:

1. Practices and Norms

Daily routines and work procedures embed cultural values in employee behavior.

Example: **Ritz-Carlton** empowers employees to spend up to \$2,000 to resolve a guest's issue, reinforcing a customer-first norm.

2. Rituals and Ceremonies

Repetitive activities that express and reinforce key values.

Example: **Salesforce** hosts an annual "Ohana" gathering to celebrate community and collaboration.

3. Stories and Myths

Narratives about organizational heroes or events that transmit cultural values.

Example: At **Apple**, stories of Steve Jobs' perfectionism are used to inspire attention to design and innovation.

4. Symbols and Artifacts

Physical layouts, logos, dress codes, and office design that convey meaning.

Example: **Facebook's** open office plan symbolizes transparency and openness to feedback.

5. Socialization Processes

Orientation and onboarding programs teach newcomers the "way things are done."

Example: **IBM** uses structured mentoring and value-based training for all new hires.

6. Heroes and Role Models

Respected individuals who embody the company's values and act as cultural exemplars.

Example: **Elon Musk** at **SpaceX** is admired for extreme work ethic and risk-taking, which mirrors the culture of ambitious innovation.

Note: A sustainable culture evolves yet remains rooted in foundational values transmitted through these mechanisms.

Case Study : Can a strong culture be too strong?

30-04-2025 Wednesday

“How long is this list of escapees?” Kumar Chandra asked as he pointed at the slide on the screen. He was the head of operations at Parivar, a mid-size Chennai-based IT services company.

Everyone in the room chuckled, except for Indira Pandit, vice president of HR. Nearly 100 employees had given notice in recent weeks.

“We’re losing them faster than your people can bring them in,” she said, turning to Vikram Srinivasan, the head of recruiting. “Our turnover rate is up to 35%.”

Vikram shook his head. “This isn’t our problem. It’s the Indian labor market. And it may not even be a bad thing. Some studies show that the more frequently employees move around within an industry, the more innovative it becomes.”

Indira gave him a skeptical look.

“This is to be expected, Indira, especially now that we’re rising above the second tier,” he argued.

This time only Kumar laughed, and Indira knew why. Sure, Parivar was growing — in revenue, profitability, and reputation — but it was still much smaller than companies like Infosys, HCL, and other leading global providers of low- to midrange business-process outsourcing services. In the past decade, Parivar’s charismatic CEO Sudhir Gupta had saved the organization from bankruptcy and made it an industry success story — but it was hardly in the first tier.

“I need to present these numbers to Sudhir at the end of the week, and I can’t do that without a theory on what’s happening and a solution to propose. That’s why I called this meeting,” said Indira.

“What about the ‘People Support’ idea that came up in the Future Vision exercise?” Vikram asked. Parivar had just finished its annual innovation process. Employees from all over the company — particularly new and young ones — were encouraged to join senior leaders in brainstorming and design sessions focused on how the firm could reach its goals for the year. This event, a hallmark of Parivar’s inclusive culture, was meant to foster collaboration and an entrepreneurial spirit. One proposal that had garnered attention was the creation of a new function whose sole purpose would be to support Parivar’s employees by hearing their grievances and figuring out solutions.

“I, for one, love the ‘People Support’ idea,” Vikram added. “It emphasizes Sudhir’s philosophy of genuine caring for our people.”

“It sounds genuinely expensive to me,” said Kumar. Indira loved his pragmatism.

“Cost aside, I’m not sure that’s the direction we want to take.” She pointed at the screen. “These people have told us that Sudhir’s ‘love culture’ — our attentiveness to both personal and professional matters — isn’t so alluring anymore. They don’t necessarily want to feel like part of a family at work.”

“Come on,” Vikram said. “That’s our biggest selling point. Recruits love that they won’t be just a cog in the machine, that our company and its managers — Sudhir included — will listen to them. That everyone at Parivar matters.”

“That expectation may attract them, but it’s not keeping them here, especially when competitors offer a 30

Vikram was clearly not convinced: “We need to go bigger. We should put our money where our mouth is with the People Support function, show that we’re 100

Big Brotherly Love

Amal, an associate in his twenties, had clearly prepared for his exit interview with Indira. He was checking off items on a handwritten list.

“Everyone says I’ll hate it at Wipro, that it’s too rigid there. But it’s Wipro! How can I refuse?”

“Yes, I’ve heard they have the same high expectations we do, but it’s more process-driven, far less personal. Here you get more attention from the top.”

Amal smirked. “Yes, if you’re one of Sudhir’s clan.”

“What do you mean?” Indira asked.

“Don’t get me wrong. Parivar promised access to senior executives, and I got it. But Sudhir doesn’t swing by the office, put his legs up, and chat with just anyone. There’s an ‘in’ crowd. Only his favorites get that family-like attention. I guess it’s understandable — one man can only do so much. But if I’m not seeing him or other top people, I’m just stuck at a company that wants to be overinvolved in my life.”

“This People Support idea, for instance,” he said, pointing to the last item on his list. He seemed to be on a roll, so Indira just listened. “I heard about it from my friend who was in that Future Vision group. You have to admit it feels a bit like Big Brother. A whole group of managers dedicated to walking around and asking about our problems? We don’t need more people to talk to. We need more money.” He sat back in his chair, satisfied.

“Thank you for being so candid,” Indira said. “This really is helpful, and we wish you the best of luck.”

A few minutes later, Amal’s manager poked his head into Indira’s office. “Did you get an earful?” he asked.

“I sure did,” Indira said, gesturing for him to come in. “I think he’ll be happy at Wipro — it seems more his speed.”

“You should know that Amal is an outlier. Most people on my team are not like him. They love our company culture.”

Thinking about her long list of “escapees,” Indira wondered whether that was really true.

A New Best Practice?

Sudhir’s office, where he regularly held big meetings, was crowded with inviting, comfortable couches. Indira scanned the room as people settled in. It was a typical gathering: most of Parivar’s senior leaders, including Vikram and Kumar, and a handful of younger employees.

“I’ve asked Nisha to tell us more about the People Support idea,” Sudhir announced. “It’s the brainchild of her Future Vision team. Ready, Nisha?”

Nisha, who looked to be fresh out of business school, began her slide presentation, describing how the new function would work. She included a scenario: An employee is worried about his future with the company because he has been given a time-consuming project that will involve working late, compromising his ability to look after a sick mother in the evening. Aware of the People Support function, he seeks out one of its designated “listeners,” as they would be called, and explains his dilemma. The listener helps him negotiate an arrangement with his boss that allows him not to stay late every night. In Nisha’s last slide, all the characters — the employee, the boss, the listener, and the sick mother — are smiling.

Everyone in the audience clapped, and Sudhir congratulated Nisha. “This is what I love about coming to work every day: Fresh ideas from smart, young people.”

Not surprisingly, Kumar was the first with questions: How much would the function cost? How would it scale up as the company grew? Who would manage it? Nisha attempted to provide answers, but Sudhir interrupted before she got very far. “We must still work some things out, of course, and those all are legitimate concerns. But I think this would be money well spent.”

Kumar wasn’t satisfied. “OK, so we won’t discuss specifics today, but what about our broader plans for growth? Will all this family stuff be appropriate outside India, when we expand to the UK and the U.S.?”

“That’s also an important issue to explore. But people everywhere want their company to care about them and their lives,” Sudhir said, indicating with a glance at Kumar that the interrogation should cease. “Indira, do you have any questions? This obviously falls into your arena.”

Indira shared Kumar’s concerns and more. But she wanted to ask something new. “Nisha, thank you for this thoughtful presentation. I was wondering if you’ve considered how the listeners will be evaluated. How will we know if they’re performing well?”

“Retention numbers,” Nisha said. “The lower our turnover rate, the better the listeners are doing.”

Indira contemplated the complexity of evaluating anyone on the basis of turnover, given the volatility in the labor market. She felt queasy thinking about it and dreaded delivering the most recent attrition numbers to Sudhir.

Vikram piped up to ask whether any other companies in India or elsewhere had tried a similar program or if Parivar would lead the way.

“As far as we know — and Nisha has researched it — no other company has done this before. Sure, HCL has its employee-first culture, but this is about truly understanding and meeting our people’s needs. Nisha and I were talking earlier about how someday this might become a best practice for all of India, perhaps beyond.”

Later, as everyone was filing out, Sudhir pulled Indira aside. “Thank you for going easy on Nisha. We want to encourage young people like her to put forward bold ideas. But of course I want your honest opinion. We’re meeting on Friday, yes? You had something for me?”

Honest Skepticism

Indira took the elevator to the fourth floor. She hoped her colleague and business school friend, Amrita, would be in her office.

“Thank God you’re not busy,” she joked, finding Amrita with her head down at her desk. The two women were always busy, but they had an

open-door policy for each other.

Indira explained about the meeting in Sudhir’s office, the People Support function, the exit interview with Amal, and the horrible turnover numbers.

“So I’m skeptical of this People Support idea because I’m not sure we can really nurture Sudhir’s love culture across an organization that’s growing so fast. It’s one thing as a philosophy of how he interacts with people, but building processes and formal management structures around it is a whole different story.”

“That’s a tough message to deliver to someone who has turned the company around, tripled revenue, and quintupled profits with that culture at the center,” Amrita acknowledged. “I’m sure he thinks this is solving the problem of his limited capacity.”

“But can you formalize a culture as distinctive as ours into processes and roles?” Indira wondered honestly. “Will this People Support function even work? And if it does, won’t it alienate more employees like Amal? What if it worsens our turnover problem instead of fixing it? If we

want to expand to Europe and the U.S., don’t we need to be less like a cult?”

Amrita laughed. “You know what Sudhir likes to say: ‘Cult is part of culture.’ But it’s not your style to just say what he wants to hear, Indira. If you think People Support is a bad idea, tell him. He’ll take your advice seriously.”

Indira knew she had more power than most HR heads. Sudhir wanted to run a humane company, and that meant giving her a say on big issues.

“I plan to be honest with him,” Indira replied. “But another thing Sudhir always says is, ‘Don’t come to me with a problem; come with a solution.’ If Vikram and Nisha are right, People Support could be just the edge we need against the likes of Wipro and Infosys, a way to retain our people and win new recruits. What if this helps us break into the top tier?”

“Do you really think it will, Indira?”

“I’m not sure, and I don’t have any better ideas right now.”

1. Dimensions of Organizational Culture Evident at Parivar

Organizational culture can be described through several key dimensions, which reflect the core values, norms, and practices within an organization. Based on the case of Parivar, the following six dimensions (adapted from Robbins & Judge, 2022) can be clearly identified:

1. **Adaptability** — This dimension refers to the organization’s capacity to respond to environmental changes and challenges. While Parivar encourages innovation (e.g., the Future Vision exercise), it struggles with rapidly adapting to market realities, such as high turnover and competitive compensation. The proposal for the *People Support* function reflects an attempt to adapt but raises questions about long-term effectiveness.
2. **Attention to Detail** — Parivar demonstrates a moderate level of this dimension. The company closely monitors employee turnover and exit interview data, indicating that it values information for decision-making. However, the lack of rigorous evaluation metrics for the new initiative (e.g., relying solely on retention) suggests room for improvement in this area.
3. **Outcome Orientation** — This is less emphasized at Parivar. The organization tends to focus more on *how* work is done — particularly on the experience of employees — rather than on outcomes such as productivity, efficiency, or profitability. This emphasis on values over results may be a cultural strength but can also hinder performance metrics.
4. **People Orientation** — Parivar is highly people-oriented, as evidenced by its *love culture*, CEO Sudhir’s personal involvement, and initiatives such as *People Support*. These elements reflect a deep concern for employee well-being and development.
5. **Team Orientation** — The Future Vision program illustrates a strong team orientation, as it engages employees across levels in collaborative planning. Such initiatives foster a sense of community and collective purpose, albeit with some criticism regarding inclusivity and favoritism.
6. **Integrity** — The organization’s emphasis on trust, openness, and caring leadership reflects a high integrity culture. However, criticisms from employees like Amal about perceived favoritism suggest inconsistencies between values and practice, which could erode trust over time.

2. Cultural Sustenance Practices at Parivar

Parivar employs several cultural mechanisms to sustain its values and identity. These include both formal and informal practices that reinforce its family-like environment:

- **Practices and Rituals:** The annual *Future Vision* exercise is a ritual that empowers employees and reinforces innovation and inclusion. Such events are symbolic and act as cultural reinforcement mechanisms.

- **Symbols:** CEO Sudhir Gupta himself serves as a symbol of the culture. His personal interactions with employees and his “love culture” ideology act as living manifestations of the organization’s values. The office environment — informal and comfortable meeting spaces — also symbolizes the open, family-like culture.
- **Stories and Myths:** Stories of Sudhir saving the company from bankruptcy and being personally involved in employee welfare likely circulate within the organization, creating a narrative of heroic leadership and benevolent management.
- **Socialization:** New employees are socialized through practices such as Future Vision and direct exposure to senior leadership. This helps inculcate cultural values early in their tenure.
- **Heroes:** Sudhir serves as the central hero in Parivar’s cultural narrative. His actions, vision, and leadership define and perpetuate the organizational identity. However, the criticism that only an “in-crowd” receives attention risks transforming the hero narrative into a tale of elitism.
- **Innovative Programs:** The proposed *People Support* function, although debated, is an attempt to formalize and institutionalize the company’s commitment to employee well-being — further sustaining the core values.

Conclusion

Parivar’s culture exhibits both strength and fragility. While deeply rooted in people-oriented values and symbolic leadership, it faces challenges in adaptability, inclusivity, and outcome orientation. The company’s efforts to sustain its culture through rituals, symbols, and socialization are commendable, but without careful evaluation and inclusivity, such mechanisms risk becoming exclusionary or ineffective in the face of growth and global expansion.

3. Arguments For Implementing the People Support Function

The proposed People Support function at Parivar represents a novel, culture-oriented HR intervention aimed at institutionalizing employee care and well-being. Below are the key arguments in favor of its implementation:

1. **Formalization of Organizational Culture:** Parivar’s culture has historically relied on the charismatic leadership of Sudhir Gupta. As the company scales and expands globally, informal cultural diffusion becomes unsustainable. A formal People Support function can help institutionalize the *love culture* across geographies and generations, ensuring cultural continuity.
2. **Strategic Differentiation:** In a hyper-competitive IT services market, where wage hikes and skillsets are easily replicable, organizational culture can serve as a unique differentiator. If executed well, People Support could establish Parivar as an employee-centric employer brand — especially attractive to Gen Z and millennials who value purpose and empathy in the workplace (Deloitte Millennial Survey, 2023).
3. **Proactive Employee Engagement and Retention:** According to Gallup (2022), companies with engaged employees show 23% higher profitability and 18% higher retention. The People Support system, if implemented effectively, could provide timely emotional and operational support to employees facing work-life challenges — potentially reducing voluntary attrition.
4. **Promoting Psychological Safety:** The proposed system can foster psychological safety (Edmondson, 1999), whereby employees feel secure to express concerns without fear of judgment or retribution. This can drive innovation, trust, and long-term commitment.
5. **Alignment with Global Best Practices:** While the model is unprecedented in India, it echoes global trends such as Google’s People Operations and Netflix’s Culture Deck, which prioritize trust, autonomy, and deep employee connection. Parivar can become a pioneer in culturally contextualized HR innovation.
6. **Internal Career Mobility and Leadership Development:** Trained “listeners” can serve as future HR leaders, enhancing cross-functional collaboration and identifying emerging talent within the organization, thereby contributing to succession planning and internal mobility.

4. Arguments Against Implementing the People Support Function

Despite its visionary appeal, the People Support initiative presents several strategic, operational, and cultural risks that must be critically examined:

1. **Cultural Overreach and Intrusiveness:** The very core of Parivar’s value proposition — being like a family — may backfire if it feels too invasive. Employees like Amal view the initiative as a form of corporate surveillance or “Big Brotherism.” This perception can erode autonomy, increase psychological pressure, and amplify attrition among independent-minded employees.

2. **Scalability and Resource Constraints:** As Parivar expands beyond Chennai to global markets like the U.K. or U.S., the feasibility of deploying a personal support system across time zones and cultures is questionable. The function could become bureaucratic and disconnected, thereby undermining its intended human touch.
3. **Misalignment with Market Expectations:** Exit interviews indicate that employees are leaving primarily for financial reasons — such as a 30% pay raise. In such cases, cultural support mechanisms may appear tone-deaf or irrelevant. Investing in competitive compensation or upskilling may yield more tangible results in retention.
4. **Subjectivity in Evaluation and Accountability:** The proposed success metric — reduced turnover — is influenced by external labor market forces, not just internal interventions. This makes performance appraisal of the “listeners” ambiguous and potentially unfair.
5. **Favoritism and Exclusivity Concerns:** As Amal observed, Sudhir’s accessibility is perceived as selective. Unless the People Support team is inclusively designed and transparently governed, the function may reinforce perceptions of favoritism — eroding trust and fairness.
6. **Cost-Benefit Uncertainty:** Without concrete benchmarking or cost analysis, it is difficult to justify the resource allocation. Kumar’s concerns are valid — the investment in this program could divert funds from more strategic areas such as technology upgrades or international marketing necessary for scaling.
7. **Cultural Misfit in Global Expansion:** Western work cultures typically value individualism, meritocracy, and professional boundaries. A familial and emotionally immersive function like People Support may be perceived as intrusive or unprofessional by international teams — limiting its global transferability.

Conclusion

The People Support function is a bold, culturally anchored initiative that reflects Parivar’s aspiration to build a humane and inclusive workplace. While it offers strategic differentiation and reinforces core values, it also risks operational inefficiencies, misalignment with employee expectations, and potential backlash in diverse markets. Parivar must weigh these trade-offs carefully, perhaps by piloting the initiative in a limited scope, gathering feedback, and iteratively refining its structure before full-scale implementation.

5. Recommendations for Sustainable Implementation

1. **Pilot Program Before Full Rollout:** Instead of implementing the People Support function organization-wide, Parivar should initiate a 6–12 month pilot in a single department or location (e.g., Chennai HQ). This will enable the leadership to test assumptions, collect qualitative and quantitative data, and evaluate cultural fit before scaling the model. It also provides room for iterative refinement.
2. **Define Clear Roles and Boundaries:** Establish well-articulated job descriptions for the “listeners” or People Support executives, ensuring that their role complements rather than duplicates HR functions. Emphasize confidentiality, non-intrusiveness, and optional participation. This clarity can dispel fears of surveillance or overreach.
3. **Implement a Data-Driven Evaluation Framework:** To address Kumar’s concerns, develop a balanced scorecard for assessing People Support effectiveness. Metrics may include:
 - Employee well-being surveys
 - Voluntary attrition rates
 - Net Promoter Score (NPS) of internal support functions
 - Manager and peer feedback

Triangulating subjective sentiments with objective KPIs will enhance the credibility and accountability of the initiative.

4. **Ensure Cultural Customization Across Geographies:** Recognizing the diversity of cultural expectations, Parivar should avoid a one-size-fits-all approach. For global teams, adapt the model by using more professional, wellness-oriented terminology (e.g., “Employee Experience Partners”) and provide cultural sensitivity training to listeners.
5. **Align with Business Objectives:** Ensure the People Support function is not perceived as merely “emotional infrastructure.” Integrate it with strategic HR goals such as leadership development, talent retention, and productivity improvement. For instance, People Support can serve as an early detection mechanism for burnout, thereby reducing project delays or absenteeism.

6. **Offer Optional and Anonymous Access:** Allow employees to voluntarily opt-in to People Support, perhaps via an internal platform with anonymous booking or feedback options. This preserves autonomy while still offering support to those who seek it — mitigating Amal’s concern of cultural intrusion.
7. **Create Feedback Loops:** Implement quarterly retrospectives involving employees, People Support staff, and HR leadership to continuously gather insights and suggestions. Incorporate design thinking and co-creation practices to maintain adaptability and responsiveness.
8. **Develop a Compelling Internal Communication Strategy:** Clearly communicate the rationale, scope, and intent of the People Support initiative through storytelling, town halls, and case-based testimonials. Highlight success stories where support improved outcomes, to overcome skepticism and increase engagement.
9. **Provide Professional Training and External Supervision:** Equip People Support staff with coaching, active listening, and conflict resolution skills, preferably certified by professional bodies. For ethical oversight and emotional safeguarding, consider periodic supervision by external psychologists or organizational behavior experts.
10. **Explore Hybrid Compensation-Culture Packages:** Address employee expectations holistically. If exit interviews reveal compensation dissatisfaction, consider combining competitive pay strategies with the cultural offerings of People Support. This would strengthen retention without relying on culture alone.

Conclusion

While the People Support function embodies Parivar’s unique cultural DNA, its success hinges on thoughtful, evidence-based execution. These recommendations aim to preserve the organization’s empathetic ethos while ensuring relevance, scalability, and strategic alignment across a dynamic and global workforce.

Dimension	Pros (Arguments for Implementation)	Cons (Arguments Against Implementation)
Cultural Alignment	Reinforces Sudhir’s “love culture” by institutionalizing care and empathy in employee relations.	May risk formalizing what was previously an informal, charismatic leadership trait — reducing authenticity and increasing cultural rigidity.
Employee Experience	Provides emotional support and fosters psychological safety, especially in high-stress service roles.	Could be perceived as micromanagement or “Big Brother” culture — risking employee discomfort or alienation.
Retention Strategy	Could reduce attrition by addressing grievances proactively, supporting work-life balance, and increasing engagement.	Exit interviews reveal that compensation is a key driver of turnover, not lack of empathy — function may not target root cause.
Innovation and Differentiation	Positions Parivar as an industry innovator — could become a benchmark for employee-first practices in India and globally.	Unproven in peer organizations; high risk if the function does not yield measurable returns on investment.
Scalability and Cost	Opportunity to formalize caring values at scale across regions and departments.	Resource-intensive (personnel, training, monitoring) — raises questions about ROI and alignment with growth objectives.
Strategic Recommendations		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start with a pilot project in one department to assess impact and feasibility. • Clarify role definitions for “listeners” to avoid overlap with existing HR structures. • Develop KPI-based performance metrics, such as retention, satisfaction scores, and utilization rates. • Ensure voluntariness and confidentiality in employee engagement with the function. • Localize and adapt for different geographies (India vs. U.S./U.K.) to maintain cultural relevance. • Combine with compensation adjustments to address the root causes of attrition. • Provide professional training and consider third-party oversight for ethical and psychological robustness. • Communicate transparently to internal stakeholders using storytelling and pilot success narratives. 		

Table 1: Business Evaluation of the People Support Function at Parivar