

Be a Cultural Anthropologist

In this lesson, we will walk through how you can borrow from anthropology to study organizational culture.

We'll cover the following ^

- What is cultural anthropology?
- Artifacts
- Rituals
- Traditions
- Language and lingo
- Behaviors

What is cultural anthropology?

Cultural anthropology is the study of human cultures. A cultural anthropologist may visit or live with people in a different culture to learn all about that culture from the inside. Similarities and differences between cultures can be compared and studied. When you're interviewing with several organizations, you have a chance to do this as well (if only for an hour or two at a time).

Anthropologists study the artifacts, languages, tools, rituals, traditions, and behaviors of a culture. You have an opportunity to do this when you interview. Think of yourself as a scientist and collect data for later comparison and examination.

Artifacts

Artifacts can include posters on walls, team or company apparel, prototypes, products, documentation, office configurations, badges, etc.

- ***What does it say about a culture if you see several people wearing the organization's t-shirt?***

- *What can you interpret from people gathered in impromptu meetings around a whiteboard?*
- *Is the kitchen a hangout place?*

Rituals

Rituals can include daily standup meetings, all-hands meetings, product launches, sales or training sessions, celebrations of successes, support processes, etc. You can gain a lot of information about rituals from questions that are asked, responses that you hear, and other simple observations.

While observing, constantly ask yourself, ***"Do these activities seem like something I would want to do?"***

Traditions

Traditions may involve bigger celebrations like key milestones or annual shareholder meetings. They may include volunteer activities or community engagement that shows the organization giving back.

If you learn about some of the traditions of the organization ask yourself, ***"Do they reinforce positive aspects of the culture?" "Would I want to participate in these traditions?"***

Language and lingo

We have discussed the importance of the language and lingo of an organization in preparing your responses to questions. For your study of the culture, notice the formality of conversations and think about whether it fits with your professional approach at work. All organizations use acronyms, but do they explain them to a newcomer? How might this impact onboarding? If you accept an offer, do you want to be someone who talks like they do?

Behaviors

What other behaviors do you notice? Do people greet each other by name as

you're being escorted around the office? Are you introduced to others? Is

there joking and laughter, or a quiet tone for deep concentration? What is the energy like?

If you think of yourself as a cultural anthropologist and collect data during interviews, you will be better equipped to make a choice about a job offer or choose between many!

That's it for this chapter! In the next chapter, we will learn the patterns for behavioral questions.