

Paul Elling, COM6303.E1, Exercise 2

1. Select and describe a corporate culture. This should be the company that you work for now or have worked for in the past.

At ARCADIS, health and safety has become the corporation's dominant culture, as it beneficially promotes the welfare of the company, its employees, and the external environment. A major reason for the development of a health and safety culture is that clients gauge ARCADIS and its competitors on statistics, such as the number of safety incidents that transpire during or outside of work hours. Another important consideration for the health and safety culture is the public's ever-growing concerns regarding the environment and how "green" corporations are. ARCADIS prides itself on working with the delicate balance of the natural environment. The company established a Health and Safety department to oversee efforts aimed at promoting, improving, or maintaining standards of health and safety on the job. Additionally, health and safety is supported when employees are away from the workplace as well. ARCADIS promotes safe driving through specific recommendations: aim high in steering; get the big picture; keep your eyes moving; leave yourself an out; and make sure they see you (ARCADIS, 2007, p. 1). With ARCADIS being an engineering firm focused on infrastructure, environment, and buildings, the company's employees are occupied in a variety of circumstances from field work to the office. Certain conditions in the field serve as prime candidates for promoting ARCADIS' health and safety culture. Those conditions may include working in areas where poisonous spiders and reptiles inhabit, hazardous waste exists, or dangerous equipment is in use. However, even employees who work primarily in the office must become part of the health and safety culture. Every meeting, regardless of

the department or purpose, begins with a health and safety moment in which an employee discusses an issue that has affected him or her, someone else, or something they have read or seen. Past health and safety moments have included proper ladder usage, workstation ergonomics, tailgating, and avoiding bees, among many others. Frequent email communications and health and safety moments help to reinforce ARCADIS' culture. Executives demonstrate their support through the CEO Wellness Challenge, which is a year-long event that the CEO created to encourage employees to exercise regularly and maintain healthier diets (ARCADIS, 2010, p. 1).

2. What are the symbols of the company?

ARCADIS has several symbols that reflect the company and the values for which it stands. The name of the company is a symbol by itself and comes from the Greek idea of existing in the most optimal place in the world (ARCADIS, 2006, p. 1). Another company symbol, the salamander, which is on ARCADIS' logo, means that the company strives to maintain a balance between humans altering the landscape and the natural environment, just as the salamander can exist on land and in water (ARCADIS, 2006, p. 1). The environment is a symbol of ARCADIS, as it is woven into the company's strategy and is of great consideration for all of the work done by ARCADIS. Driving automobiles is a symbol of ARCADIS, as it requires employees to take personal responsibility for their own safety. Health and safety is the hallmark and culture within ARCADIS, which makes driving a daily symbol of the care and caution employees must use. ARCADIS' slogan, "Imagine the result", symbolizes the company's commitment to limitless solutions and the possibility of harmony with the environment in which people

live and work (ARCADIS, 2006, p. 1). According to Eisenberg, Goodall, and Trethewey (2010), a symbol “stands for something other than itself” (p. 104). The symbols of ARCADIS carry meanings that reflect the company and its values in addition to having inherent meanings. Driven by its principles, ARCADIS’s core values serve as a symbol of the company’s determination to create innovative solutions while caring about the environment. The ideas of being “client-focused”, “market-driven”, and “world-class” are all symbols of ARCADIS, as the company strives to work in a manner that sets itself apart as a leader in the fields of infrastructure and environment.

3. What are the metaphors of the company?

ARCADIS promotes a few metaphors that demonstrate the company’s size and focus on seamless operations. The company considers itself an “international network”, as it is connected by offices in dozens of countries that strive to understand the needs of the local markets (ARCADIS, 2006, p.1). This metaphor conjures up the image of millions of computers connected to each other over the vast Internet network. The ARCADIS network allows its offices to influence each other in a helpful manner or to access help from one another. Although ARCADIS is dispersed all over the globe, the organization still considers itself to be an “integrated company”, as employees in different offices collaborate remotely on a daily basis (ARCADIS, 2006, p.1). As communications technology continues to advance, ARCADIS offices become more seamless, giving additional credence to the idea of the company being truly integrated. To reinforce the idea of connectedness, ARCADIS prefers the notion of being “one firm” rather than offices that operate independently of one another (ARCADIS, 2006, p.1). As

Eisenberg, Goodall, and Trethewey (2010) stated, the “one firm” notion is the “cultural perspective” used to make employees feel united (p. 105). Over the years, ARCADIS has experienced numerous mergers. It can take time for mergers to actually be completed. When they happen with ARCADIS, the combined companies form a greater force in the marketplace as a singular entity. All of these metaphors lend themselves to suggesting that ARCADIS is large corporation that is quite capable of handling the projects in which it engages.

4. Describe the language of the company.

As Eisenberg, Goodall, and Trethewey (2010) discussed, language can serve a symbolic purpose in organizations (p. 104). Commonly used language at ARCADIS includes words like stewardship and ownership, as it wants employees to become invested in the company. These words promote the idea that employees are stewards of their contributions to the company through projects. With ARCADIS maintaining a culture of health and safety, anything that has to do with these words becomes part of the company’s language. In relation, wellness is a term bandied about, especially because the CEO Wellness Challenge is a year-long event aimed at encouraging employees to take personal responsibility for their own health (ARCADIS, 2010, p. 1). Strategy is a term that plays a major role in the language of the company, as ARCADIS does not seek quick fixes to problems, but rather methodically strategizes about long-term solutions. Of course, since ARCADIS is an engineering firm, technical terminology is part of the permanent lexicon. Various types of engineers, scientists, and information technology professionals are employed by the company. Their jargon enriches the vocabulary of

ARCADIS in addition to the business terminology found in other large corporations. Departments, such as human resources, accounting, legal, and project management contribute mightily to the language of ARCADIS. Even computer languages enter into the realm of language at ARCADIS. Furthermore, with the company possessing such an international presence, its language includes several human languages, including English, Spanish, Portuguese, French, Chinese, German, and more.

5. What stories circulate about the history of the culture?

While ARCADIS has many stories that make up the history of its health and safety culture, particular stories stand out as lessons that employees remember. Some stories exist as examples of what not to do, while others provide the basis for how to keep health and safety as an important focus. For example, an employee on site had been working near a manhole and had forgotten to put the cover back over top of it. He ended up falling down the manhole and ended up breaking bones. The lesson for employees is to maintain awareness of safety matters on site. Another employee out in the field avoided being bitten by a brown recluse spider. The spider had crawled into his glove and found shelter there. Fortunately, the employee caught sight of the spider and safely removed it from his glove, which prevented the spider from giving him an infectious bite. Part of health and safety is to be aware of the surroundings, but another side of it is to follow instructions that help employees avoid putting themselves in harm's way. These stories and lessons become the history of the culture and also serve as practical experiences for employees to remember. The stories of health and safety "convey to members what and who the culture values" (Eisenberg, Goodall, & Trethewey, 2010, p.

106). One story that remains with employees is when a coworker's family experienced a carbon monoxide outbreak in their home. A disaster was averted, because they had carbon monoxide detectors that alerted them to evacuate their home. Had the detectors not alerted them, the family would have died from carbon monoxide poisoning (ARCADIS, 2010, p. 1). The health and safety culture is upheld and its history is enriched by stories such as this one. Regardless of whether health and safety issues happen at work or at home, it is important for employees to be mindful of the culture in the best interests of themselves, their families, and their coworkers. Of course, employees do not always follow the lead of their coworkers. Some stories involving motor vehicle accidents, slips or falls, or other accidents go unreported, which detracts from the company's history of a health and safety culture.

6. Describe the heroes or heroines.

At ARCADIS, heroes and heroines are the leaders who started the companies that eventually merged with ARCADIS, the employees who have given the company loyal service for twenty years or more, and employees who live by and uphold the company's health and safety culture. Longevity at the company is celebrated, and employees that reach the twenty-year milestone serve as heroes and heroines. Their service to the company is valued, and they are recognized by their fellow coworkers as important contributors and team members. Of course, employees who helped found the companies that later merged with ARCADIS are respected and considered heroes and heroines. Their vast knowledge and experience are keys to supporting the company as it continues to grow. Obviously, with ARCADIS' culture of health and safety, employees who have

applied good practices, especially those promoted by the company, when confronted with precarious situations are rightfully acknowledged as heroes and heroines. They provide examples for coworkers to remember when they face similar circumstances. These employees are the organizational “role models” that ARCADIS see as the embodiment of the very important health and safety culture (Eisenberg, Goodall, & Trethewey, 2010, p. 106).

7. How are the companies values communicated?

According to Eisenberg, Goodall, and Tretheway (2010), “values represent a (more or less) shared set of beliefs about appropriate organizational behaviors” (p. 106). How these values are communicated is essential to them being embraced by employees. Instead of simply forcing values upon employees, ARCADIS encourages employees to communicate them to one another. The values of ARCADIS are communicated through various mediums that are either personal or delivered via technology. Email and instant messaging are common mean for communicating company values. Frequently, the intranet is a location where company values are communicated to employees, including the CEO’s blog, announcements, and the Safety Tip. The company’s public Internet website communicates the values of ARCADIS to the world and especially to prospective clients. More personal means of communicating company values are the initial interviews where potential employees meet the company. Of course, the monthly and quarterly face-to-face meetings help to communicate the values that ARCADIS supports. The company also communicates its health and safety values through pamphlets or laminated cards that employees can carry in their wallets or purses. Acronyms, such as

TRACK, serve to communicate the health and safety culture and values. TRACK stands for think through the task; recognize the hazards; assess the risks; control the hazards; and keep health and safety first in all things (ARCADIS, 2007, p. 1). The purpose of communicating values through TRACK is to encourage employees to apply these principles before every task.

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