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Aligning and Propagating Organizational Values

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Abstract

That organizational values are positively related to performance is well established by works such as ‘Good to Great’ (Collins, 2001) and ‘Built to Last’ (Collins and Porras, 2004). Academic works also show several positive relationship such as 1) organizational commitment and citizenship behavior (Cohen, 2011; Arthaud-Day et al, 2012; Vurgun and Sezai, 2011), 2) organizational culture and job satisfaction (Danuta & Vytautas, 2011), 3) work engagement (Anna et al, 2013), 4) lower burn out (Anna et al, 2013), 5) team performance (Arthaud-Day et al, 2012), 6) organizational learning (Cohen et al, 2011; Cohen & Liu, 2011), and 7) organizational integration (Levent et. Al, 2011). While values are important, whether we align the values of the individual and organization and propagate them adequately to benefit from their positive relationship is not so clear. This study is motivated by the observation that many MBA students could not easily find the values of many good Indian companies and that they could not easily decipher them when tasked to do so as part of their assignment. Auster and Freeman (2013) also found that value-fit in organizations leaves much to be desired. In this work, I examine the question whether organizations match their values to the individual values and whether they propagate their espoused values in an easy to access manner. Using secondary input procured from the web site of companies that figure among the top 25 in the Business Today’s ranking, 2012, I examine these issues by cognitive mapping of the espoused values to the value theory framework (Schwartz, 2006) and find that many organizations do not map their values to the individual values or propagate them in an easily accessible manner. Recommendations are given to mitigate this problem.

Keywords: organizational values, cognitive mapping, individual values

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1. Introduction

Contribution to the body of knowledge: This paper examines how effectively top business organizations in India do value mapping to create value congruence between individual and organizational values and effectively they achieve value propagation. Since values are extremely important for sustenance and performance of an organization, the knowledge contributes to enhancing organizational effectiveness. The author uses the value theory framework for this mapping.

Teaching a required course of leadership in a premier AACSB accredited business school which has 'leadership' as one of the Program Learning Objectives, I had a pleasant surprise while handling one of the student assignments. The assignment required students to evaluate the vision statements of some major Indian companies using Collins and Porras model of vision building, a model which includes core values as one of the important components. The surprise found it difficult to identify the core values of many Indian companies simply because these were not clearly articulated and easily available and they had to come up with inferences drawn from various inputs from the company web sites and other resources rather than procure it through a direct search using key word 'values' or 'core values' in the search window of the company web site. This made me ask some basic question i.e., do values matter? Are companies proud of their espoused values and if so, do they really announce them from the roof tops? How well aligned are the values of the company and the individual?

In this paper I assume that espoused values, distinguished from demonstrated/practiced values, is an essential precondition if values have to be effective. Then I examine the values of top 25 Indian companies as ranked by 'Business Today' magazine (BT 500, 2012) from two perspectives. Firstly, I examine whether companies propagate/announce them in a manner that is articulate and easy to identify and secondly I map the key words of their values to themes in the value theory (Schwartz, 2006) through a manual cognitive process to find out whether there is a prima facie case to be concerned about these. Evidence shows that both value propagation and value mapping needs considerable improvement.

The question whether values are important is a rhetorical one. Classical works such as 'Good to Great' (Collins, 2001), 'Built to Last' (Collins and Porras, 2004), 'The Leadership Challenge' (Kouzes & Posner, 2006) and 'Emerging Value in Health Care: The Challenges for Professionals' (Dumma, 2010) have all articulated the indispensable role of values. Values are positively related to 1) organizational commitment and citizenship behavior (Cohen, 2011; Arthaud-Day et al, 2012; Levent et al, 2011), 2) organizational culture and job satisfaction (Danuta & Vytautas, 2010), 3) work engagement (Anna et al, 2013), 4) lower burn out (Anna et al, 2013; Dyląg et al, 2013), 5) team performance (Arthaud-Day et al, 2012), 6) organizational learning (Cohen et al, 2011), and 7) organizational integration (Levent et al, 2011). Values are important for for shaping team behavior (Bardi & Schwartz, 2003, p.

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