President’s Breakfast Series

“Totems and Taboos Survey Results”

Thursday, December 6, 2012
What is Organizational Culture?

This is the environment that surrounds you at work. It’s what shapes your work enjoyment, your work relationships, and your work processes. However, you can’t see culture. Culture is like a personality – just like a person personality, an organizational culture is made up of values, beliefs, underlying assumptions, attitudes, behaviors shared by a group of people. It is the behavior that is acceptable – generally unspoken and unwritten – rules of working together. Organizational culture is neither good nor bad – it is the environment around us at work.

An organization’s culture is made up of all the life experiences each employee brings to the organization. IT is especially influenced by the leaders of the organization through decision making and strategic direction.

It is made up of: language, decision making, symbols, stories and legends, and daily work practices. Examples would be what’s on our desks, bulletin boards, webpage, newsletters, interaction in meetings, how we collaborate really speaks to our culture. People learn how to perform certain behaviors through either rewards or negative consequences.
Dr. John Slocum’s March 2012 Breakfast Series Review

Dr. Slocum’s definitions of the distinctive cultural elements that guide the behaviors of the members of that culture. The Four T’s:

A. **Totems** are rewards/prizes that the organization uses to encourage employees for proper behavior and achieving its goals.

B. **Taboos** are behaviors that should not be engaged in by an employee. If these are, no rewards are given.

C. **Traditions** are the known practices of an organizational culture that have existed over a period of time.

D. **Transitions** are the changes carried out during a time period from current to new rules or practices.
SHSU Totems

Most accurate descriptors of the SHSU culture

1. Enthusiasm for the job
2. Achievement orientation
3. Being team oriented
4. Respect for individual’s rights
5. Emphasis on quality
6. Having a good reputation
7. Being careful
8. Being results oriented
9. Being socially responsible
10. Having a clear, guiding philosophy
SHSU Taboos

Least accurate descriptors of the SHSU culture

45. Quick to take advantage of opportunities
46. High pay for good performance
47. Risk taking
48. Being precise
49. Being aggressive
50. Being decisive
51. Being demanding
52. Single set of standards throughout the firm
53. Not constrained by many rules
54. Confronting conflict directly
Neutral Descriptors

23. Taking individual responsibility
24. Developing friends at work
25. Being people oriented
26. Security of employment
27. Informality
28. Being innovative
29. Managers offer praise for good performance
30. Being easy going
31. Working in collaboration with others
32. Adaptability
Questions?

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