

Guidelines for Assessing Organizational Culture

- Look around. What do the headquarters and other buildings look like? How are people dressed? How much interaction is there? Who is talking to whom? How does the place “feel”?
- Read newsletters and other internal documents. What values are emphasized? Who is held up for praise? Are parties, celebrations, or other ceremonies mentioned? What sorts of things are discussed?
- Look at annual reports or other communications to those outside the firm. What “face” is being presented to the world?
- Ask, “Can you tell me anything about what the culture is like here? Are there any stories that people here tell about X?”
- Ask, “What values are stressed in X? How are they communicated? How are they reinforced?”
- Ask, “Who is looked up to in X?”
- See what you can learn about rites and ceremonies in the organization. What happens when people accomplish something? Are there “rites of passage” such as promotion ceremonies and retirement parties? Are there regular “get-togethers” such as holiday parties, social events, and company softball games?
- Ask, “What sorts of behaviors are expected and rewarded here? What sorts of behaviors are punished?”
- Ask people outside the firm what they think of it.
- Check magazines, newspapers, and other sources to get clues about the culture.
- As appropriate, use quantitative measures such as the QFIT-C, Organizational Culture Profile, Organizational Culture Inventory or a tailored Culture Survey.

Making Sense of the Information

- Overall, how salient is the culture?
 - Do leaders mention culture, values, and heroes in their messages?
 - Do organizational members talk much about culture and its elements?
- What primary themes emerge?
- Are responses consistent across people, levels, and units?
- How does everything fit together?
 - Are valued behaviors rewarded?
 - Are symbols, stories, heroes, and ceremonies consistent?