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Marketing culture : an ethnographic case study of organizational culture in Silicon Valley

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**MARKETING CULTURE: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC CASE STUDY
OF ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE IN SILICON VALLEY**

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Departments of Social Science and Anthropology

San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirement for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Kathleen MacKenzie

December 1996

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ABSTRACT

MARKETING CULTURE: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC CASE STUDY OF ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE IN SILICON VALLEY

by Kathleen MacKenzie

This thesis addresses the topic of corporate culture in a Silicon Valley high tech organization. It explores an explicitly articulated corporate culture as a managerial process which attempts to influence employees to work toward achieving organizational goals. This process strives to shape workers thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. The findings of this research challenge a number of assumptions upon which corporate culture rests. These assumptions, the significance of corporate culture, and the wider role of cultural issues in the workplace are examined in an ethnographic study of corporate culture in one Silicon Valley organization. The research demonstrates that managers take a very narrow view of culture in developing corporate culture, that the use of corporate culture involves a complex interactive and interpretive process, and that corporate culture is often inconsistent and contradictory. As a result, the use of corporate culture has significant implications for organizations and for workers.

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CHAPTER ONE

THE PROBLEM AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE

An enduring challenge for corporations is persuading employees to exert effort toward organizational goals. Many of the processes to achieve this are familiar and traditional, such as systems that compensate employees through incentives and rewards and work policies that are enforced through supervision. More recently, corporations have sought to control employee behavior through the development of explicitly articulated "corporate cultures" that attempt to internalize in employees corporate goals and ways of behaving, and to thereby transform their thoughts and feelings. These corporate cultures are often thought to be doubly beneficial: ideally they are more efficient in achieving employee compliance, while they are more humane and enlightened than the strict, external discipline imposed by many employers.

This use of well articulated corporate cultures by management rests upon assumptions that are often unexamined. First, corporate cultures may be presented as homogeneous or unitary. Other manifestations of culture within the corporation may be safely ignored, and the official corporate culture becomes the exclusive manifestation of the cultural. Corporate culture thus acknowledges the importance of culture, while limiting its conceptualization to ways that are acceptable to management. Second, corporate culture may be presented as a set of beliefs and values that are officially sanctioned and transmitted to employees who then follow them. The relationship between idea and action becomes simple, direct, and

unambiguous. The price of this clarity is that the interactive nature of cultural development and the individual interpretations of official dogma are overlooked. Finally, the elements of a specific corporate culture are assumed to be internally consistent, and thus to present no problems of interpretation for employees who must act accordingly. The ambiguities, tensions, and dilemmas of culture are ignored, and as a result the corporate culture is presented as clear and straightforward.

This thesis explores these assumptions about corporate culture in the context of one organization. The corporation is located in Silicon Valley, a region marked by various high technology industries, and is often viewed as a model of the Silicon Valley ideal. Because corporate culture is a prominent feature of the social landscape in many companies, the research examines the significance of corporate culture in one company and the wider role of cultural issues in the workplace. As a result the thesis has implications for employees and employers, as well as for a region and a society in which organizations such as corporations play a prominent role.

Background and Significance

With the increasing complexity of societies, increased travel, migration and immigration, the development of new communications technologies, and globalization, the concept of culture has become salient in recent years in a variety of academic disciplines. The concept of culture has also been adopted outside of academia, by businesses and organizations competing for limited markets, resources, and profits, in a environment of rapid technological and demographic change. Businesses employ a

variety of strategies to survive and succeed in reaching their goals by increasing quality, productivity, predictability, and efficiency. The management of corporate culture is one such strategic response to the competitive environment, growing numbers of workers, and the complexity of society.

The Study of Culture

The field of anthropology has been built around the study of culture and it is a concept that anthropologists have wrestled with for decades. In anthropology, culture is understood to be the shared and learned meanings, values, and understandings, which inform knowledge, attitudes, and actions, and which are symbolically transmitted, expressed, and communicated. Perhaps indicative of the success of anthropologists in illuminating the importance of culture in people's lives, the application of concept of culture by other fields complicates questions of culture because of the variety of definitions of what culture is and how it is important.

Within the discipline of anthropology alone there are a number of theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of culture. Specific aspects of culture, such as artifacts and material products, language and symbols, cognitive processes, environmental influences, social structures, or a combination of these features may qualify its study. Theoretical constructs for the study of culture can be divided into two general distinctions, those that view culture as ideational systems and those that view it as sociocultural systems.

Some anthropological and social science approaches relate culture to its interaction with social systems and in these, conditions such as history, environment, or social structures are linked with culture in sociocultural systems. Historical-diffusionism stresses the importance of history and the migration of cultural traits with an eye toward patterns, configurations, and trends in the evolution and study of culture (Boas 1939). Ecological-adaptation understands culture to be a system of socially transmitted behavior patterns that relate human communities to their ecological settings or environments (Rappaport 1968). Similarly, cultural materialism (Harris 1979) suggests that the explanation of aspects of human culture are material in nature with the determining factors being demographic, ecological, environmental, and technological. Functionalist and systems approaches view societies as social systems, and the various aspects of culture are explained in terms of their interdependence and contribution to the maintenance of those systems (Radcliffe-Brown 1952; Malinowski 1961).

Cultural idealists perceive culture as systems of ideas in which culture is distinct from the social system. These view the individuals or actors as the bearers of culture. Levi-Strauss (1966) stressed the importance of unconscious cognitive processes and structures in ordering experience and his structuralist approach is related to an array of culture studies. Ethnoscience (Goodenough 1971) view culture as a system of shared cognitions. Semiotics and the study of signs, symbols, language and meaning also center on cognitive processes and meaning, as do hermeneutical or

interpretive studies of culture (Geertz 1973). Studies of symbolic interaction, such as those of anthropologist Gregory Bateson (1972) and sociologist Erving Goffman (1959), view communication, action, and interaction as related to cognitive understandings and the meanings actors attach to things and to social action.

These then are some of the theoretical bases for the study of culture. The connection between culture and the organization is not new in the social sciences and much of its study derives from these foundations. However, a relatively recent development is the application of the concept of culture by management to organizational infrastructures. This development has resulted in two distinct ways to approach organizational culture and corporate culture, one which is descriptive and the other prescriptive.

Culture in Organizations

In examining culture in organizations, anthropological research approaches the task from the descriptive position which incorporates the empirical and critical analysis of organizational culture. From the descriptive position organizations *are* culture, or a subset of culture. This view of culture is systematic and detailed and sometimes attempts to characterize and examine culture by relating it to theoretical views.

Much of the descriptive research in organizational culture is informed by the cognitive, structural, or interpretive anthropological approaches, locating organizational culture in the meanings and symbolism of a group. Smircich (1983), for instance, describes organizational culture as an outcome of shared meanings that

emerge from group interactions. Barley (1983) emphasizes semiotics, or symbols and signs in the study of occupational and organizational cultures.

Other social science perspectives on organizational culture have had the flavor of the functionalist approach by focusing upon certain characteristics of organizational cultures and how they relate to organizational structures. Schwartzmann (1989), in her ethnography of the meeting, focuses on one component of the organizational culture in practice, and analyzes its function in the organization and as it relates to the wider society. The notion of control in organizations similarly relates to the structures and systems within organizations (Ray 1986).

In some studies of organizational culture, the emphasis is on subcultures or categories of individuals within organizations, most notably those in management or leadership positions (Schein 1992) or members of specific groups, like ethnic minorities, female workers, and so on (Fernandez Kelly and Garcia 1988).

Occupational communities and careers (Van Maanen and Barley 1984) represent another basis for ethnographic research on the organizational culture. Anthropologists have argued that the "native-view" or insider's perspective in organizational studies is an effective and accurate means to describe and analyze the culture of organizations (Gregory 1983). The descriptive position is typically based upon empirical research with a focus on the insider's point of view.

One critique of much of the research of organizational culture emerges from its failure to relate culture in organizations to the larger social structures that surround it

(Alvesson 1993; Baba 1989). Political and economic conditions, post-industrial society, technological changes, and how organizational cultures respond to these conditions are often omitted from such studies. Saxenian (1994) confronts this failure when she attempts to compare how different conditions in two different high tech regions influenced the formation of two very different regional cultures. Knights and Wilmott also argue that organizational culture cannot be "adequately researched without reference to the political and material contexts of which they are a medium and outcome" (1987: 58).

A final category for the study of organizational culture endeavors to construct new theoretical models or expanded methods for its study. Martin and Meyerson (1988), present a case for the exploration of ambiguity in organizations as an alternative to the typical foci of organizational culture studies which characterize culture as affecting integration or differentiation. Alvesson proposes a "multiple cultural configuration" approach in which organizational cultures are not "unitary wholes or... stable sets of subcultures but...mixtures of cultural manifestations of different levels and kinds" (1993:118).

The way that the study of culture in organizations is conceptualized and conducted is often reflective of a particular guiding principle or abstraction. More importantly, anthropological approaches to organizational studies represent the researcher's efforts to frame, describe, and analyze organizational culture with a fundamental understanding of its complexity and its ubiquitousness. As such they are

grounded in a view of organizational culture "as a body of research in which the concept of culture is applied to the study of human behavior in organizational settings" (Jordan 1989:2). In so doing, the relevance, scope, intricacy, and depth of culture or of specific aspects or demonstrations of culture are pursued and the complexity of culture is given its appropriate weight.

Corporate Culture

The concept of culture was picked up by a growing segment of business management in the early 1980's, when a second approach to culture in organizations, the prescriptive view, grew in popularity. This perspective is employed most often by organizational development specialists, consultants, and management as a means of assessing and improving the operations of the organization. In the prescriptive view organizations use the concept of culture as a management tool and "corporate culture" is seen as a strategy that organizations can use to produce desired results. This view assumes that organizational goals can be better achieved by either maintaining certain existing values and beliefs within a given organization or changing current values and beliefs by promoting new ones (Deal and Kennedy 1982).

Corporate culture was made fashionable as a management strategy in the early 1980's. William Ouchi's *Theory Z* (1981) touched a sore spot by highlighting the Japanese edge on American organizations and examining the cultural and structural differences between organizations in the two countries. Later, with the publication of two books, *The Search for Excellence* (Peters and Waterman 1982) and *Corporate*

Cultures (Deal and Kennedy 1982), both of which were outcomes of work conducted by a large business consultancy firm, the concept of corporate culture found a firm footing in business practices. For example, Peters and Waterman examined the practices of successful American businesses and found that "without exception, the dominance and coherence of culture proved to be an essential quality of the excellent companies" (p.75).

Both of these publications became celebrated among some business organizations and following their lead, corporate culture became a popular organizing strategy for management. As organizations began to reinterpret corporate culture individually, a number of trends became prevalent. Founding fathers and leaders became important icons for the strategy and often myths and stories about such figures became prevalent in organizations (Schein 1992). New rituals and practices were developed to carry the culture to members and naturally occurring practices became endowed with symbolic significance (Trice and Beyer 1993). Another trend was a rising wave of "diagnostic tools," often developed by business consultants, designed to measure, evaluate and adjust corporate culture in organizations (Sathe 1983; Ott 1989; Hofstede 1991).

While each organization may boldly proclaim its own unique culture, common cultural features of organizational life are the norm. These common features are rooted in capitalism, education, the work ethic, political and social policy, and consumerism (Braverman 1975). This common culture is, of course, sometimes

influenced and modified by new management strategies and organizational developments. Books with catchy titles like *When Giants Learn to Dance* (Kanter 1989) and *Flight of the Buffalo* (Belasco and Stayer 1993) advise businesses on a range of issues from managing diversity in the work place, team building, leadership development, organizational change, and a host of other timely topics which are often reinforced through lectures, workshops, and trainings. These occasionally become part of the cultural discourse in organizations. As a result, the elements of corporate cultures are by no means exclusive to individual organizations. Rather the tendency is for trendy groups of strategies to be picked up and incorporated as components of diverse corporate cultures.

Corporate culture thus conceptualized is a consciously created thing, a manufactured component of the organization that can be consciously transmitted and even purposefully changed to suit new situations and challenges. However, a fundamental weakness in this perspective is its failure to account for a multitude of other cultural and social influences that operate within the workplace and that even predetermine the corporate culture. Furthermore, the fundamental nature of the corporate culture as a process for the control of workers is rarely articulated.

Studies of Organizational Control

In a very pragmatic sense, corporate culture can be regarded as a form of social control (Ouchi 1981; Kunda, 1992). The use of corporate culture as a style of management explicitly demonstrates the use of normative measures as organizations

attempt to meet their goals and objectives by changing and reinforcing specific workplace norms, beliefs, and values.

Social theorists, in examining the history and nature of work and organizations, have observed and commented on various attempts by organizations to control and influence the workplace. Contemporary problems in the workplace were born with the rapid rise of industrialization which led to the specialization of the work force (Durkheim 1964). As industry grew, so too did the need to implement methods to supervise growing numbers of workers, resulting in the growth of the management sector of the work force. Scientific management (Taylor 1947), which broke down jobs into the smallest manageable components to increase efficiency, arose as one response to the rapid expansion of industrial production and led to the deskilling of labor and the alienation of the worker, as well as increasing organizational control over workers (Braverman 1975; Edwards 1979). Weber (1947) described the rationalization¹ of the workplace, critiquing its dehumanizing component as bureaucracies attempted to achieve their production goals in the cheapest, most efficient ways.

Later in the century a new style of organizing the workplace emerged, following the experimental work of Elton Mayo (1933) in a Western Electric assembly operation, which, in theory, counteracted the dehumanization of the workplace. This

¹Weber referred to the rationalization of action as the "deliberate adaptation to situations in terms of self-interest" (p. 123).

strategy emphasized the human side of business by attempting to create work environments which promoted a sense of self development, meaning, and satisfaction among workers. The "Human Relations" school of thought spawned by Mayo's work was built upon by organizational development, human resources management, industrial psychologists, and the rising wave of organizational consultants and trainers. Douglas MacGregor's "Theory Y" offered a formula for integrating the individual into organizational goals by promoting an environment whereby employees can "achieve their own goals best by directing their efforts toward the success of the enterprise" (1960: 49). Human relations has been viewed as one example of the attempt by organizations to exert normative control over workers.

Control in the modern workplace presents an ongoing challenge to organizations. *Contested Terrain* (Edwards 1979: 20-21) developed the notion of structural control in organizations in which processes of control are located "in the social structure or the social relations of the workplace" and in the "physical structure of the labor process." Edwards argues that hierarchical job ladders with the potential for promotion within large organizations have fragmented the working class. In an analysis of complex organizations, Etzioni (1975) discussed the use of three different types of control--coercive, normative, and remunerative--that organizations use in their efforts to achieve the compliance of employees. Normative control "rests on the allocation and manipulation of symbolic rewards and deprivations" (1975: 5).

Clearly normative social control can become embedded in the organizational structures and operate as a means for organizations to achieve their own goals. It is in these structures that the concept of culture, adopted in many organizations as "good" management practice, has become formally situated through the creation and articulation of an explicit set of corporate values and beliefs which are designed to further organizational goals and attempt to appeal to and transform the emotions and actions of employees.

Corporate Culture and Individuals

Control of workers continues to play a significant role in work force management today. As members of a corporation, individual workers are expected to perform within the social frameworks constructed by their organizations. Many of the latter have adopted corporate culture as an organizational strategy that aims to ensure the survival of the organization in the competitive business environment and achieve internal cohesion and accord. Defenders of corporate culture believe that as a strategy to motivate workers, it is a system that is both humane and rewarding to employees. They argue that by aligning their own beliefs and values with those of the corporation, employees will not only further the goals of the organization, but will achieve a higher level of success and satisfaction in their own work lives.

On the other hand, detractors from the corporate culture view argue that while such modern management techniques claim to elevate the worker and transform the work environment, leading to "the reenchantment of the workplace" (Howard 1985),

there are unexamined contradictions and dangers of this transformation for the individual. Similarly, in his examination of the individual in the workplace, William H. Whyte Jr. constructed a generic model of *The Organization Man* (1956), outlining the processes of the organization and characteristics of the organization man, while warning the individual against the potential hazards of conformity. Echoing Whyte's cautionary tone, Kunda describes how management in the company uses culture to shape "the employees' selves in the corporate image" (1992: 13).

Much of the research on organizational and corporate culture has resulted in descriptions or assessments of the culture or subdivisions of it, and tends to neglect or ignore the interaction of the individual in the organizational culture and the implications of this active and interpretive role. In viewing the actor or the individual in a social context, A.F.C. Wallace's concept of an individual's "mazeway," as the unique mental image used by the individual as a "representation of the operating characteristics of a 'real' world" (1961: 16) gives some indication of the complexity of the interaction between the individual and the corporate culture. One's mazeway contains (1) symbolic, altruistic, negative, and organic values, (2) objects, including self, the human environment, the nonhuman environment, the supernatural environment, and views of how the entire socio-cultural, self, natural, and supernatural system works, and (3) techniques which are prioritized ways of manipulating objects in order to achieve results or values. Based on his argument, the range of experiences and interpretations of experiences in a given setting is limitless

and this applies to work settings and corporate culture as well as any other social setting. Accordingly, we may reasonably doubt the adequacy of most attempts to codify and manipulate corporate culture.

Some research and theory explains individual responses to the complexity of social interaction by examining roles and identification with roles. Goffman (1959) describes identity as both the identification with and distance from a role, and in this context the corporate self may vary from the individual's sense of self in different situations and environments. In a similar vein, Leon Festinger's theory of "cognitive dissonance"² (1962) examines the circumstances under which the inconsistencies which an individual encounters between knowledge, beliefs, and experiences are or are not reconciled. Arlie Hochschild (1983) identifies "deep acting"³ as a characteristic arising when an individual is trained or instructed in appropriate emotions to match specific situations and roles, and which may over time obscure the distinction between an individual's true emotions or self and that of the role. These examinations characterize individuals as active participants in the social settings in which they find themselves.

² Festinger theorizes that individuals will attempt to reduce the tensions created by dissonance by changing knowledge and/or behavior and "actively avoid situations and information" that would increase dissonance (p.3).

³ Hochschild's discussion of Delta Airlines flight attendants introduced the concept of deep acting to describe the situation when, over a period of time, the boundaries between roles and identity become blurred. For a discussion of deep acting among high tech employees see Kunda, 1992.

Cohen (1994) reminds researchers that individuals are self-reflexive, active architects of their roles and conduct. In order to discover and examine workers understandings and embodiment of corporate culture it is necessary to "descend into detail...to grasp firmly not only the various cultures but the various sorts of individuals within each culture" (Geertz 1973: 53). It is in this context that the implications and consequences of the corporate cultures will manifest themselves.

Conclusion

The focus of the research, the exploration of organizational use of corporate culture as a strategy to secure the compliance of workers by articulating an explicit set of values, beliefs, and symbols, has been introduced in this chapter. A review of the literature on organizational control and corporate culture identifies the foundations of the strategy. The problem is that these corporate cultures are constructed upon often unexamined assumptions. Further review of the literature tells us that these assumptions may be inaccurate and incomplete.

The first of these assumptions is that corporate culture is exclusive, homogeneous, and unitary. In examining the debate on the study of culture, we have demonstrated that culture is a large, wide ranging, and intricate concept. A discussion of descriptive explorations of organizational culture has outlined empirical evidence of various sources of culture in organizations. As such, culture within organizations is not limited to corporate culture alone.

The second assumption is that consistent and predictable thoughts and actions will result from the values of the corporate culture. We have examined research and theory which addresses the interactive and interpretive nature of the individual. Since individual workers are expected to think and behave in accordance with the corporate culture, we consider that individuals may have different understandings and exhibit different behaviors in response to the corporate culture.

Finally, the question of the internal consistency of corporate culture is explored. As the literature makes clear, a number of external circumstances influence the shaping of the corporate culture. Furthermore, managerial strategies change and evolve, as do the specific elements of corporate cultures. Corporate culture is not created nor does it operate in a vacuum and as such, it is larger than its architects presume. On the other hand, with the range of other cultural and social influences operating within the workplace, the influence of corporate culture is significantly less than its architects believe.

In the following chapter, a conceptual framework and the research methodology used to explore corporate culture in a Silicon Valley high tech corporation will be outlined. Subsequent chapters will apply these principles as we view the construction, interpretation, and influence of the corporate culture.

CHAPTER TWO

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, the conceptual framework and the research methodology which guide the research are presented and discussed. The conceptual framework outlines the analytic tools and concepts that this study uses to organize and explore the research problem. It also demonstrates the relationships between these concepts. The analytic concepts, in turn, establish the methodological choices best suited to the conduct of the research. The research methods consist of the tools and procedures, including sampling strategies, site selection, fieldwork methods, and data gathering instruments, which are used in data collection and analysis. Taken together the conceptual framework and research methodology are the foundation and the tools for the research.

Conceptual Framework

We begin with a discussion of the objectives of the conceptual framework. By outlining a framework and the "sensitizing concepts" (Blumer 1954) which are used as analytic tools, we can define precisely what it is that we are looking at, and how it is important. As the previous chapter demonstrated, the theories and concepts used to view organizational culture can constrain the research by highlighting certain aspects of the culture while obscuring others. In presenting the conceptual framework I aim to delineate the boundaries of the research.

Our first task will be to formulate an operational definition of "corporate culture." Corporate culture is commonly evoked as an organizational folk term, the use of which has obscured its practical application as an analytical concept. Once we establish an operational definition of corporate culture, we can then begin to pinpoint those areas where it is salient to our research problem. Doing so will allow us to examine corporate culture in its contexts. Finally, because corporate culture involves actors operating within its constructed boundaries, we must establish the concepts for exploring its real and observable manifestations.

These then are the goals of the conceptual framework. The guiding principles are meant to strengthen the scope, definition, and depth of this exploration of corporate culture. In the next sections each of these concepts will be detailed.

Defining Corporate Culture

The concept of corporate culture has been influenced by its use as a folk model by organizational insiders and commentators. As such it is necessary to begin this discussion of corporate culture with an operational definition of the term. Corporate culture¹ describes one facet of the complex social environment of the workplace. For the purposes of this study I define corporate culture as management's deliberate attempts to (1) create and promote a distinct set of values, beliefs, and symbols, which

¹In contrast to the concept of organizational culture, which encompasses symbols and language, cognitive processes, behavior, material products, socio-political-economic structures, and ideology, all embedded in the wider environment, and of which corporate culture is only one small component.

may produce a discernible identity that distinguishes it from other companies and organizations; (2) socialize employees into this component of the organizational structure; and (3) produce results which are demonstrated in the actions of employees. This definition includes three key elements, creation, transmission, and enactment.

The management of corporate culture as a strategy for transmitting and manipulating the assumptions, symbols, values, and beliefs that an organization embraces is a complex process. The corporate culture must first be formulated, and in its development fundamental assumptions about work, workers, education, and success, among others, shape the strategies that organizations use. Subsequently, a succession of interpretive processes transform the corporate culture as it is translated locally within subunits in a corporation. It is then transmitted to members of the organization and reinforced through a combination of enculturating processes, which often include a skills training and educational component. Workers, in turn, interpret and act upon the corporate culture according to their individual and often idiosyncratic understandings of it. In addition, the meanings and expressions of corporate culture are conditioned and adapted to suit specific situations.

When defined and outlined as such, the study of corporate culture is necessarily limited to a specific dimension of organizational life and does not provide an over-arching view of the organization or organizational culture. Corporate culture as an analytic concept is intended to explore the significance of corporate culture as an

organizing principle and its consequences and implications for subunits and individuals within that organization.

Layers of Corporate Culture

Having operationally defined corporate culture and discussed generally how it is established, we can now explore its significance in the organization. We begin by first emphasizing that corporate culture can be viewed on a number of levels from the societal, to the organizational, to the group, to the individual. A thorough analysis of a corporate culture should consider the underlying societal conditions which influence its creation and enactment and situate it in the larger societal structures.

In the context of large corporations in general, corporate culture can be viewed as a socially constructed response to a number of factors operating in the society at large and in the industry and business arena. It has its basis in problems of productivity, the growth and expansion of large companies, the growth of the work force, the increased diversity of the work force, expansion of the service sector of the work force, technological changes, consumerism, and globalization. Corporate culture is perceived as a humanistic and penetrating way to achieve greater control in the workplace. The use of corporate culture in organizations has an instrumental purpose which affects the bottom line: it is intended to increase the efficiency of workplaces. Therefore, its purpose is only comprehensible if we understand the society.

When viewing a specific corporation, we may ask about the corporation's official version of its corporate culture and the purpose for which it is developed and

manipulated. These questions address corporate culture from the perspective of the corporation as a whole. This constitutes the "macro" view of corporate culture which seeks to understand the officially articulated models of the corporate culture and provide a context for its emergence and maintenance. Once this layer of corporate culture is captured, we can then begin to examine the localized reproduction of it.

Individual organizations or subunits within a larger corporation must translate corporate culture in terms of their own requirements. Here the influence of organizational leaders and management can come into play in designing and maintaining the particular corporate culture. Corporate culture has been described as managerial ideology (Kunda 1992) or "the ideas espoused by or for those who exercise authority in economic enterprises, and which seek to explain and justify that authority" (Bendix 1956: 2). At the local level, managers may emphasize elements essential to the specific type of organization in question, such as a service division as opposed to a production organization. In some cases, corporate culture is modelled on successful companies or practices, and in others it is reinvented to address specific needs.

When examining how an individual or subsidiary organization within a larger corporation reproduces the corporate culture locally, several questions might be asked. What incompatible aspects of the corporate culture challenge the translation, interpretation, and expression of it? How consistent are the various organizational strategies and ideologies of the corporate culture among different occupational

categories and levels? Finally, what strategies and techniques are used to socialize the work force into the corporate culture?

It is important to note that specific social characteristics and assumptions underlie the contexts in which these corporate cultures are created and exercised. In organization studies, "cultural phenomena...have been examined without adequate consideration of the material and political contexts within which these organizational artifacts are socially organized and reproduced," (Knights and Wilmott 1987: 42). These contexts can include systemic qualities such as the division of labor, hierarchical structures, gender and racial discriminatory practices, social class of members, the specialization of roles, the work ethic, and the nature of the marketplace to name a few. While these assumptions can be logically separated from the corporate culture, in practice they are difficult to distinguish. Corporate culture thus interacts with and is linked to numerous other structures, processes, and variables that are at work both within the organization and which exert pressure from outside the organization. This interaction can be characterized as "cultural traffic" where basic assumptions, cultural conditions, and interpretation are "influenced by societal culture, changes regarding environmental protection, gender and ethnic relations, age, attitudes to work, and so on" (Alvesson 1993: 80). As such, corporate culture is not the only source of culture in organizations.

Corporate Culture: Interpreted and Enacted

This then brings us to an examination of corporate culture at the "micro" level, which explores the local, group, and individual understandings, the face to face interactions, and the actions and behaviors of members. What emerge at this juncture are the local definitions of the corporate culture, the expectations that the corporate culture dictates, and the contradictions between various conflicting interpretations of the corporate culture.

The consequences and implications of the corporate culture are demonstrated through the voices of employees from a diversity of occupational categories, who provide descriptive accounts of corporate culture, how it is perceived and understood, what individuals believe to matter about it, how its meanings change situationally, and its expression in actions and behaviors. At this level there is a formalized statement of corporate culture and employees are expected to follow it. The analysis of corporate culture from the point of view of the actors serves to illuminate their understandings and enactments of it in the environment in which it is planned, transmitted, and practiced.

Corporate culture has an expressive significance which can be demonstrated and described at the local level. As a strategy meant to bind employees to the corporation and produce results, the symbolism used by the corporate culture becomes significant. At this level of the study, employees are viewed as the actors and the interpreters of the corporate culture. At the individual level we can see the role that

interpretation and meaning plays as employees navigate the many facets of corporate culture. What have been the individuals' experiences of the corporate culture and what meanings and symbols do individuals attach to their understanding of corporate culture? This experience and interpretation can be examined at all occupational levels of the organization, from managers to individual employees, because all must operate within the constraints of the corporate culture. However, as Mills points out, many "interpretive accounts have failed to come to terms with the problem that reality is 'negotiated' or mediated between actors of *unequal* power" (1988: 354).

Since the symbolism of the corporate culture may be interpreted differently by specific subgroups, occupational groups, and individuals, we must continue to be mindful that cultural traffic, which at the local level can be better understood as the individuals' mazeways (Wallace 1961), may influence members perceptions and experiences of corporate culture. Some elements of mazeways may be shared by members of the organization, but others may differ, such as gender, occupational categories, social class, and ethnicity. Though the guidelines of the corporate culture might appear to be clear and suggest specific actions, how employee actions reflect efforts to reconcile personal mazeways with the corporate culture remains problematical. Here we may examine how each individual interprets and acts upon the corporate culture.

Finally, we can explore how corporate culture influences the workplace practices in the daily work lives, the routines of workers and work groups, the events

and activities of the organization, and the various interactions between employees. In order to assess how these different interpretations are demonstrated in the workplace it is necessary to view the influence of corporate culture on actions and behavior and the contexts in which they occur. In practice, corporate culture may manifest very different consequences than intended and these may emerge from the interpreted meanings that members attribute to it. Due to the multiple layers of interpretation and the underlying conditions involved in this complex process, the ultimate expression of corporate culture is unpredictable.

By applying a substantive and critical examination of everyday activity in the organization at the local and individual level, including work and social practices; the content of work; material attributes such as physical space and technology; and occupational categories and work groups, we can see how the corporate culture plays out within the organization. It is in practice that contradictions between the ideology and the application of the corporate culture may be revealed and strains and tensions may become evident.

The previous sections have provided the groundwork for this exploration of corporate culture by operationalizing the problem and discussing analytical concepts which are its guiding principles. Using these concepts as a foundation enables us to now select the appropriate research methods to effectively accomplish the task before us.

Research Methodology

In order to capture and explore the multiple levels of the environment of the corporate culture, its translation to the local level, and the individual perceptions and actions that demonstrate the corporate culture, the conceptual framework outlined above requires a research methodology that allows for flexibility in the gathering of a variety of data. The following section introduces the methodological alternatives and choices which qualify a study of this nature.

Ethnographic Methods

The goals of this research suggest a methodological strategy that is both descriptive and interpretive. Qualitative research methods are useful for establishing the existence of a phenomenon, as well as its important characteristics. Quantitative methods can then be used to measure these established phenomena (for a comparison of qualitative and quantitative methods see, for instance, Babbie 1989; Bryman 1989; Denzin and Lincoln 1994). Since our aim is discovery and exploration, we can see that qualitative methods will be best suited to meet the goals of this research.

Among qualitative strategies, ethnography accommodates the range of data essential to this research, rendering it the most appropriate and effective methodology (Agar 1986; Bernard 1988; Fetterman 1989; Schwartzmann 1992). Simply defined, ethnography is the systematic recording of culture. Usually descriptive in nature, ethnography results in detailed qualitative and quantitative data which is employed to construct a view of culture that is as close as possible to that of the group and

informants that it attempts to describe. Ethnography seeks to understand and describe culture in terms of what is important to insiders, those individuals who participate in the culture. The result of ethnography should be, according to Geertz (1973: 6), a "thick description," a rich, comprehensive, and detailed account which situates cultural behavior in its wider context.

Ethnography is characterized by a distinct set of tools used to accomplish this considerable task. Fieldwork is the primary means for collecting data. When conducting fieldwork the researcher seldom approaches the research with a specifically defined hypothesis. Instead, she attempts to make sense out of ongoing processes which cannot be predicted. Ethnography promotes a broad and comprehensive understanding of the complexity of the social arena.

Ethnographic fieldwork incorporates a range of techniques for exploring this complexity. Many ethnographic and qualitative studies involve single settings, or case studies. Participant observation, the method most often associated with fieldwork, involves the immersion of the researcher in the culture in question. Another means for gathering ethnographic data is through unstructured or semi-structured interviews of key informants, members of the culture being studied, who provide the "emic," or indigenous point of view.

A combination of these ethnographic methods was used in conducting this research in the organization. In addition, an archival review and analysis of previous literature available about the larger corporation as well as content analysis of

documents supplied by the subsidiary organization provided the contextual and background material critical to the understanding of the organization's corporate culture.

Conducting the Study

The first step in structuring the research was the selection of the methods and techniques to be used. Having accomplished this, the next task was to select a site in which to conduct the research. Following the identification of the site, I began the fieldwork and data collection within the organization. Finally, I established the mechanisms for the management and analysis of the data. In this section, we will discuss the actual processes involved in carrying out the work of site selection, data collection, management, and analysis.

Selecting a Site

The first challenge to a study of this nature is the selection of a site which is amenable to the research and which fits the definition of corporate culture that we have outlined. Another consideration at the inception of the research was the prospect of conducting a comparative study of corporate culture in two organizations. This possibility was later abandoned as a premature endeavor as I began to understand the complexity of Silicon Valley corporations, and the intricacies of conducting even one comprehensive assessment of corporate culture.

Several high-tech corporations in Silicon Valley which demonstrated the characteristics of having strong and discernible corporate cultures were identified and

solicited as potential sites for the study. While each of the corporations responded favorably to my requests to participate, I soon found myself entangled in a web of referrals between departments, administrative assistants, and supervisors, vacationing and travelling contacts, and a telephone and information exchange which became quite convoluted. As is often the case in research, the final selection of a site occurred not as a result of a controlled and planned process, but as a matter of luck and accident.

In September 1994, I was contacted by a lecture agent, who had been referred to me through the Department of Anthropology at San Jose State University, and invited to participate in a student forum that was part of a video production at L&L (a pseudonym), one of the sites that I had previously identified. As a result of this fortuitous invitation, I met a personnel department employee who was also the principle producer of the video. She would become the gatekeeper for the subsequent conduct of the research in Datamar (a pseudonym), a subsidiary organization within L&L.

In my participation in the video project, I assumed the stance of a participant observer, taking careful note of the layout of the building, the occupational structure of individuals involved in the video, the purpose and content of the video, some of the jargon that characterized the interactions and organization, and other descriptive data which would later prove useful in understanding the organizational structure and the corporate culture. At this time I introduced my project to the personnel manager and arranged to continue the discussion about the project at a later date.

Two subsequent meetings were conducted at the site with the personnel manager and several phone conversations ensued during which she provided valuable information on the history of the corporation and the specific organization, the development of Datamar's organizational structure, the processes involved in developing the corporate culture for the organization. We also discussed sampling strategies and potential interview participants. She provided me with documents and literature to further enhance my background on the organization, and allowed me to view a previous video production done in the organization as well as previewing the video that I had participated in myself. At each of these meetings I was introduced to some of the employees of the organization and continued to familiarize myself with the setting. A third meeting with the personnel manager involved the pretesting of the interview instrument that I had designed for the semi-structured open ended interviews which I intended to conduct with employees as a source of ethnographic data.

These early steps for getting into the organization were time consuming and slow, due to scheduling conflicts, the exchange of requisite information, institutional constraints, and the imperative to establish rapport with the gatekeepers to the organization. These included both the personnel manager and Datamar's general manager, who I formally met with in June of 1995.

Following this meeting, during which I was officially granted permission to conduct the research in Datamar, the research began in earnest and an ethnographic field study was conducted within the organization. Using a combination of methods,

including participant observation, document and archival review, and a series of personal, in-depth interviews, the details and individual experiences of the corporate culture were collected.

Data Collection Practices

Participant observation involved informal tours of the organization, brief observations of the formal work setting and the more casual setting of the cafeteria, and observations of special activities or events, such as the video production and a monthly coffee break meeting. The participant observation was conducted as a means of getting a general overview of the organization and an opportunity to see the workplace in action, since the primary source of research data was to be individual interviews. A field journal containing in-depth field notes on the physical environments, social interactions, interviews, and meetings observed was maintained in order to provide context for the interviews and observations of the activities in the organization.

To further enhance the context of the corporation and organization, additional background on the organization was obtained through a combination of document content analysis, archival review, and literature search. Documents, publications, video tapes, and training materials were reviewed for a description of the organization and the corporate culture. This segment of the analysis focused on the distinctive aspects of the corporate culture, the skills and training requirements which are advocated by the organization, and educational and socialization processes for the

corporate culture including both the formal and informal trainings, widely circulated publications which conveyed corporate culture, and group interactions and acculturation processes.

Personal interviews involved two important components, the sampling strategy and the actual interviews. The sampling of employees for in-depth interviews proceeded vertically through formal structural levels, and laterally across occupational categories as the research progressed. The general manager, who authorized the study, also agreed to participate in the interview process. Two upper level managers from each of two specific operating units within the organization participated in the study, one by agreeing to be interviewed and both by recommending potential candidates within their divisions. Using a snowball sampling method as each subsequent interview was conducted, potential participants were identified and interviews were arranged with workers at various management levels and occupational categories in the organization from top managers, first line managers, and project managers, to administrative assistants and telemarketers. All participants were permanent employees of the organization. As new individuals were recommended for the research, attempts were made to obtain a diverse cross section of informants in terms of background, gender, status, length of employment, and ethnicity. Fifteen in-depth interviews lasting from approximately one and a half hours up to three hours were conducted.

The semi-structured interviews consisted of specific questions about the interviewee's background, educational, and work history and progressed into open

ended questions. These were designed to elicit workers' perceptions of the corporate culture, how they personally fit into the corporate culture, their participation in and responses to the various corporate educational trainings and workshops offered, characteristics that the corporate culture promotes in its employees, and processes that identify and reinforce these characteristics. Critical incidents which illustrated the values and expectations of both employees and the corporate culture were captured and examples of agreement and dissonance with the corporate culture were collected.

All interviews were tape recorded with the permission of the interviewees. Tapes were transcribed following the interviews, using a computer program specifically designed for qualitative data analysis. Data from the transcribed interviews, field notes, and document review was categorically sorted as patterns emerged.

Data Analysis

By using multiple ethnographic research methods, including the document review and content analysis, participant observation, and personal interviews with both managers and employees, the data gathered assessed the corporate culture from a variety of viewpoints. This served to increase the scope of the research by providing context and background, observations of the corporate culture in action, and personal accounts. Furthermore, the validity of the study was enhanced through this "triangulation" of research methods (Babbie 1989).

The challenge of the research was to discover corporate culture in specific settings, rather than applying predetermined hypotheses, categories, and assumptions. This required that I assume the role of the anthropologist as a "data-gathering instrument" (Lincoln & Guba 1985). The conceptual framework for the research only generally delineates the sensitizing concepts, not specific theoretical foundations, and as such, the findings and conclusions of the research were grounded in the data. As a result, the analysis of this data was an ongoing inductive process derived from the data and observations as they were collected. Patterns and consistencies as well as departures and inconsistencies between the organization's corporate culture and skills training requirements, and the individual's reactions to and experiences of the corporate culture and trainings were demonstrated throughout the fieldwork. These included similarities and differences between the larger corporate culture and the local version, between individuals, between occupational categories, and between organizations. A variety of analytical devices such as grids, matrices, comparative charts and flow charts aided in the examination and analysis of the data.

Two final points need to be made on the use of ethnographic methods in research. First, the conduct of ethnographic fieldwork depends greatly upon the researcher's ability to establish rapport with informants and to obtain accurate information. Secondly, as a research methodology, ethnography has been criticized for weaknesses particularly in its external validity, reliability, and generalizability. The

following section attempts to answer some of the issues that emerge both from doing ethnography and from the general criticisms of ethnography as a research method.

Research Issues

The corporation selected is considered a Silicon Valley model, and numerous inquiries, surveys, interviews, research projects, and observations have been conducted within it over the years. The corporation lures researchers and writers not only as a result of its longevity, success, and economic impact in the Silicon Valley region and the high tech world in general, but also because it is often held up as an example to other American businesses by virtue of its innovative practices particularly in the area of management and human relations processes. Fortunately, the company acknowledges its position as a community resource which includes indulging the researcher, and employees seem to consider this a public relations effort and a component of their jobs. Naturally, there is a certain sense of intrusion as the organization is microscopically dissected by various sources from business schools, journalists, management trainers, and others.

Entering the organization initially proved to be a challenge, but once inside my access within the organization was relatively free and unconstrained. Cooperation from all levels of participants was generous and interview responses were thoughtful and forthright. Several favorable elements of this particular study were noted by informants. Among these were its anthropological foundation which participants found intriguing, the ethnographic nature of the work which placed participants in the role of

the experts, and, particularly gratifying to employees at the lower levels, the diverse cross section of occupational categories represented.

Some of the interview questions may have stimulated some participants to view their workplace and its processes in a way that they had not previously considered, possibly one that caused them discomfort. A strong sense of loyalty to the corporation (nurtured by the corporate culture) may have influenced responses to interview questions and some of the information that may have been of a critical or controversial nature may have been omitted from participants responses. In fact, much of the critical analysis of the corporate culture consisted of reading between the lines of informant information. Often negative assessments emerged from informants' stories about the experiences of co-workers rather than self reflective accounts. Most employees were loathe to critique the corporation, perhaps justifiably so when comparing alternative work environments in Silicon Valley in which employees may have previously worked or heard about from others in the industry.

The snowball sampling method necessarily limited the types of participants interviewed. Department heads predictably recommended top performers whom they felt to be exemplary representatives of their organization for subsequent interviews. However, the purpose of this specific component of the research was to describe individuals' experiences and differential interpretations of the corporate culture, and to explore the implications of their experiences. As such, the conclusions which reflect

individual perceptions and actions are based on the worker as a valid and significant source of information.

Finally, because this research was restricted to employees in one specific organization, its overall generalizability across other organizations within the corporation, and indeed, across other corporations may be limited. However, to the extent that other organizations and corporations use corporate culture as a strategy, the overall findings of the research may be applicable in other settings as well. This research will demonstrate that there is much more involved in the use of corporate culture in organizations than may be understood.

In spite of these limitations, this study represents a contribution to the study of corporate culture by presenting a critical exploration of this intentionally constructed corporate culture. It offers a bird's eye view of some of the ramifications of the corporate culture and places the worker in the appropriate position as the co-creator, co-conspirator, commentator, recipient, and enactor of corporate culture. The organization can benefit from the research in as much as it will gain a more comprehensive understanding of how corporate cultures are shaped and translated, how elements of the corporate culture are being transmitted, used, and understood, and how workers perceive and act upon the corporate culture, including the variations and similarities of experience between individuals. Workers themselves gain through providing their expertise and through the self reflective experience of examining their own attitudes and behaviors in the context of the workplace. Finally, other

organizations seeking a broader understanding of workplace processes or attempting to create and use similar corporate cultures, may benefit by acquiring a more comprehensive view of corporate culture, what it is and what it is not, and of the workplace and workers in general.

Conclusion

The use of the conceptual framework and the ethnographic methods suggested in this chapter will serve as a systematic approach to the understanding and analysis of the research questions examined in this study. First, to discover the corporate culture and other sources of culture in the organization we will look at the context for the creation of corporate culture by examining its purpose, its structure, its environment, and its components. We will also introduce and identify some of the issues of cultural traffic that influence it. Next, the relationship between idea and action will be examined as we describe the local version of the corporate culture and identify issues that shape it and difficulties in translation, transmission, and interpretation. Finally, the internal consistency of the corporate culture will be explored through the actions and perceptions of individuals in the workplace. The corporate culture in practice will illuminate its contradictions and inconsistencies. Exploring corporate culture as such will enable us to come to some conclusions about the influence and consequences of corporate culture on individual workers and in the workplace. To begin the discussion, in the next chapter we will examine the larger environment in which corporate culture is constructed.

CHAPTER THREE

THE ORGANIZATION AND ITS ENVIRONMENT

In this chapter the background for the creation of corporate culture in Datamar will be presented. As outlined in the previous chapter, this exploration of corporate culture in Datamar will discuss the external conditions which influence it in order to provide a context for its use as a management strategy. First, an overview of Datamar will describe it as a subunit of the larger corporation. Second, a discussion of the parent company, L&L, will include a brief background to its formal values, objectives, and management practices. Finally, the Silicon Valley region and the high technology industry will be examined to complete the picture of the environment in which Datamar corporate culture is developed.

Datamar

"Datamar," a subdivision of American Field Operations (AFO), is one organization within the L&L conglomerate. Like many L&L operations, Datamar is a company within a company within a company. According to its general manager, Datamar is a very small part of AFO's operations, as indicated by its budget. Datamar itself is comparatively young, having been redefined and restructured several years ago and operating in its current capacity for approximately six years. The organization employs more than three hundred employees.

Datamar is a service organization that provides sales support to L&L's product line manufacturing organizations. It accomplishes this through telephone marketing, with an emphasis on pre-sales information and technical assistance. Customer service representatives facilitate sales through the use of large databases, training in product technical information, and literature distribution. These features comprise what are referred to as "tools" within the organization. In 1993, Datamar responded to more than two million customer calls, more than sixty percent of which were assisted by customer representatives, the others utilizing an automated system. Outbound calls numbered close to one and one half million, and nearly seventeen million literature distribution packets were shipped to customers.

The entire organization operates on funds solicited from other organizations, or "clients" within L&L. "Tin cupping" requires Datamar divisions to develop pre-sales programs and strategies for the various product manufacturing organizations and to sell these programs to their clients in their annual funding plans. The threat of outsourcing looms heavily in this environment, so Datamar must be concerned with continuous innovation, evaluation, and design of new and improved marketing support strategies.

Pleasing the client organizations within L&L competes with pleasing the customer on the phones as a priority in planning and programming. The organization is often the only line of communication between the corporation and product users or customers. Management feels that this is a critical relationship, and that the way that

Datamar conducts itself is representative of L&L as a whole. For this reason a strong emphasis is made on customer service and product quality.

Organizational Structure

Datamar's organizational structure (see Figure One, page 46) is divided along the two major product lines that it represents, Systems Company (Sysco) which supports computer systems organizations and Product Company (Proco) which supports computer products organizations. These product lines are also subunits of the larger corporation. Other divisions within Datamar include an Information Distribution Group, a Training Group, and a Quality Group. Sysco and Proco are each additionally separated into two departments, a Phone Center which responds to incoming calls from customers seeking product technical assistance and information on new products, and a Marketing Department which is geared toward marketing to large customers.

Proco and Sysco operate independently of one another and according to employees there is a competitive undertone between them. However, managers remark that this is reflective of different operational styles, types of products, and the needs of different manufacturers and clients, rather than an explicit rivalry between the two. According to Datamar managers the competition promotes innovation and new ideas within the organization.

Managers and employees of L&L are coached in having a "systems perspective." The corporation as a system is composed of interdependent components which communicate and adjust to the environment in order for the system to reach its

basic goals and survive. As a result, in Datamar there is a strong emphasis on decision making for the benefit of the entire organization and the corporation as a whole, rather than for a specific unit.

Datamar is currently working toward establishing greater lines of communication between the two divisions through "cross-functional organization." This is promoted through monthly coffee breaks, large morning meetings which involve employees from all the divisions and occupational categories within Datamar. Facilitation of the coffee breaks rotates between the divisions, and is intended to provide a forum for sharing new ideas, programs and projects, and information about the divisional planning objectives and operations.

Occupational Typology

Datamar employees are "L&L employees" who work in Datamar on a daily basis. Entry level positions at Datamar begin with the phone sales representatives, and technical consultants or engineers represent the next level. Their workday schedules are rigidly constrained and representatives are on the phones for six hours per day. Individuals at both of these levels are organized into teams and operate interdependently to accommodate the thousands of calls that come in each day. Phone sales representatives answer incoming calls from customers who have questions about products prior to purchasing them. Most questions can be answered by these individuals, who have an extensive database at their disposal. However, calls that require more technical information are referred to the engineers. Often these

individuals have started in the organization as phone sales representatives; then, after receiving additional training in particular technical areas, they move up to this capacity.

Lower level Phone Center managers represent the next structural positions moving up the job ladder. These managers directly oversee the teams of engineers and phone representatives, communicating new projects and programs and coordinating the Phone Center teams. Sometimes these managers respond to telephone "escalations," which are calls in which a customer cannot be satisfactorily accommodated by sales representatives and has asked to speak with a manager.

Other mid-level managers include project managers and program managers with varying roles. For instance, a program manager may be responsible for securing funding for their organization from the client organization, or recommending strategic services to the client organization. A project manager may be responsible for implementing an ad campaign by setting it up on the database system that phone sales representatives use. Project coordinators and other individual contributors work in specific capacities, such as database coordination or presales literature distribution, on these special projects.

Clerical support for projects, programs, and teams is provided by administrative assistants ("admins"), some of whom provide support to as many as twenty employees depending on their roles and programs. These individuals do much

of the clerical work in their organizations such as mail sorting, electronic mail, personnel transactions, graphics and presentations, accounting, data entry, and so on.

Both phone representatives and administrative assistants are classified as either non-exempt (full L&L employees) or as exempt employees who are contracted from temporary agencies. Special consultants and contractors are also brought in for specific projects and programs. Temporary workers ("temps") are not considered employees for legal reasons, and as a result are unable to participate in some of the many benefits, like holiday celebrations, that full employees enjoy. According to employees and managers there is a constant effort among temps and contractors to become full non-exempt employees of Datamar and L&L, which can create tension in the organization. For instance, a contractor in the Phone Center who is trying to become a regular employee may attempt to elevate his own position by taking on too much instead of simply following procedures. Ironically, this may result in his inability to maintain his performance on the phones.

Upper level management includes the business managers, or functional managers, from each of the divisions, and the general manager. These individuals comprise the Datamar steering committee. This group meets monthly and is charged with monitoring the organization's continuous improvement efforts. This is accomplished through project selection, project review, process mapping, and process review.

FIGURE ONE:

DATAMAR ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

Promotions and transfers occur frequently within Datamar and within L&L. Employees move laterally and vertically into different jobs in Datamar, as well as into jobs in the wider L&L organizations. Job titles and positions are changed, divisions are reorganized, programs are restructured, and new positions are created, thereby increasing the mobility of employees.

Only in rare instances will an employee be fired. Examples of grounds for dismissal include theft, drug use, or other legal infractions. For other issues, such as chronic tardiness, personality conflicts, poor performance, and scheduling conflicts, the process for handling problems with employees is structured and well documented, lasting about three months. According to personnel managers it is particularly important to avoid problems that could disintegrate into litigious battles. Furthermore, since it is in the best interest of L&L and Datamar that employees find a suitable place within its structure, the process for problem solving serves to highlight employee strengths as well as identify potential concerns.

Getting In and Staying In

The corporation's popularity as a Silicon Valley work site is legendary. Because L&L is viewed by most outsiders and employees as an excellent employer and the company retains employees for long periods of time (often for their entire careers) there is stiff competition to get in to the company. In this environment it can be critical to have an inside advantage and several shortcuts into the company may be used by potential employees.

To get an interview for a position, friends and family members inside can sometimes provide information about the availability of jobs. Temps have the advantage of knowing how things get done in the organization, but may have to wait for long periods of time before opportunities arise to interview for full positions. Outside contractors may also have the inside track on positions within the corporation due to their knowledge of it and their track record in it. Finally, recommendations of current managers and employees serve as a possible entre into the organization, at least getting someone to the initial interview stage. Who you know can make a difference at this level. However, this is just the beginning in a structured and sometimes lengthy recruitment process.

Recruiting Employees

According to Datamar's organizational literature, its "competitive advantage" is its "ability to attract and retain highly talented people." Potential employees must endure a rigorous, structured interview process comprised of behavioral interviews that utilize scenario building and other assessment tools to elicit indicators of particular skills. Interviews take place before a panel of managers and employees. In Datamar's recruiting practices, educational background may be less an issue than one's capacity to fit well with the corporate culture. An upper level manager says:

Typically there is what we think of as an L&L "fit" and we look pretty hard for that. You need all different types of people. Some are just more successful than others. Some fit real well and some don't. The person that fits sees the "bigger picture."

Another strong indicator of an employee's suitability is past work experience in the corporation. Due to its size, technological advances, managerial strategies, shifting markets, and transformations in the industry as a whole, change is a constant factor in the corporation. Within the company at any given time an array of programs, projects, departments and organizations are changing, either by downsizing, restructuring, terminating, merging, or starting up. As a result, there is a constant pool of employees between jobs or projects. For this reason the company supports internal hiring between units and divisions, and referrals, transfers, and promotions are important components of the organization's hiring practices. Internal hiring also plays a large role in an employee's career planning and advancement.

Retaining Employees

Once someone is hired and "in" the organization, noticeable efforts are directed toward retaining them. Management assumes that workers will be with the corporation for their entire careers, and employees are expected to move up and around in various positions and organizations. This is another aspect of the systems perspective in the organization. As a result, there is strong support within the corporation for continuing education, training, and career development. This is furthered by the role of managers who are charged with monitoring employee progress and recommending areas for potential future career development.

L&L managers expect to "work themselves out of good employees." In other words, an exemplary employee of the organization will, if they have been nurtured

and handled properly, eventually move out of Datamar and into other L&L organizations, a loss to Datamar but a benefit to the corporation as a whole. The general manager describes an employee that he recently lost to a promotion:

For our top performers I expect a little more effort from my managers in helping them, because those are the key employees that we want to retain for the company. That may mean that they have to leave Datamar, like my admin, to continue her career. It's worth it. I might lose her out of my organization, but L&L is gaining and retaining a great employee.

Assessments and Incentives

Employees are evaluated, ranked, and assessed according to standard measures. Performance evaluations which rate certain characteristics like "initiative," "taking the lead on an issue," or "attention to detail and follow up," and "soft skills," such as communications and leadership ability, are regularly examined. In addition, workers meet regularly in individual meetings with their supervisors, once a month in some cases, more often in others. These meetings are seen by managers and employees as an opportunity to emphasize strengths, assess weaknesses, work on development plans, and brainstorm ideas. These also provide employees with the opportunity to plan future educational and training choices.

The corporation provides assorted incentives and Datamar has developed its own reward and recognition programs. Achievement is rewarded at the corporate level through ranking, promotions, granting and developing special projects, and stock options. Organizational rewards publicly recognize individuals and teams who have displayed outstanding performance, contributed to their department or the

organization, completed Total Quality Control projects, or contributed to training efforts at Datamar. Award recipients are announced at Datamar's monthly coffee breaks and on the organization's E-mail system. It is common to see certificates and plaques awarded to employees displayed in their work stations.

Employee incentives play a large role in the continuous motivation and achievement of workers. The financial rewards of working at L&L are significant. Entry level hourly wages are competitive, as are the salaries offered. While employees are not explicit in discussing their incomes, they hint at their high dollar earnings as well as speculating on the earnings of co-workers and managers. Profit sharing is another strong motivational factor that reinforces the view that supporting the business of the corporation as a whole rewards employees individually. All full employees of L&L receive profit sharing bonuses every six months. Brian, a project coordinator remarks that "the work environment is a benefit, but the financial arrangement is the bottom line."

The Parent Company

An accurate portrayal of Datamar, or of any specific organization in L&L, must also be situated in the context of the L&L corporation as a whole. This is because employees consider themselves first and foremost to be members of the L&L corporation, the place in which they will spend their careers, and because the larger corporation dictates the direction and operation of the individual organization.

Lewis and Little (L&L) is one of Silicon Valley's corporate giants. L&L is a high technology company which designs and manufactures computer systems and other similar products and operates on a global scale. The corporation is one of the region's pioneers having been established more than fifty years ago by two engineers. Like the Valley itself, in its formative years (1940's and 1950's) L&L was supported by the defense industry, and later diversified into business computer product manufacturing in the 1960's, and home computer products in the 1980's. From a small backyard operation, it now has worldwide operations from Canada, to Australia, to Europe, to Asia, and Latin America. Employees number close to one hundred thousand, and annual sales are in excess of twenty five billion dollars.

L&L is comprised of literally hundreds of organizations operating interdependently under one large overarching corporation. Beginning with a foundation based in engineering, the growth and expansion of the company has resulted in two primary types of operations, factory and field, which now characterize the company. The distinction between the two types of operations is in the actual interaction with customers. The factory component includes engineering, product development, manufacturing, marketing, and research and development; i.e. the design and production end of the business. The field consists of the sales and support organizations that interact with end users. The field sales organization developed in the mid 1960's. Previously the organization handled product sales through contracts with various firms throughout the United States. However, as a result of the rapid growth

of the company and the diversification of product lines, the sales organization was established.

A focal point of L&L's business strategy rests on the values and objectives that the company has established. The corporation's values and corporate objectives, along with its management strategies and practices, comprise what is known throughout the corporation as the "L&L Path." The L&L Path is the primary source of corporate culture for the corporation and its subsidiary organizations. The L&L Path is frequently cited, quoted, and referenced in documents, in conversations, in memos, in videos, and in other communications within the company. All L&L employees are aware of the "L&L Path" and its critical role in the company. New employees are required to be oriented to the L&L Path and established employees are required to attend yearly sessions to discuss and review the Path and what it means to the corporation, to their organization, and to individual employees.

A widely distributed publication states that, "L&L's values are a set of deeply held beliefs that govern and guide our behavior in meeting our objectives and in dealing with each other, our customers, shareholders and others." The specific company values include: trust and respect for individuals; a high level of achievement and contribution; business conducted with uncompromising integrity; common objectives achieved through teamwork; and flexibility and innovation.

L&L first formally developed its corporate objectives in 1957. With some modifications, they have survived and are said to be the core guiding principles of the

corporate operations and decision making. According to a brochure distributed by the corporation, the seven corporate objectives include:

1. **Profit:** To achieve sufficient profit to finance our company growth and to provide the resources we need to achieve our other corporate objectives.
2. **Customers:** To provide products and services of the highest quality and the greatest possible value to our customers, thereby gaining and holding their respect and loyalty.
3. **Fields of Interest:** To participate in those fields of interest that build upon our technology and customer base, that offer opportunities for continuing growth, and that enable us to make a needed and profitable contribution.
4. **Growth:** To let our growth be limited only by our profits and our ability to develop and produce innovative products that satisfy real customer needs.
5. **Our People:** To help L&L people share in the company's success which they make possible; to provide employment security based on performance; to ensure them a safe and pleasant work environment; to recognize their individual achievements; to value their diversity; and to help them gain a sense of satisfaction and accomplishment from their work.
6. **Management:** To foster initiative and creativity by allowing the individual great freedom of action in attaining well- defined objectives.
7. **Citizenship:** To honor our obligations to society by being an economic, intellectual, and social asset to each nation and each community in which we operate.

Over the years the corporation has employed a number of management practices and strategies which are the third official component of the L&L Path. These practices and strategies include informal management, management by objective, open door policy, and open communication. The open management style is intended to allow employees to do their work without being "micromanaged" or "policed," and

allowing for a degree of autonomy in their positions. An open door policy invites employees to raise issues with managers at any level, not just one's direct supervisor. The practice is meant to eliminate the typical rank and file business style, leaving workers free to share their feelings and concerns and seize opportunities to discuss new ideas, career options, and general business issues with supervisors and managers.

The development of clear plans and objectives to guide workers, organizations, and programs is required by the corporation and intended to aid in the effective operation of the company. "Management by objective," a process first introduced by Peter Drucker (1954), consists of the development of objectives which drive the business. This occurs within each department and organization and at all levels of L&L and is then consolidated between various L&L organizations. These practices, along with the values and objectives, are the driving forces by which accountability, coordination, organizational integration, and effectiveness in meeting customer needs are expected to be achieved.

The founders of L&L and its employees attribute the company's success to a number of factors, not the least of which is its distinction for being a company committed to its employees and committed to quality. Because of its history and its reputation, its position in the Valley, its size, competitive salaries and benefits, and its successes, L&L is recognized by and identified with particular qualities by outsiders in the region. Many consider L&L to be "the place to work" in Silicon Valley.

The Region

Silicon Valley is distinguished worldwide as a high technology and business leader. The region is a model for the high tech industry around the globe, and domestic high tech complexes like Austin, Texas and Rio Rancho, New Mexico, and foreign ones like Bangalore and Singapore have been influenced by its example (Dworkin 1989; Muniak 1994). Silicon Valley is synonymous with entrepreneurial vision, invention, and innovation, and it is known for technological, social, and managerial advances. Its distinctive style and history have been characterized by journalists, researchers, and organizational analysts, and tales of Silicon Valley corporate innovative style and "cutting edge" management practices fertilize the Valley's image (Saxenian 1994). One journalist calls Silicon Valley "a self contained, living entity" (Malone 1985: 8).

Located south of San Francisco in and around Santa Clara County, Silicon Valley's emergence as a high technology industrial complex has been attributed to a number of key factors (Rogers and Larson 1984). Among these were the educational opportunities afforded by universities in the region, particularly Stanford University, as well as San Jose State University, Santa Clara University, and the University of California at Berkeley which contributed to the fields of science and engineering, and fostered new ideas and talents. Secondly, a number of high tech "start-ups" were spawned by engineers and inventors in the valley, several of whom at one time worked at one key company, Fairchild Semiconductor in the late 1950's. Finally, in

the 1950's the region attracted defense and aerospace dollars, and Silicon Valley became a virtual high tech boomtown. Entrepreneurial success stories are legend in the region (Malone 1985; Cringely 1993).

Corporate Silicon Valley is characterized by a core industry of high tech businesses such as computer software and hardware, systems and networks, components, peripherals, electronics, semiconductors, telecommunications, and the newcomer to the region and to high tech, biotechnology. Venture capital flows into the Valley (Suchman 1995), and start up companies with the right product at the right time can become multi-million dollar corporations. Other companies, of course, fail miserably, while still others become swallowed up by voracious high tech giants (Cringely 1993).

Researchers who have viewed Silicon Valley as a region have identified a number of features which differentiate its "regional culture" (Weiss and Delbecq 1988; Saxenian 1994). Silicon Valley corporate styles have helped to shape this representation and are influenced by it. As a group, Silicon Valley corporations are described as risk taking, innovative, entrepreneurial, informal, individualistic, and competitive but also maintaining tightly knit networks. The local labor force is typically described as mobile and driven towards self fulfillment and wealth. Management and decision making styles in Silicon Valley are characterized as decentralized, flattened hierarchies with an orientation toward results.

In Silicon Valley the economic base of the high tech industry has distinctive consequences for businesses and the work force, and specific issues like immigration, specialized education, technological innovation, and competition affect and characterize the region (Markusen 1985). Globalization is one of the emergent issues that informs Silicon Valley activities. Globalization, on the one hand, opens up new markets and the possibility of more resources for Silicon Valley companies. On the other hand, globalization increases competition for the market share and threatens the very sustainability of the region in light of cheaper production costs in other countries (Bradley, Hausman, and Nolan 1993).

Industry's responses to business concerns of this nature often reflect Silicon Valley's self promoted image as a region on the "cutting edge," and technology persists as the prime solution in the region's survival strategies. Such strategies involve efforts such as Joint Venture Silicon Valley, a collaboration of high tech industry, business, community, and political leaders, the self-appointed problem solvers for the region (Joint Ventures Silicon Valley 1993). "Smart Valley" an initiative born of Joint Venture Silicon Valley is charged with the task of creating an electronic community through the establishment of a regional communication infrastructure (Glatstein 1994).

Underlying the industrial base of the Valley are other intrinsic values and assumptions of the Western capitalist system that condition the structure of organizations, the operation of businesses, and the roles of workers. The "information

age," which emphasizes the role of knowledge in production and consumption and has facilitated the development of information technology, is at the core of Silicon Valley's rise as a region (Rogers 1989). Silicon Valley's industry has helped to ring in this new age, and is dependent upon it for its survival. There is a continuing increase in the service and information sector of the work force (Harris 1981). Furthermore, industries which previously put their efforts into production are faced with intensified competition and have expanded marketing and sales departments. Sudden technological breakthroughs and continuous advances in the computer industry (Hanson 1982), coupled with excessive patterns of consumption help to keep the region viable.

Within the social makeup of the high technology industry, the division of labor persists with a large managerial force in middle and high paying positions and an even larger number of production and lower level employees in low paying positions (Braverman 1974). Despite the celebration of flattened organizational hierarchies, hierarchical patterns whereby those at the top have power over those in subordinate positions and make decisions affecting them perpetuate the status quo. These patterns are sustained by careerism and the pursuit of advancement as employees attempt to work their way to the top, often via a stringent and time consuming work ethic (Gregory 1984; Hayes 1989). Furthermore, promotions may well be conferred upon those employees who exhibit characteristics which have been previously associated with success. The historical dominance of white males in the industry conditions these perceptions of promotable characteristics such as analytical ability, rationality,

productivity, professionalism, and education (Mills 1988). As a result, gender and racial inequity and discriminatory practices persist, although they are made less conspicuous because of a growing emphasis on diversity and ethnicity. Women and minorities still find themselves generally steered into a narrow range of roles in the industry (Hossfeld 1988; Douglass 1991).

The complexity of the Valley is further intensified by the various groups that comprise it. Within the larger industrial framework is a diverse mixture of people from different countries, regions, backgrounds, social classes, ethnic groups, and work environments. The Valley plays host to a wide assortment of residents, many of them immigrants or migrant Americans who have come to pursue the fortunes that the region boasts (Ignoffo 1991). Highly educated engineers from Europe, Asia, and South Asia have come to pursue careers in the computer industry. Subsequent waves of less educated South East Asian refugees and immigrants, and an ongoing influx of Latino immigrants from Mexico, other Latin American countries, South America, and the Pacific Islands expand the region's labor market. As a result, Silicon Valley businesses have a large pool of employees for the variety of types of work and occupational categories that support the high tech industry.

The Valley's work force requirements range from occupations requiring minimal skills to jobs requiring advanced graduate degrees (Darrah 1992; Ray and Mickelson 1993). In addition, a variety of support businesses and enterprises, including banking and finance, travel, retail, and recreation, piggyback on the

industry, further accommodating the labor pool. Nevertheless, Silicon Valley also sustains high job turnover rates as electronics industry workers migrate between workplaces, corporations downsize and outsource, and a temporary and telecommuting work force rises. (Hayes 1989; Weiss and Delbecq 1988).

The distinctive features of Silicon Valley both shape the region's high tech industry and, at the same time, are generated and influenced by the industry. It is in this environment that management practices, like corporate culture in Datamar and L&L, are implemented and challenged.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have learned about the structure of Datamar and how its functions direct the type of work that is done in the organization. We have seen that Datamar is embedded in L&L, the parent company, and we have discussed the origins and background of the corporation. Both L&L and Datamar are further embedded in a larger Silicon Valley environment that is a source of "cultural traffic." The origins of this cultural traffic may be a distinct high tech culture, and a diversity of backgrounds, ancestral homes, races, and ethnicities. Finally, we have discovered that L&L has developed and uses a corporate culture as a fundamental part of its business. In the next chapter we will focus more precisely on specific clear cut elements of the corporate culture of Datamar, how it has emerged from the larger corporate culture and the region, and how it has been modified to fit Datamar's operations and structure.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATAMAR CULTURE

In this chapter we turn our attention to Datamar's corporate culture. Our goal is to understand the characteristics of that culture and management's objectives in articulating it as a means to shape employee action. We will also explore some of the sources of this culture. Specifically, we look at how L&L's Path is taken by Datamar and adapted to its local circumstances. We then examine more specifically the work and characteristics of Datamar and how these constrain the adaptation of the Path.

Datamar, like many businesses has articulated corporate culture as one means to accomplish its organizational goals. Datamar's challenge has been to adapt the corporate culture of the parent corporation to the specific requirements and needs of its own goals and structure. This adaptation is shaped by Datamar's function as a marketing organization and idiosyncracies of management style.

The Translation of the L&L Path

The "L&L Path" is the predominant element in the "official" corporate values, goals, and objectives. These written guidelines comprise the expressed component of the corporate culture and are intended to enhance the operations and environment of the corporation and its organizations (Deal and Kennedy 1982). The L&L Path is referenced and reinforced in numerous corporate published materials such as "Standards for Business Conduct," in memos from corporate leaders to successful

ventures in the organizations, in videotape productions designed to orient new members or to promote new organizational strategies such as diversity or empowerment, in promotional materials, such as press packets, media kits, and annual reports, and in training materials.

Locally within Datamar, images and reminders of the corporation's values can be seen tacked on bulletin boards or the walls of employees cubicles, and even on the paper cups stacked beside the coffee machines. Through these assorted and abundant displays, the L&L Path permeates the organization's environment with its constant presence.

As a newly restructured organization, Datamar's early challenge was to develop a plan for the organization that would fill the perceived needs of the corporation and ensure the organization's survival. Late in 1991, Datamar managers introduced an organizational charter, "to provide a continuum of direct marketing services to complement L&L sales reps and dealers" which address customer needs, minimize selling costs, and increase customer contacts. In addition, the manager of the newly formed organization took part in a "Process of Management" (POM) training for L&L corporation's functional managers. POM is a technique used to develop a "shared vision" and establish purpose and direction in organizational planning processes. The explicit component of Datamar's own corporate culture was formulated as a result of this process during subsequent off-site meetings attended by a group of

Datamar managers whose charge was to develop the organization's mission, values, and vision.

Participants of these meetings took part in activities to conceive, design, reinforce, implement, and shape the various values, goals, and objectives that would guide the organization. What emerged from those sessions was Datamar's own set of values, a strategic plan for the organization, and a logo that illustrated the organizational mission for fast and effective customer service. Datamar's formal values as stated in the organizational "Leadership Solutions" include:

1. **Excellence:** We believe that as individuals and as a team, we do the best for L&L customers, our clients, our teammates and ourselves. We know we've achieved excellence when clients continually choose us over competitive alternatives, and our other values remain uncompromised.
2. **Teamwork:** We believe teamwork is necessary for success.
3. **Innovation:** We believe that taking a risk on breakthrough change is as important as continuous improvement. We know we're innovative when people constantly propose and implement new ideas.
4. **Respect for Others:** We value the diversity of the people in our organization and the efforts and contributions of every individual. Respect for others is achieved when all ideas and opinions are thoughtfully considered.
5. **Fun:** We believe that fun is the by-product of challenged, satisfied people enjoying success and each other's company. A strong indicator that we have created a fun place to work will be when more people want to work here than there are openings to fill.
6. **Trust:** We believe that people want to do a good job and will do so, given the proper tools, support, and understanding of the organization's objectives. Trust is built when open, honest feedback is freely given and received in all directions regardless of position.

In comparing the L&L Path and Datamar's Leadership Solutions, we can see many areas in which the values of these two sources of corporate culture are closely aligned. Some elements of the Path such as trust, respect, innovation, and teamwork are adopted literally, while others, such as flexibility and achievement are modified and become evident in other expressions of Datamar corporate culture. In the next section we will look at some of these other local interpretations of Datamar corporate culture.

Local Expressions of Datamar's Corporate Culture

The values that Datamar managers designed as "Leadership Solutions" represent Datamar's attempt to adapt the L&L Path locally, and these very closely parallel the values of the larger corporation. The specific elements of Datamar's values were modified with an eye toward the explicit function of the organization, its emphasis on customer contact, its interactions with other L&L client organizations, as well as promoting the buy-in and commitment of employees.

In addition to these values, Datamar articulates several other significant aspects of the local corporate culture, some of which are again adapted from symbolic images and practices of L&L, while others are Datamar management constructs. While not necessarily formalized in writing, these basic assumptions and values are a part of the widespread discourse about the work environment that are reiterated by employees in describing Datamar's corporate culture.

The Human Touch

Within Datamar, management promotes the principle that the corporation really cares about the human side of business. They care about their customers and they care about their employees. Datamar goes to great lengths to reinforce a sense of the value of each employee in the organization and "respect the integrity of the individual." Managers and employees alike speak of this value as being the feature that separates L&L from other Silicon Valley organizations. A Datamar employee says, "Here people are less likely to walk all over you. Positions, not people, are used as stepping stones." James, a mid level manager, compares L&L with a Silicon Valley competitor:

At ACME in the large environment, you're not viewed as a person: you're a role in the group. At L&L you're an individual.

According to managers, L&L does not have a "hire/fire mentality." Instead, employees are given options in "lean times" or during organizational restructuring in the form of voluntary severance incentives, benefits, and lump sum payments. Sometimes "move packages" to different regions are offered as an option. At one point a ten percent cut in pay was absorbed by all employees at all levels to circumvent layoffs.

Promoting the "human side" of the business is one way that Datamar managers encourage the loyalty of employees. By assuring employees through its values that they are valued, integral, and critical components of the corporation, and that the

corporation will in turn take care of them, the organization attempts to secure and foster employee achievement and motivation, and impart a sense of confidence and trust in the corporation.

Keeping Up: Getting the Proper Tools

The previous chapter outlined the processes whereby employees are hired by the organization and maneuver around in it. One of the key components of maneuverability in the organization involves employee's attention to their career planning and development. To accomplish this entails more than just performance, and it is highly dependent upon training and skills development, particularly those skills which are valuable to the organization.

A number of employees and managers have commented that educational background is not necessarily a criterion for getting hired at the corporation or organization. The degree is "just a piece of paper" according to Brian, a 25 year old college graduate:

I was really surprised at the interview that they didn't ask any questions about my degree. It was just like 'do you have a degree,' then on to the next topic.

While educational background may not be a prerequisite to working in some positions at Datamar and L&L, there are some positions that do require specific educational backgrounds. L&L generally values education, personal growth, and development. Employees are encouraged by managers to pursue educational goals and great efforts are made by the organization to accommodate educational needs, from

providing funding assistance to offering flex time and temporary leaves to accommodate schedules. Many employees take advantage of such opportunities.

Sharon, a project manager who completed her university degree at San Jose State University after having worked in the organization for a number of years, describes her experience as both a student and an L&L employee:

L&L is very, very big on education. I changed my job four or five times to accommodate my schooling. I think I did my education on L&L's money. They basically reimbursed me because I was working and going to school. Working and going to school is very beneficial, it makes you more well rounded. I felt the ability to speak up more, that I had value to add.

Often employees, after having worked within the organization for a period of time, identify specific educational goals that they would like to pursue. For instance, one mid level manager with a B.A. degree in engineering discovered that he is now inclined to pursue the marketing side of the business and plans to go back to school to further his education in that field. Others return to the university system to enhance their technical knowledge. L&L is involved in extension programs with higher educational institutions such as the University of California at Santa Cruz and UC San Francisco, and it encourages employees to augment their skills and value through higher education.

The organization also conducts a variety of training programs that are intended to enhance the growth and career development of employees as well as training employees in the skills, processes, techniques, and habits that the organization feels are necessary in its employees. These "trainings," which will be described further in

Chapter Five, are another of the ways that the organization attempts to offer employees opportunities to get the necessary tools to do their current jobs well and to increase their options as they plan their futures within the corporation.

The Time Piece

Datamar managers maintain that the organization strives to encourage work/life balance for its employees. Datamar supports flexible scheduling by providing full time, part time, and flex time (or variable) schedules. Another option is job sharing. All employees are entitled to flexible time off (FTO), which is accumulated over the course of the year. Full time employees are expected to work an eight hour day. Higher program, project, and management level employees are largely self-directed and autonomous; their arrival and departure times are left to their own discretion. However, to ensure phone coverage and support, timing and scheduling is much more systematic at the lower levels, in the Phone Center and in support positions.

Time is also seen as an incentive by some employees. Managers believe that the time they invest in employees is evidence of the organization's endorsement of demonstrations of excellence. Deborah, a Datamar functional manager says that she supports exemplary employees through, "Accessibility, spending time with them, letting them know I value them because I share my time with them and my time is a limited and important resource."

This demonstrates that time is a resource that can be manipulated by employees and managers in the exchange that takes place between the organization and its

employees. Time can be used as a bartering mechanism. For instance, through flexible scheduling, the organization offers an incentive to employees with the expectation that, given this autonomy, the employee will produce results. By conferring a measure of freedom upon employees' use of their time the organization allows them to have some control over their part of the bargain. As a reward, managers offer their own time to acknowledge and reinforce the value of the employee's contribution. This serves to further reinforce the belief that there is a trusting reciprocal relationship between the organization and its workers.

The Young Organization

One of the most common descriptives used when employees are asked to describe the environment at Datamar is "young." Lisa, a recently hired program manager says:

I've described the atmosphere as being young, even though I'm not sure the average age of employees is significantly different than other organizations in L&L. It has a young feel, a fresher feel to it, a little more focused on the human side of getting work done. People seem a little less jaded, a little more open to new ideas.

Datamar as an organization is relatively young, at least within L&L, having been reorganized in 1991. Top level managers in the organization are in their middle to upper thirties. What is clear from employee comments on the Datamar corporate culture is that "young" is a frame of mind, one that encompasses features like energetic, fun, "open," social, fast paced, always changing, informal, and friendly. One employee describes the general atmosphere of the organization as "very collegial

and campus like." This casualness and social aspect of the work environment is seen by employees as one of the many advantages to working in Datamar when measured against other organizations or corporations.

This aspect of the organization lends itself to creating an overall environment that supports and parallels Datamar's value of fun. Outsiders and employees from other organizations are often surprised at the casualness of the environment, according to Brian, but for some people, the environment may be too social and not structured enough. By promoting and articulating the value of fun, the corporate culture attempts to create an environment that is both social and in which employees enjoy the work that they do.

Agreement and Consensus

According to Datamar managers, the organizational decision making style is based on consensus. One former manager was quoted as saying, "Everything is done by committee! Everyone's got to be involved." While this type of decision making can be quite time consuming, one of the ways that consensus is achieved more readily and smoothly is through agreement with the organizational values. Deborah explains:

The values are fundamental human values, human and business values, like trust and respect, integrity and profit. So it's hard to not feel good about the values.

When decisions are made, the formally espoused values stand as one standard for achieving consensus. According to a project manager, "People who do well in the organization tend to believe in the L&L Path." They also tend to behave in keeping

with the systems perspective that if the company as a whole benefits its employees also benefit. Jean, a personnel manager describes dedicated employees, "They care for the greater good, they're not just in it for themselves, but that they look at the bigger picture.

Managers attempt to facilitate agreement and consensus through some of the management practices described in the last chapter. Managers are accessible to employees through the open and active management style which allows them to observe operations and engage in an ongoing exchange of ideas and feedback with employees. In addition, in the early restructuring of the organization, an intensive series of "empowerment" trainings and exercises focused on integrating employees into an organizational team and building an active and interactive base for employees to voice their opinions and take part in organizational decisions and operations. By articulating this decision making style, managers promote an environment in which employees may feel that they have some control over the decisions that are made that effect them.

Characterizing Employees

Datamar's adaptation of the corporate culture at the local level involves another significant component, its workers. Some of the specific characteristics that employees in Datamar share symbolize this translation of the corporate culture, for in the characteristics of employees we can see managers again attempting to delineate corporate culture at the local level. The characteristics that Datamar employees possess

or demonstrate often reflect management's appraisal of worker capacities to reproduce the corporate culture's values.

Managers and employees are fairly consistent in their assessment of what Datamar looks for in an employee beyond the basic skill base. Most employees, when asked to describe the qualities that exemplary Datamar employees exhibit, reiterate a composite of the explicit values delineated by the corporate culture. Like the values embodied in the corporate culture, the qualities that characterize employees range from trust and respect for individuals, to achievement and contribution, to integrity, to teamwork, and flexibility to name some. While the skills necessary to work in Datamar may differ, the fact that managers and employees recite an official list is testimony to L&L and Datamar's success at enculturating members.

Flexibility

Managers and employees alike cite "flexibility" as the most common characteristic that employees need to survive in the Datamar workplace. According to workers, the environment is one of rapid change that can manifest itself in numerous ways from rearranging office cubicles and space, to changes in jobs or roles, to changes in programs. These changes can seem to occur overnight and a certain amount of ambiguity is inherent in this environment. Workers must be able to accept and work within a structure that is surrounded by a degree of uncertainty. Carol, an administrative assistant, relates a insider joke that she shared with a co-worker.

I used to sit across the way from another admin and we used to share the back wall as our common wall. And sometimes in the morning we used to look at each other, raise our arms, bend up and down, and say 'Ready, flex, one, two, three, flex, one, two, three, flex, one, two, three...'

Flexibility is also put into practice on a daily basis within the organization.

For instance, on the day that an interview with a functional manager was scheduled, she was called away unexpectedly on an emergency. What could have resulted in a wasted trip to the site was circumvented by the efforts of a project manager who quickly cleared her desk of work in order to free her schedule and act in the place of her manager.

The extreme importance of flexibility is advanced in the values of the corporation, demonstrated in the changes in not only the immediate environment but also in the larger high tech business environment and market structure, and attested to by employees who have survived and succeeded in the organization. By encouraging flexibility in their employees managers prepare employees for the ever present possibility of change embodied in the environment.

Teamwork

Another attribute frequently agreed upon by managers and employees as critical to their survival and ability to excel in the organization is an individual's capacity to integrate into a team and be part of the group. Teamwork is one of the stated values of the corporate culture and is the focus of many trainings and workshops offered by the corporation. It is held as an extremely important component of the organization,

and terms like working groups, cross functional teams, virtual team, and team synergy are commonly used to describe specific details about the work style of the organization. Marie, a project manager says:

I think one of the most important things I've seen is teamwork. Being a team player. If you want to get anywhere, if you want to grow professionally and personally, and help the company, that's the big thing.

Developing and working with teams is a particularly high training priority among managers at Datamar. Managers are trained in a variety of strategies to facilitate team building, and charged with identifying specific roles and responsibilities for employees that match or develop their skills and talents and rewarding the contributions of team members and teams as a whole.

At lower levels in the organizational structure, the interdependence of employees is critical, particularly in the Phone Center where the basic work of customer relations is accomplished, and a specific number of operators are required to man the phone lines for extended periods of time. Workers rely on one another's sense of responsibility to the group for timing even the simplest of circumstances, like running an errand or grabbing a cup of coffee. One Phone Center technician says:

Availability and dependability are very important in the Phone Center. In this environment it's very hard to be a lone ranger, to do your own thing. There's just too many ramifications, you have to schedule things with other people. You have to have communication and buy in to the team.

The interdependence of employees in this context is a result of the type of work that occurs in the Phone Center and is quite different from the teamwork that

occurs at higher structural levels in Datamar. However, it is significant that this interdependence is locally translated and redefined as teamwork. In so doing, the corporate culture connects naturally occurring interdependencies with the value of teamwork which promotes a sense of employee responsibility to one another, the team, and the organization.

Diversity

Diversity is another value that Datamar supports, and some managers and employees are convinced that it is one of the most important values that the organization holds and looks for in its employees. James, an African American manager says that he looks for differences in hiring employees. He feels that:

It's important to understand that diversity is not an affirmative action thing but that it is inclusion. That each individual is part of a work team and that they bring value to the table.

Diversity has become much more emphasized recently in Datamar, both in hiring practices and in workshops and trainings offered by L&L. Datamar's general manager is an Asian American male, and the functional managers of Proco and Sysco are both female. There is similar diversity in the remaining management levels and among employees in the Phone Center. Many employees say that they are encouraged by the growing emphasis on and recognition of this issue, although some employees believe that the current diversity emphasis is on "looking" different, and involves familiar issues of gender and ethnicity. These individuals see this trend as an opportunity to promote greater diversity in thinking. By promoting the diversity of the

organization, management articulates a welcoming environment in which the opportunities available to employees are fair and equitable.

In addition to the three characteristics described, several others are mentioned by workers and managers. Among these are qualities such as initiative, communication skills, enthusiasm, analytical ability, and good judgement. These qualities are thought to be important indicators of a good employee and important to ensure an employee's ability to survive and succeed. Moreover, worker characteristics are qualities that can effectively support and reinforce the corporate culture as it is articulated by management, and, in combination with Datamar's Leadership Solutions and the other expressions of Datamar corporate culture give us a picture of the local corporate culture in Datamar.

Datamar Culture in Context

We have seen examples of how the work that is done in Datamar shapes the translation of the L&L Path and several issues which influence the local interpretation. Among these are the one-on-one contact with customers, the reliance on client organizations for financial support, and the possibility of outsourcing. Since specific elements of Datamar corporate culture, such as innovation, flexibility, education, and the human side of business are generated from the L&L Path it is important to note how closely the former resemble the latter.

Innovation is a prominent value in both the L&L Path and Datamar's corporate culture. L&L as a whole is concerned with product innovation and organizational

innovation. As a result, Datamar must be constantly attentive to providing an effective and valuable service to the corporation. In Datamar, innovation is associated with the implementation of new ideas, both as strategies for improvement within the organization and progressive marketing to clients and customers.

Another important value in the L&L Path and in Datamar is flexibility. Some differences in the local translation of flexibility can be examined in the context of Datamar's function as a marketing group and the work done in the organization. For instance, the L&L Path states that it encourages flexibility by allowing "people flexibility in working toward goals that they help determine are best for the organization." L&L expects that employees will continuously upgrade their skill base to meet the challenge of a business "where the rate of progress is rapid and where people are expected to adapt to change."

Datamar's use of the term flexibility has a slightly different significance than does L&L's even though in the former, flexibility also means the ability to adjust to change. Flexibility is even more important in an organization which, while being a subsidiary of a very stable corporation, must rely on funding from other L&L organizations. As a result Datamar must develop its marketing strategies based on client needs, then obtain financial support from clients for these programs and projects. The failure of this support means rapid reorganization and renegotiation, complicated by the ever present threat of outsourcing.

L&L's emphasis on education and training are obviously important to ensure that the company stays competitive in the industry, particularly in the science and engineering fields. Datamar's accent on education and training is somewhat different. The requirements and emphasis of a telephone marketing organization are less technical, and more oriented to business and vocational skills. Datamar's strong emphasis on interpersonal skills reflects the organization's interaction with clients and customers. The perception by employees that graduate degrees are not necessary to getting a job in Datamar is confirmed by their experience. Nonetheless, Datamar's training and education component represents a significant investment in its work force in order to supply their workers with the tools (including training) to do a good job. By enhancing the capacities of workers, the latter are able to give more value to the organization. Furthermore, workers may attain a sense of accomplishment and competence as a result, which may lead to greater job satisfaction.

Finally, both L&L and Datamar emphasize the human side of business. Trust and respect for individuals and customers are common features in the values of both the Path and Datamar's Leadership Solutions. L&L workers often stay with the corporation for their entire careers, while changing jobs, roles, and organizational affiliations often. The work force in this context then is internally mobile, with Datamar being one of many L&L employee career options.

One of the ways that Datamar promotes the human side of business is by supporting diversity. This emphasis may serve a dual purpose. First, an expanding

global market and increasing competition compel businesses to attract and include the growing diversity of employees and customers. In promoting respect, loyalty, trust, and diversity L&L and Datamar alike attempt to remain competitive as employers and as businesses reliant on their customers. In addition, since social and ethnic diversity are rising trends in the work force, these values may encourage the satisfaction and loyalty of workers.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have seen the local application of the L&L Path to the corporate culture of Datamar. The translation of the L&L Path to the Datamar organization requires Datamar managers to formally incorporate the L&L Path into the operational structure of the organization through its own set of values. The formalized aspects of the corporate culture are written into policies, values, objectives and practices. Most elements of the corporate culture are shared, and the values of the L&L Path fit closely in Datamar's corporate culture, but some are left out and others are modified.

We have learned that employees demonstrate their cognizance of the less formalized elements of the corporate culture. They acknowledge that there are commonly held beliefs, such as the human side of business, standard practices, such as education and consensus decision making, and publicly exhibited characteristics, such as diversity and flexibility.

What remains to be understood is how it is that workers know what is important, how this is communicated, and what payoffs employees obtain for accepting these premises and acting accordingly. The processes and issues of socializing workers into the Datamar corporate culture and the rewards to employees that result from the successful adaptation of the corporate culture will be the focus of the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

CREATING A SENSE OF BELONGING

Datamar's formal corporate culture must necessarily conform to that of the parent corporation, L&L. Yet, the latter's culture must be reinterpreted and adapted to the local conditions of Datamar. This localized corporate culture must also be communicated to employees and processes to ensure their compliance to it must be developed. This chapter will examine how the transmission of the corporate culture to individual workers occurs, and what advantages and benefits increase the likelihood that employees will accept and identify with it.

Learning the Culture: How Does it Work?

Manipulation of corporate culture is a pervasive organizing strategy in Datamar, and workers learn that the expectations of the organization are contained in the corporate culture. As a result, they must conform to it, or at least act consistently with it in order to survive and succeed in the Datamar environment. But first, employees must learn the corporate culture.

Several strategies are used by the organization to enculturate employees, and a number of social constraints are enacted by its members to reinforce the corporate culture. Included among these are hiring practices, education and training, repeated exposure to organizational symbols, social pressures, and finally self-monitoring. How

the transmission of the corporate culture occurs through the combined effects of these strategies and processes is discussed below.

Selection Processes: Finding the Right Fit

Hiring in Datamar is highly selective as managers attempt to identify potential employees who are the best "fit" for the organization. These individuals exhibit qualities that promise a potential to learn and integrate the corporate culture. In some cases, candidates are already familiar with the corporate culture, at least the L&L Path, through working in other L&L organizations or as temps or contractors in Datamar. In either case, there is clearly a specific type of individual that management looks for.

Particularly for new hires, a critical capacity that must be displayed is "trainability" and even before employees come into the organization they must demonstrate their potential to learn the corporate culture and adapt to it. Robert, a Phone Center operator says about the interview process:

You have to demonstrate that you are trainable. It's really important that you're not going to go through the training process and then later just go back to doing things the way you always did.

Certainly, many of the worker characteristics described in the last chapter enhance an employee's potential to be trained. By recruiting for these types of qualities in their workers, the organization can then conduct business to further its own goals and ensure a greater potential for cooperation with less likelihood of disagreement and conflict.

According to Etzioni, "various studies indicate that a small increase in the selectivity of an organization often results in a disproportionately large decrease in the investments required for control" (1964: 68). The selection process is a pivotal one, and the role of selection in Datamar is a critical component that should not be overlooked in attempts to understand how this workplace obtains worker compliance. While it is not a perfect process, and sometimes mistakes are made, it is the first stage in a process designed to align members with the corporate culture.

In addition, the organization supports and practices internal hiring, or hiring from within the corporation. One upper level manager connects this hiring practice to the organization's value of diversity. According to her, most of the organizations in the corporation now have sufficient diversity so there is a "pool" of diversity within the corporation from which to choose hires. Furthermore, these "diverse" individuals have already demonstrated that they can fit into the culture. They have effectively been initiated into the corporate culture through having already participated in some of the enculturation processes. Thus, internal hiring is accomplished by drawing from a relatively limited and pre-selected pool of individuals.

The Cultural Curriculum: Doing Your Homework

Employees receive ongoing training and instruction in the organization through the numerous workshops, trainings, and skills building programs provided by L&L and Datamar. Some of these are conducted by internal trainers, while other trainings are contracted through outside trainers and consultants. Kunda describes the training

component as one aspect of an organization's "presentational rituals"¹ which are "mechanisms through which certain organizational members influence how other members are to think and feel-what they want, what they fear, what they should regard as proper and possible, and ultimately, perhaps, who they are" (Van Maanen & Kunda 1989:49).

Datamar's "vision" is to "have the best equipped, most highly skilled work force in the industry." To accomplish this the organization builds on the skills and "tools" of its workers. Datamar's educational and training philosophy "is based around a core set of educational assumptions," outlined in a training and development summary. These assumptions are:

- Training meets the needs of the business.
- Individuals learn best in their own way and at their own pace.
- Standard resources and "off the shelf" products are used when possible.
- Follow a synergistic approach so that courses reinforce each other.
- Provide a common language and set of tools for the organization.
- Core values are every bit as important as product knowledge when it comes to customer satisfaction.
- If "magic" is to occur on the telephones, then it must be present in training.

¹ Kunda classifies a variety of structured face-to-face gatherings including speeches, presentations, meetings, lectures, parties, and training workshops as "presentational rituals" (1992: 92).

Trainings offered to employees range from technical skills building (e.g., new software training), to management training (e.g., leadership development and team building), to "soft" skills, such as communication and interpersonal problem solving (see Table Two, page 87). Even Datamar trainers attend a three day trainer training workshop. Some programs, such as entry level trainings preparatory to going on the phone lines, are mandatory. Other trainings, such as the training designed for functional managers, carry the expectation that the appropriate individuals will participate in them when it is appropriate.

Generally speaking employee participation in the many trainings is often a matter of personal choice and based on individual career development plans. Some workers tend to emphasize the technical component of their plan, others the business or marketing piece, and still others the interpersonal components. Training choices often reflect the current popular trends in psychology, business, management, and even politics (Darby 1992), and fashionable business "gurus" of the day are quoted and venerated, as are many current fads in business "reengineering" curriculum.

TABLE ONE: DATAMAR TRAININGS	
Type of Training	Specific Trainings Offered
Phone Center Trainings	New Sales Orientation Training Call Management Customer "Magic" Telephone Sales Product Training (telemarketers)
Training and Consulting	Needs Assessment Training Design and Development Training Delivery Tools Development
Business Management	Process of Management (POM) LEAD-Leadership Effectiveness and Development First Pass (TQC, teams/project) Functional Management Training Managing Change Working with a Diverse Workforce Finance for Datamar Managers Teambuilding Managing Consensus (Negotiation) The L&L Sales Process
Skills Development	Empowerment L&L Culture Computers (systems admin, programming) Public Speaking Time Management Resume Writing Managing Personal Career Growth Software Trainings How to Interview Building Support for your Ideas Influencing for Results Reflections: E-mail Links
Interpersonal Skills	Diversity Awareness 7 Habits of Highly Effective People Managing Interpersonal Relations Understanding Behavioral Styles: Myers-Briggs Types

Some trainings, while not required, are highly recommended by managers who identify needs and gaps for specific employees. Others are simply recommended by other employees. Sometimes specific training offerings become a part of the daily discourse and corporate culture of the organization. Lisa, a program manager describes one of these:

There's one called Understanding Behavioral Styles that does this quadrant thing that's real popular within L&L where you're either a driver, or an amiable, or expressive. Lots of people in L&L have taken that. Probably because so many people have taken it, it becomes sort of part of the parlance and I found it useful to be able to speak in those terms with other people who've taken the course.

The numerous workshops, trainings, and skills building programs provided by Datamar are intended to enhance the growth and career development of its employees to the benefit of the corporation as a whole. The repeated exposure to the corporate culture through the educational and training process also serves to transmit and reinforce the corporate culture. As one individual contributor says, some elements of the corporate culture are, "Implicit to the observer, but the people who are doing them are doing them explicitly because that's what they've been trained to do." So while the individual is encouraged and even nudged toward personal development, the training options within the organization tend to perpetuate and standardize the types of qualities and skills that Datamar sanctions in its workers, thus maintaining and supporting the corporate culture.

Acculturation Over Time

The third enculturation process consists of the daily interaction with and reinforcement of the corporate culture. This includes the L&L Path, Datamar's Leadership Solutions, prompts from an ongoing stream of written materials, and management's articulation of the corporate culture at meetings and other gatherings. The organization facilitates learning the corporate culture by exposing employees to it on a daily basis vis-a-vis printed works such as memos, documents, publications, handouts, even wall plaques. Newer forms of communication technologies such as videos, FAX, and electronic mail augment the printed word.

The values, goals, and objectives are also regularly reinforced through general dialogue, work group, team, and one-to-one meetings, presentations, conferences, and ritualized practices. Sometimes these reinforcing strategies are informal and spontaneous, as in conversations in the hallway or cafeteria. Other gatherings, such as team meetings or conferences, are more formal and purposeful.

One of L&L's most prominent customary practices is the monthly coffee break, a presentational ritual that is intended to involve employees and organizations throughout the corporation. Each month Datamar locally sponsors this event by holding an organization-wide meeting facilitated by one of its divisions, Proco or Sysco. All Datamar employees are expected to participate in one or the other of two meetings. These meetings take place in two shifts, the first at 8:10 and the second at 9:10 a.m., so that all Phone Center employees are able to attend while ensuring

coverage of the phone lines. The following excerpt describes part of one such meeting.

The coffee break takes place in a large assembly hall with rows of chairs facing a stage with a large screen on it. In the back of the room is a table spread with a rich assortment of pastries, fruits, breads, juices, bottled water and coffee. Prior to the start of the meeting employees mill around the table and serve themselves plates of food. Small groups of employees huddle together in conversation, some find seats together, while others sit separately amid their co-workers.

The meeting commences as Paul, an upper level manager in the Proco division, introduces the agenda and topic for the day's meeting. His formal tone is tinged with a European accent, and his demeanor is businesslike and reserved. He introduces the day's featured speaker, Marcia, an energetic young woman, also a Proco manager, who will conduct the presentation. On this particular day, the topic centers on a dramatic change in Proco's Phone Center operations with the implementation of a new strategy referred to as "Relationship Marketing." This strategy is meant to replace the old style of answering calls, which was "to get rid of the customers as soon as possible," with a new style of building relationships with customers. Since this is a topic that particularly affects the Phone Center, most of the participants in the audience are attentive and eager listeners.

As Marcia recounts the basic strategies involved in the new approach, she acknowledges a number of employees in the audience who have been instrumental in

developing the new marketing strategy. Ken, who had helped to develop the database/information technology that will facilitate the new strategy, is mentioned several times and is acknowledged among lower level employees with nods and murmurs.

To demonstrate the new strategy, Marcia plays a tape recording of two sample phone calls. The first she calls a "customer dissatisfier" which characterizes the old style of customer service where the customer is not assisted satisfactorily and is hurried off the line. During this recording there are nods and smiles and whispers from the audience, agreement that this is typical of many phone calls and that customers are often left frustrated. The second call reflects the more customer service oriented style, friendly and personalized, that reflects the "relationship marketing style."

One audience member speaks up, "We've been saying this for a long time, but we've always been told to keep the time down on calls." The manager sitting beside me reinforces the comment by explaining to me that both of the presenters, Marcia and Paul, were formerly employees of the Proco manufacturing organization, one of Datamar's "clients." At that time the two of them were very resistant to this type of strategy, which Datamar had been trying to sell to their clients, because it resulted in increased costs to production organizations. "It's ironic now that they are staff at Datamar they've changed their tunes."

As Marcia continues her pitch to the group, she uses a number of metaphors to characterize the structural changes that will take place. During Marcia's exchange, the audience is engaged and participatory. She is reassuring in her tone, attempting to downplay what will obviously result in considerable changes in the Phone Center. She urges the audience to work as a team to implement the new strategy. She compares it in its developmental stages to a child being taken to the pediatrician. While the parent worries about the stages and progress of the child, the pediatrician assures the parents that the changes are "just normal" in the child's development.

When Paul returns to the podium, the tone of the meeting changes immediately, becoming more subdued and serious. Like Marcia, he attempts to reassure employees about the changes, but his style has a more serious, almost ominous undercurrent. He comments that employee attrition in this type of change occurs when people don't have faith in the direction of a new way of doing things.

Throughout this meeting there are a number of examples of Datamar values being called upon to support the planned change in telephone marketing, but also to promote the buy in of Datamar employees. The recognition of individual initiative and contributions to the project is prominent. The new strategy is presented as an innovative way to conduct pre-sales marketing that is much more customer oriented than previous methods. Finally, the presenters call upon Datamar employees to work as a team to implement the new strategy, while attempting to reinforce the trusting relationship between Datamar and its employees.

The coffee break is just one of the domains in which socialization into the corporate culture is accomplished through the repeated exposure to the daily routines, problems, and expectations of the organization. A program manager who is new to Datamar, but not to L&L explains:

I think in any organization you go into there are things you don't say and questions that you don't ask, and it varies from culture to culture and you just have to pick up on it as you go, and I'm not sure I've picked up on all of that yet at Datamar.

It is through time and proximity that employees learn many of the less apparent but no less important appropriate cultural behaviors, such as dress, deportment, and telephone and social etiquette, and experience the consequences of the corporate culture.

Social Sanction and the Influence of Peers

Datamar employees, aware of the expectations within the organization, are also aware of how they are perceived by their co-workers. They easily identify employees who they feel to be exemplary and they also cite examples of individuals who have difficulty in adopting the corporate culture. The notion that certain individual traits are acceptable and commendable while others are not is illustrated when employees discuss themselves and their peers. Lifestyle elements and personality traits which are thought to be antithetical to the culture are actively concealed, held in reserve, and sometimes even apologized for as if they are character flaws.

There is a strong sense among employees that the corporate model employee is an "analytical, engineer, who knows something about business." More than one

worker made clear that they do not fit the model, tending more toward an instinctual, humanistic personality. Although they may recognize this personal trait or inclination, they tend to downplay it in their business interactions. In fact, one high level manager indicated that if she had been true to her intuitive nature when she was younger, she probably would have selected a different career. At the same time this hasn't impeded her success in the organization, due, she feels, to her fundamental agreement with the company's values.

The culture and its expectations are consistently reinforced by the ever present judgement and opinions of managers, peers, and co-workers. "It's expected that you live by the values, and if not you'll be confronted by another teammate," according to one mid-level manager. For instance a project manager related an incident when someone in another department was spending too much money on equipment.

While a few people may respond by saying, "Oh, well that's not my department, not my concern," the majority of the people will say "Hey, that's not good business for L&L!"

On the other hand, the display of characteristics that the corporate culture cultivates in its employees will often result in the approval and support of other members of the organization. Exemplary employees become models for their peers, as is portrayed in the following description:

Someone who is always taking initiative, always being proactive. Communicating what they're doing, rewarding and recognizing other team members who are contributing to what they're doing. Someone who looks positive, looks like they like their job, willing to help to take the extra time. Someone who just acts like they're part owner of the company. Someone

demonstrates that they're an excellent employee by really internalizing the whole company culture, being very loyal.

Employees who have learned the corporate culture with its expectations will often model the characteristics that they have identified as successful. These in turn may be adopted and reinforced by their co-workers.

Self Monitoring: Assuming Responsibility

A final critical component of the corporate culture's socialization process involves consistent and rigorous self monitoring. The publicized recruitment of high achievers with high levels of initiative, and the various training options such as empowerment training, and the values of the corporate culture effectively send a message that personal responsibility is expected of employees. A sense of self worth based on performance and the will to succeed is also reinforced through the corporate culture's system of rewards.

By offering and promoting training and education and with the guidance and assistance of supervisors and managers, the corporate culture places much of the burden of responsibility for creating their own futures in the hands of employees themselves. Many employees agree with this self directed philosophy of the corporation and feel that identity is malleable and can be trained and taught. Taking their cue from the organization, many employees actively pursue their own education. Some even feel that one can determine the kind of person the organization needs or wants, and practice being that person. Marie, an individual contributor and project

manager says she visualized who she needed to be in order to land a recent promotion:

I think, what do I want to do a year from now? I'm always thinking about the future. I wanted this job so I tried to be that person. I thought, what do I need to do to get there, and why don't I just be that person...

Other employees manage to effectively sell themselves to the organization.

These employees write their own job descriptions based on needs that they perceive in the organization and strengths that they feel they can offer to fill those gaps. These individuals then sell their ideas and the job description to accompany those ideas to the organization. Sharon describes one of these employees:

She was one that was very proactive in improving our tools process. The person just did such an excellent job that they went on to 'own' tools as a complete project in itself. In working with this person we were able to create a full time job. When employees start really growing is when they can look outside of their own desks, department, division and to that bigger picture.

The organization benefits tremendously from hiring self motivated and achievement oriented employees. These employees contribute a great deal to the organization and guide their own careers to a large extent. Furthermore, they require less of the organization's resources than would be necessary for monitoring less self reliant employees.

We have now examined the various enculturation processes at work in Datamar. These however are only part of the process that ensures that employees follow and comply with the corporate culture. In the next section we will assess the rewards which further motivate employees to comply with the corporate culture.

Accepting the Culture: The Up Side

What does Datamar offer to successfully obtain the compliance of its employees? Clearly the organization provides valuable rewards for employees' efforts. Employees benefit from their association with the organization and the acceptance of the corporate culture in many ways. The rewards that the organization offers can be tangible or intangible.

The Tangible Rewards of Belonging

Many of the benefits that Datamar offers are tangible. The competitive salaries are attractive and motivating in and of themselves. Added to these are other financial rewards such as the benefits package, profit sharing, paid vacations, flexible time off, stock options, and even small benefits such as a dinner out with the family, courtesy of the company. In addition, the organization is structured in such a way that advancements, promotions, and raises are both attainable and encouraged through careful and consistent attention to employee development plans.

Other tangible rewards offered by the organization, come from the small incentives programs and the public recognition of exemplary employees outlined in Chapter Three. These are used to remind employees that the company values their achievements and encourages continuous initiative and improvement. The upper level manager who mentioned that she supports her top performers by spending time with them, implied that her time is precious and valuable: she uses it as a reward. Several of her employees noted that this particular manager was very generous with her time.

Finally, the educational component of the organization is another highly valued concrete reward. Datamar employees can personally profit from the access to various types and levels of trainings. Furthermore, the possibility of gaining a higher education through the support of the organization is a strong incentive for many employees, particularly those at management levels.

In addition to the tangible benefits of working at Datamar, there are symbolic rewards which facilitate employee's acceptance and integration of the corporate culture. The symbolic rewards are a critical component of the organization's ability to sustain workers conformity and harmony within the work environment.

The Symbolic Rewards of Belonging

One of the ways that the symbolic rewards of belonging in Datamar may be understood is by observing what employees value on a personal level. Dorothy Lee describes value as a transaction experienced out of relatedness to one's surroundings, to one's situation, or to others. According to Lee, culture provides "the form in which value will enter the experience of its members, and determine the degree and strength of this experience of value" (1976: 6). Corporate culture may provide one of the contexts which sustains the potential for employees to experience value in their work lives.

Certainly some Datamar employees describe their experiences of value in their work through satisfying roles and relationships. A Phone Center representative

describes how his personal style, which centers on interpersonal relationships and helping people, fits with his role in the organization.

I really like assisting customers. As someone who can help out a person in need I really get a lot of personal satisfaction and reward from my work in that way.

Finding a niche in the organization also enhances the value of their work to some employees. A project manager describes the importance of the relationships that she has developed in heightening her satisfaction in her work.

I do love my job. I love it. And I've never lost that in working here. You look forward to coming here, even though maybe you don't do stuff with people outside of work, it's a neat environment, real comfortable, you come here and bounce things off of people about anything. I do, I just love my job and I love what I do. I love my boss too.

L&L maintains an image of the corporation as being unique and different from other Silicon Valley companies, particularly in its treatment of its employees, and this reinforces the loyalty of employees and the sense of belonging. Employees and managers express their loyalty to the corporation in a variety of ways. Michael, a recently promoted Latino manager says about the company:

I've had opportunities when the headhunters call to go and check out other organizations and had offers in the six figures, way more than I make here. I think that says something about the company, and me in the company. I'm in it for a career and life. I wouldn't mind spending my whole career at L&L.

Presenting itself as the model in human relations, L&L attracts countless people outside of the company who are trying to get their feet in the door. Its reputation as "the place" to work can be heard on college campuses, in business

offices, and even seen in publications, and as a result, some employees view membership in the organization as conferring status.

I think if you can't be proud of the company you work for, you're not going to do a very good job. L&L is such a successful company, and I know for a fact, the quality of our products, that I'm personally just thrilled and proud to work for this company.

Many employees express a strong sense of pride in their association with the group and in being an L&L employee, viewing it as *the* best place to work. "It's like the Disneyland of companies..." Clearly many employees consider themselves fortunate and proud to be part of the organization.

The corporation's promise of loyalty to the employee may also be a source of value to employees and the stability that they perceive may be another of the symbolic rewards of belonging to the group. According to Marie:

You see these people that never leave L&L, and they get offered jobs that you could make twice as much outside. The stability is part of it, another is just the way you feel when you come in and the trust and relationships that you've built with people. You can't put a price on it.

Datamar reinforces this quality of belonging by using metaphorical images of the family and community in its representation of itself. The general manager states that, "At Datamar we try to foster a sense of family and personal ownership." Several employees indicate that the family feeling that Datamar engenders is strong, and that they feel a familial support from their co-workers and supervisors. Belongingness is particularly important in lieu of the expectations the organization places upon its employees and the demands of the workplace.

For many employees, "belonging to" the organization is accompanied by a sense of responsibility and "ownership" that workers express toward it. Often this can translate into actions that go beyond the formal requirements of their jobs. For instance when a Phone Center representative is off line but sees that there a number of customers waiting and not enough coverage, he might get back on the phones to ease the backlog. Or an individual contributor from one department might contribute his expertise to a project in another department. In this way, employees support one another as well as supporting and contributing to the organization.

Managers work to sustain this sense of responsibility that accompanies belonging through ongoing communication and open and informal management practices. Employees and managers all the way up to the CEO of the corporation are addressed by their first names, and managers are generally accessible to employees. "Having a manager that treats you well, that you can share things with is a benefit." Brian, who formerly worked for another large Silicon Valley corporation, says that the fact that he can go to any manager in the organization, even as far up as the general manager is a unique feature of the organization.

Tom will come up to me and say "Hey, Brian, what's going on?" That's just really odd. It's been my experience that you just can't go up to the top of the chain, and if you do the managers want to know what's going on. Because if you do go to the top it would be because you had a personnel issue with your manager.

Datamar's corporate culture supports the symbolism of belonging through values which highlight group membership, such as teamwork and respect for others.

In addition, recurring themes that value diversity and acknowledge the efforts and contributions of every individual and all roles in the organization convey a sense of place and purpose to employees. This can be particularly important at the lower levels where employees who are doing the work of customer service may not always be abreast of higher level organizational developments. In addition, trainings are offered which acknowledge different roles and styles, and reinforce how important each individual is in the larger organization. A Phone Center representative describes a recent training for operators:

Our group is the voice of L&L, I love that part of my work. We just had some training last week to encourage us once again, to remind us how important our role is and how our customers are what makes L&L successful.

Some employees describe this sense of belonging on an even larger scale, expressing the feeling that they have a place where they belong everywhere they go. Amy and Carol, who both talk about leaving the Bay area at some point in the future base their plans around other L&L work sites in the country. Another employee who travels extensively as part of her job description relates that she always feels sheltered by and at home in the corporation in any foreign surroundings that she visits. She sums up her sense of loyalty and connection to the corporation by saying, "I have travelled a lot for the company. On an international level, I'd rather turn in my passport than my L&L badge."

We can see that the sense of belonging that the corporate culture engenders and the practices that managers enact to realize this is important to employees. It also

benefits the organization, particularly when employees' expressions of loyalty demonstrate their understanding of the "big picture" and their actions place the goals of the organization over individual goals.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have explored the various processes which enculturate members into the corporate culture. The selection and training of employees, exposure to the culture over time, social sanctions, and self-monitoring processes aid in the enculturation of members. We have also demonstrated that within the corporate culture are processes for reinforcing the culture and assuring the cooperation and acquiescence of employees. These include both tangible and symbolic rewards. The most predominant of these symbolic rewards is belonging, and employees demonstrate that these rewards are important through their loyalty and contributions to the organization. They also demonstrate that the corporate culture does indeed have an impact on individuals, even if by only compelling them to *act* in a way consistent with the corporate culture.

In the picture we have painted of Datamar, it would appear that these processes and structures are sufficient to meet organizational goals and objectives. However, in the real world, enculturation is never complete, and in the high tech world, change is a given. Both the organization and individuals deviate from the corporate culture and its goals.

While the enculturation processes are largely effective and the rewards persuasive, there are instances when employees stray from the corporate culture. Contradictory expectations of the corporate culture may confuse its expression in practice. Implicit values of the corporate culture may conflict with explicit demonstrations of it and create tension and ambiguity. Different personalities, styles, and interpretations complicate employees' understandings and assessments of the corporate culture. Some of the conditions which provoke the divergence from the corporate culture will be examined in the next chapter.

CHAPTER SIX

INCONSISTENT LESSONS

In their day to day activities and interactions, workers behave and communicate in ways that reveal the extent to which they act consistently with Datamar's corporate culture. As employees navigate within the work environment, there are occasions when conflict with the cultural requirements emerges in their behaviors and attitudes. Sometimes contradictions between the cultural premises and expectations of management can lead to this conflict. At other times, the varying interpretations of the corporate culture between managers, between managers and employees, and between individual employees, based upon their own understandings and experiences, also leads to conflict. In this chapter the inconsistent and contradictory conditions of the corporate culture, the variety of actions that result from individual's understandings of it, the circumstances under which employees depart from it, and the consequences of the departure will be examined.

Irreconcilable Ideals

One of the fundamental dilemmas that the corporate culture engenders arises from the inconsistency of ideals. As the corporate culture is fixed upon the fulfillment of certain goals, the ideals and values put forth are presumed to be a creative and suitable means to achieve them. As such the values may be conceived as an all-encompassing and inclusive world view that identifies the importance of a variety of

different practices and beliefs. However, in actuality, these ideals may be inconsistent with one another. Such conflict is illustrated by the inconsistencies among some of the basic ideological premises of the Datamar corporate culture. Potentially dichotomous ideologies, such as identification with the group versus individualism, or diversity versus corporatism can lead to ambiguity and difficulties in interpretation. Accordingly, individuals may take different courses of action but each may find legitimation for these in the corporate culture.

Individuals and Membership

A critical component of the Datamar corporate culture is employees' ability to act as if they identify with the group. Employees can express this capacity to connect in many ways; in their ability to work as a team, through demonstrations of loyalty, and their dedication to corporate goals. The expectation that employees will become active team members, identify with the group, and be self-sacrificing and loyal is pervasive in the corporate culture.

According to their co-workers those individuals who have been least successful in the organization have been those who aren't perceived to be team players. An individual with a more independent work style who does not blend well into the group is labelled by fellow employees as a "rogue," "lone ranger," "maverick," or "lone wolf." James, a mid-level manager describes a poor worker as being "too individualized." On the one hand, the corporate culture values the individual, but on the other hand, it is expected that the individual will conform to certain requirements

such as teamwork. Thus, in some circumstances it is inappropriate for employees to display their individualism.

There is little support in the organization for individuals who do not integrate well with co-workers or at least give the appearance that they do so by displaying the capacity to work well as a team. One admin who says that she believes in the value of teamwork and declares that teamwork is vitally important to the organization also admits that:

I'm in a position where I don't do a lot of teamwork, working together on projects. It's more like they give me stuff and I go off and do it.

This is similar to the example of the Phone Center in Chapter Four, in which the interdependent roles of some members of the organization are recast to model the value of teamwork that the corporate culture promotes.

Another mid level manager discusses the contradictions of teamwork, particularly at the entry level. He explains that for some employees, getting ahead is the bottom line, and the ranking system measures individual performance against the performance of others. So for these employees teamwork may become less a personal priority than competing successfully with one's co-workers.

Such competition is, of course, inconsistent with expressions of group identification that reflect an employee's willingness to put the good of the company before their own personal agenda, and to feel a strong sense of personal responsibility for the success of the company. Workers are expected to "help the company," to "see

the big picture," and to "think globally." Displays of loyalty are demonstrated through self sacrifice, which can even lead to financial losses such as the ten percent across the board pay cut that employees experienced in the past. However, there is evidence that some employees doubt the reciprocity of this loyalty. According to managers "rumors are always flying," particularly in the Phone Centers, where employees worry that the organization's function will be "outsourced," or that workers will be laid off or moved to another facility in another region.

Personal losses can also hit home as is reflected by divorce rates among employees, some of whom feel that their work is at least partially responsible for the breakup of their marriages. One mid-level manager cited the changes in her personal style that occurred as a result of her work with L&L:

I began understanding other lifestyles as a result of working at L&L. My husband had a good job, but our life was chaotic... After watching people with planned lives at L&L I realized that life doesn't have to be so chaotic. By this time I had my first son, and I just figured I could do it better on my own.

Spouses and children are expected to understand and adjust to employees' membership in the organization, although some succeed more than others. Many that succeed are also current or former L&L employees, or are affiliated with the high tech industry in some way. In fact, of the seven employees interviewed who are married or engaged, six have spouses in the industry.

Since maintenance of membership is a high priority among employees at L&L, the latter will often engage in a variety of activities and behaviors to ensure their

continued membership, including ones that are contrary to their own individual inclinations. Identification with the corporate culture can result in literal "self doubt," as Deborah, an upper level manager reflects on her career: "I question whether I was true to my real self."

Furthermore, non-identification with the group may diminish one's worth to the organization. Sometimes individual characteristics that don't support the corporate culture are concealed or modified. David, a Phone Center manager, admits that he sometimes falls short in "participatory management:"

I have to really watch myself. I tend to jump right in when employees have an idea. I start to build on their ideas and make recommendations without letting them follow through and come up with their own ideas and solutions.

Since the notion of teamwork is a critical piece of the corporate culture, even managers, like David, have to be alert to personal characteristics that might undermine teamwork or group identity. Managers believe that their actions must convincingly reflect the values of the corporate culture if employees are to believe that the values are truly important and real.

Individuals and Diversity

Another key premise of the corporate culture is that the organization truly values employees as individuals, and that it supports and promotes "diversity." The organization goes to great lengths to reinforce these values. Valuing diversity is one of Datamar's current popular expressions, and management and employees attend diversity trainings at least once a year. These trainings are two hour sessions that

address societal beliefs about gender and ethnicity and that convey the messages that the Bay Area is a diverse place and when people do something different it does not mean that it's wrong. According to a project manager with a college background which he feels addressed diversity quite thoroughly says,

The trainings only scratch the surface of the issues of diversity. But I feel that L&L is ahead of other companies in Silicon Valley in addressing the issue of diversity.

Diversity is a concept which can be complicated by various individual interpretations, particularly when the individual's understanding of diversity strays from the categories of diversity tacitly recognized by the corporate culture.

Most employees, whether motivated by personal preference or having been trained in diversity issues, support the value of a diverse work force in the organization. Tom, the organization's general manager says that he looks for differences when hiring employees:

I look for opportunities to increase the diversity of the organization. That's important to me because as a minority, I see that diversity has its benefits to the organization in terms of getting different viewpoints, different cultures.... That's the challenge for my managers. Sometimes I insert people with a personality that's different just to help them realize that this could be a chance for them to learn how to deal with it.

While the corporation in principle encourages a diverse work force and many managers feel that it is a crucial element in their hiring decisions, some aspects and individual expressions of diversity are discouraged. There is risk in expressing facets of the self that may depart from the corporate norm. Unconventional or eccentric

behavior, even behavior that strays from the politically correct or popular management paradigms, can be viewed as unsuitable. On this side of the diversity issue, employees cite cases when diversity is not well received in the workplace.

One example of divergence from the corporate culture's "acceptable" diversity is exhibited in the context of a current business trend, consensus decision making. Managers adopting this style of management have less power to act quickly and decisively, which is particularly difficult for those used to a different style of decision making. The latter may be due to longevity with L&L, having come from another high tech company, or moving from another region. Several employees cited problems with one engineer who, when promoted to manager, could not understand why he was not the "authority." And according to Tom, one manager who was transferred from a site in Europe

is frustrated. He's from Europe, a different cultural background and so he's trying to adapt. In Europe people are just much more direct. Americans kind of beat around the bush and give innuendos and stuff. I think he's driven on a different clock and so he runs things that happen quick, and people issues take a long time.

While the consensus style of decision making contributes to the maintenance of the group member mentality and increases employees' belief in the value of their contributions, it can be a real problem for some managers who according to Tom, "feel like they're handcuffed because they can't get decisions fast enough."

Some managers disagree with the value of "empowering" all employees and relinquishing managerial responsibility to employees. Some interpret it as essentially

leaving employees "blowing in the wind." Deborah, an upper level manager

comments:

Empowerment to an extreme is both anarchy in terms of how the organization ends up running, and irresponsible management and leadership. Leaders have to take responsibility for setting the course and putting some boundaries around the space within which people are empowered. If managers stop doing that, employees resist even that degree of boundary setting. And given that ultimately we're responsible for what we deliver, we can't abdicate that responsibility.

Expressions of diversity, individualism, and group membership are concepts that the corporate culture defines in very specific ways. These concepts and ideals can be diametrically opposed to one another, a dichotomy that the purveyors of corporate culture may not recognize except as they are expressed in individual actions.

Interpreting the Culture: The Down Side

One of the fundamental problems that emerges from the transmission of the corporate culture in the organization is one of interpretation, particularly given the multiplex messages that the corporate culture conveys. Cultural traffic influences the region, the corporation as a whole, the organization, and specific divisions and groups within it. Individuals, including managers and employees, come in to the organization from their own distinct backgrounds and myriad experiences and interpret the culture accordingly. All of these influences add to the challenge of interpretation.

The interpretation of the corporate culture represents the employee's creative efforts to relate it to his or her own identity and experience. An individual's distinct training, work experience, background, and specific job requirements are influential

factors in an employee's ability to represent the standards specified by the corporate culture. As a result, some employees succeed while others do not. Similarly, the expression of some elements of the corporate culture may be a simple task for an employee, while others may be difficult. This competence varies between employees.

Enacting some of the critical characteristics dictated by the corporate culture at Datamar may entail certain concessions on the part of employees. Employees may learn that the corporate culture contains unexpected demands that are not part of the job description but are nonetheless prerequisites for success in the organization. Some employees are more adept at discerning and exhibiting these characteristics than others. Sometimes employees choose between conflicting demands and concessions. These choices rest on individual interpretation.

As a result, management's assumption that by articulating the corporate culture certain actions will result is erroneous. The corporate culture does not always produce the anticipated outcomes: the actions that follow are not predictable and may be entirely unexpected. The varying interpretations of the corporate culture can be illustrated by examining the multiple understandings, inherent contradictions, and distinct demonstrations of the corporate culture. Some of the ways that employees may digress from or adhere to the cultural expectations are outlined below.

Individuals and the Right Look

In the Datamar culture appearances can be revealing, and looking different can create problems. Indeed, appearances are very important in Datamar and seem to be a

constant concern to managers and employees. This attention to appearances is manifested in at least two different ways, both of which a number of employees say reflect a level of professionalism. The first area is in conduct, particularly emotional conduct. One individual is described as being an exemplary employee because she is "always helpful and cheerful even when she doesn't want to be," and another because, "I never see him flustered or frustrated."

An earlier example illuminated the importance of presenting oneself in specific ways; someone that *looks* a certain way, and *acts* a certain way is commendable. In order to gain the acceptance of peers and co-workers, employees may display those qualities that they have been trained or discover to be "appropriate" in the work environment. Amy, an administrative assistant feels that:

I have an extremely high sense of humor, and at L&L I've had to tone it down. I've seen other people go through the same thing, so I think be a little bit aware, a little bit cautious about what's professional and appropriate versus what's fun, and find a balance.

Later Amy says, "Sometimes what I present is very aloof and unemotional, and I'm not." This camouflaging of aspects of one's personality suggests that one should act differently than one feels and should not reveal emotional, distasteful, or negative qualities which may be interpreted as unprofessional. Again, only some facets of the individual's self are allowed expression.

Another significant dilemma posed by the required corporate demeanor involves the perception on the part of some employees that they can't always say

what's on their minds. A lower level manager describes the environment as being "kind of fake and put on." He feels that employees tend to play a social role and speak indirectly. Confrontation is couched in subtle terms like, "I have an issue with this," rather than directly and honestly. So while the corporate culture is presented as being quite open, it operates with strict guidelines surrounding self expression.

The limitations surrounding self expression are further illustrated by the second area in which appearances are important, that of physical appearance. The organization is concerned with maintaining an image and this is revealed in an almost obsessive attention to physical attire, even in the Phone Center where employee interaction with outsiders, customers, or clients is almost never face to face. Phone operators may be less concerned with wearing ties, suits, and dresses, but even one telemarketer dressed in jeans and a knit t-shirt made an apologetic reference to the casualness of his attire.

There is an unwritten code concerning appropriate clothing, particularly at management levels. A female admin who was interviewed on a Friday, the one day of the week which is set aside as "casual day" when everyone is entitled to "dress down," commented that there are even subtle "rules about what is casual." Casual jeans do not include Levi's but can include designer labels. One employee who attempted to express his personal style by wearing black leather on casual day was clearly assessed negatively when this was out of line with corporate expectations. His choice resulted in a joke which likened him to Mad Max, a renegade film character.

The Young Culture

Time and again, employees describe Datamar as a "young" organization. While the youthful nature of the organization is presented as a frame of mind more than a chronological age, this characteristic nonetheless can have implications for older, more traditionally trained employees with a longer history within the organization. In a fast paced environment where management paradigms can shift like the weather, the company's "oldtimers" may encounter dramatic changes that effect their jobs, their futures, and their perceptions of the corporation.

Even being an oldtimer is a contradiction in terms since many employees who have put in considerable time in the corporation are still relatively young. In recounting a story about the "oldtimers" in the organization, one 43 year old employee who has been with the company for 16 years surprised herself at the end of her dialogue by saying, "I'm an oldtimer now myself."

These individuals, having been with the company for many years, are respected by co-workers in many cases, but they can be even more susceptible to the changes and the scrutiny of the metaphorical "young organization" particularly after having been trained and raised in an entirely different era and work environment. They may also find themselves competing for jobs with a younger work force. These workers represent another type of diversity, one that may become less and less appreciated in the current workplace.

While the company's emphasis on the human side of business has reassured these workers that the company values them and is committed in principle to providing them with employment security, they may still feel themselves to be vulnerable in reality. When organizations or positions are eliminated, employees may take a voluntary severance. They may get an offer for another job, and if they turn down that position they must accept the next offer or they "terminate." This can cause workers to question the wisdom of their choices, and question the changes taking place in the workplace.

One manager, who has been with L&L for more than 25 years and whose position was eliminated, was critical of the changes in the structure of the organization and predicted the failure of that structure. She felt assured that based on her past performance she would have no problem finding an even better position, but in her first attempt to transfer to another position in another organization, she was passed up for a younger female employee who was part of an "accelerated management program" in L&L. She eventually transferred to another organization, but not without first experiencing a great deal of stress and alienation generated by her uncertain future.

Time and Time Again

In an earlier chapter, employee's autonomy in terms of their use of their time was indicated as one of the strengths of the organization. By leaving the management of their time in the hands of employees, the organization attempts to establish a

trusting relationship with its workers. However, time can be a double edged sword in the organization. One strong expectation that is revealed from experience in the organization involves one's willingness to contribute time. Time is used in a number of contexts which send clear messages to employees about the requirements of the organization. As one admin says:

In this group they work a lot harder than they play. People don't want to take flexible time off. It's very challenging to be able to get all your work caught up to the point where you can take three days off and you've got three days worth of work to catch up on when you get back. A lot of people say it's just not worth it. Especially when your manager doesn't take his FTO's. It's almost like you're an oddball if you take any time off. That's my take on it.

Many employees admit that when it comes to balancing work with other facets of life, they personally do not do a very good job. Furthermore, most employees feel that the structure for balance is there in terms of flex time, time off, and scheduling, and while L&L as a whole provides more opportunities than other companies, Datamar is less successful than other organizations within L&L. This is complicated by the fact that some employees have fewer choices than others, particularly those that work in the Phone Center and are much more restricted in the use of their time. One Phone Center operator remarks:

L&L has a big emphasis on work\life balance now. I really don't see that. I've always had to fight for the early hours and it's always a discussion item, it's never part of the plan... Typically at L&L you never work 40 hours, people have gone part time so they can work a 40 hour week or closer to 30 hours. As far as work life balance, L&L definitely wins.

So while the organization gives the appearance that it appreciates the dilemma of the balance between work life and home life, and entrusts employees with choice in the use of their time, clearly employees feel pressured to comply with what they perceive to be strong expectations concerning time management. Furthermore, their dedication and loyalty to the company can be displayed by the careful and calculated manipulation of their time.

Space and Boundaries

The "openness" of the culture is reinforced by the use of open space in the environment, although this can present a significant dilemma for some employees. The physical nature of the organization is arranged so that everyone from the general manager to entry level phone operators all have similar work spaces. There are no doors on any offices, and there is free access to anyone in the building. While on the one hand this quality may symbolize the organization's equity and openness, for some this lack of physical boundaries can be quite unsettling. One employee notes that:

Boundaries are a real issue. You can't have them. There are probably a high percentage of people that don't care, and I do. It can be a very intrusive environment.

This type of environment can reinforce the perception that one is constantly under the gun, always being watched. Another difficulty that is added to the lack of privacy is the issue of interruptability. The lack of boundaries limits one's ability to work uninterrupted for any extended length of time on a given project. One outcome of this dilemma is that often employees will take work home with them in order to get

it done. Several employees admit that they take work home with them; many of them read their E-Mail at home. Marie says:

A lot of times I'm just constantly interrupted and I can't write. At home I have more time to think about it. It's actually more enjoyable sometimes to do that at home. I don't know why but...it's great. The phone never stops ringing here.

Even some employees that don't take work home with them may admit that, "I'm thinking about work all the time."

The lack of physical boundaries may be compensated for in limited ways. Office cubicles are sometimes arranged by employees to protect them from intrusion by placing their work stations in the farthest, most isolated corners. Work tables and chairs are placed in the more public, accessible spaces.

Another mediation of space is demonstrated by the notion of intimacy in the organization. Lisa explains, "There is a respect for privacy here. You don't ask questions until someone volunteers information." In an environment where one may have little control over one's physical space, a possible outcome may be that employees attempt to have more control over their "personal space."

This is also reflected in the discomfort that many employees feel about being exposed to the personal life and personal issues of co-workers. This separation of work life and personal life is another area that places complex pressures on employees. In a description of yet another exemplary employee, Brian says:

One of the things that I really admire about her is that she is really able to separate her personal life from her business life. She's very private. When

someone doesn't let you in to that aspect of their life it's hard to view them as unprofessional.

He explains that when she was newer to the organization she used to be more personal but apparently over time she felt that this hindered her advancement in the organization. The expectation is that while work life may infringe on one's personal life, the reverse can be a handicap.

Performance by Volunteerism

Another striking expectation of the organization involves the notion of volunteerism. In order to really stand out here it is necessary for employees to "go the extra mile" by becoming involved in projects above and beyond their own assigned tasks when one may have expertise, experience, or value to add. Again, there is the sense that this is good for the organization, and this type of behavior is rewarded by managers. However, it can also be overwhelming as one employee explains:

There's an underlying message at L&L that you never say no. You can redirect, you can delegate, but you can't say no. If you do, somehow that will wind up in your evaluation. I think the feeling that you can't say no, when you're overloaded is very difficult.

The pressure to perform above and beyond the call of duty is inherent in the environment. According to managers, dedicated, exemplary employees will "come in on weekends to work on a project." This pressure also adds to the blurring boundaries between work and home life as many employees feel compelled to take work home with them just to stay on top of things.

Some employees can also feel the pressure to perform in the wider community, both as representatives of the organization and by making individual contributions to the community. By advocating for community service and distinguishing itself as a resource in the community (even citing citizenship as one of its objectives), L&L places an additional responsibility on its employees. Many employees express guilt when they don't feel that they are contributing to the community through volunteer work and feel compelled to qualify by saying that they have been active volunteers in the past and/or plan to do more in the future.

Volunteer work is on the list of things. I have done that, gotten a lot of personal value out of it and I'd like to find a way to get it back, to squeeze it back in, it just hasn't gotten there yet.

Converting the No Fit Employee

As we have seen, the organization has processes by which it identifies individuals who fit, individuals who are able to, above all, identify with the group. These employees may demonstrate their diversity, within recognized boundaries and in tolerable ways, and their individuality in appropriate situations or ways. In spite of this, some individuals stray from the corporate norms. There are a number of responses to the deviation.

In some instances finding a "better fit" for employees alleviates the tensions that can arise from conflicts with the corporate culture. In one situation, a functional manager advised an employee who was unable to "assimilate" into his role in one specific component of the business:

We weren't going to be able to fund as many people as we had on board...my recommendation was that he use this kind of window of opportunity to pursue other opportunities, because that time was also when other organizations were hiring.

In another instance, an engineer who was promoted to manager but lacked "people skills" which created conflict with his employees, was transferred to a position where communication skills were less a priority than the technical expertise that was his specialty. In addition to maintaining smoother operations this type of solution can also serve to circumvent legal hassles.

A second strategy to deal with friction between employees and the organization involves compromise and negotiation. Jean, a personnel manager, cites the case of an administrative assistant who has been in her current position for eight years. Recently her supervisor moved to another position, and her new manager has different work requirements which will entail her making a schedule change. This change will also involve a lifestyle and routine change. Being dissatisfied with the change, she has taken advantage of the open door policy to voice her concerns with upper management. Currently negotiations between the admin, her supervisor, and the personnel department are underway and are expected to result in a compromise with concessions made on both side, but which will reflect the organization's demand for loyalty and flexibility.

The final response to departure from corporate cultural norms and expectations is to educate employees through supervision and training in an effort to modify their

behavior. The educational focus of L&L and Datamar obviously supports this strategy. One indicator of this trend is demonstrated in the role of managers who are expected to monitor progress, note weaknesses, and "recommend areas for potential future career development" in each of their employees. Employees who have difficulty with aspects or expectations of the culture are advised and encouraged to attend trainings in areas that may address deficiencies. These can be as divergent as "Dressing for Success," "Teambuilding," and "Managing Interpersonal Relations."

This emphasis on training and education reflects not only the corporation's and organization's style, but the even more pervasive ideological premise that education is the solution. The emphasis on knowledge as a means to an end, which has been furthered by the information age, is supported by the corporate culture, and a high tech paradigm that both generates it and is dependent upon it for its own survival.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have examined a number of discrepancies of the corporate culture which effect the environment and the actions of employees in the workplace. In looking at the official policy of the organization we have seen that there are some values that are articulated and sustained by the corporate culture which when viewed collectively are in opposition to one another.

We have explored some of the contested interpretations of the basic elements of the corporate culture. These can and do result in inconsistent and unpredictable actions. We have seen that such inconsistencies occur across levels of the

organization. For instance, the interpretations and actions of high level managers differ from those of lower level employees. These discrepancies also occur within levels of the organization, in that different managers interpret and act differently, and employees in similar occupational categories interpret and act differently.

Finally, we have demonstrated that these variations are perceived as correctable when they result in actions which are deemed inappropriate. The organization continues to attempt to remedy problems of interpretation and action through a number of corrective strategies to further socialize members and reinforce the corporate culture.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CULTURE'S CONSEQUENCES

This aim of this research was to explore and describe management's use of a well articulated corporate culture as a more efficient and humane means of influencing workers to work toward achieving organizational goals. The thesis problem is that underlying managerial use of corporate culture are several unexamined assumptions. First, it is assumed that corporate culture is the primary source of the cultural in the organization. A second assumption is that there is a clear relationship between the elements of the corporate culture and subsequent employee action. Finally, management often assumes that the corporate culture is internally consistent. If supported, these assumptions would establish the creation and enactment of corporate culture as a simple, straightforward, and uncomplicated way of affecting workers and workplace processes.

The goal of this thesis has been to explore the bases of these assumptions through the ethnography of a single organization. In this ethnographic examination of Datamar, we have attempted to present a thorough and detailed representation of one organizational version of corporate culture. We have examined the environment and background for the creation of Datamar's corporate culture. We have described the organization, its corporate culture, and its enculturation processes. Finally we have viewed the significance of corporate culture in the workplace.

As a result of this exploration of corporate culture in Datamar we have reason to challenge the assumptions that corporate culture rests upon. In this concluding chapter we review each assumption and, using the case of corporate culture in Datamar, argue for rethinking them.

Sources of Culture

Datamar, like many organizations, recognizes the importance of culture and attempts to bind employees and constrain their actions through the use of an explicit corporate culture which contains a distinct set of values and assumptions. However, managers conceptualize culture in a very narrow way and exclude many cultural influences from their design of an organization's corporate culture. They create values and practices that are meant to meet organizational goals, but in the official corporate culture these other sources of culture within the organization are absent.

We have seen many manifestations of culture which influence Datamar. Cultural traffic converges in Datamar from a variety of sources such as the L&L Path, Silicon Valley and the high tech industry, current business practices, and even the type of work that is done in the organization. Descriptions of Silicon Valley's regional characteristics illustrate some of the similarities between L&L and other Silicon Valley organizations. Since the industry plays a prominent role in the region, even new employees in an organization may be preshaped by the region. These sources of culture not only exert pressure on the organization and on its workers, but also

predetermine some elements of the corporate culture itself and influence the culture of the organization as a whole.

Workers may be constrained by Datamar's corporate culture in the workplace, but much of their lives are lived elsewhere. As such, many other sources of culture also influence them from outside the organization. Workers bring culture into the organization through their own value systems, experiences, and cultural roots. Enculturation processes and corrective strategies of the organization which are intended to modify behavior and ensure compliance lack insight into the constant presence of cultural variation between people. As a result of the pressure of these different cultural forces, managerial attempts to ensure homogeneity and conformity to the corporate culture are incomplete.

Corporate culture is but one of many sources of culture in the organization and in the lives of workers. These other sources of culture can present a significant obstacle to the ability of an organization's corporate culture to achieve its aims of unification and uniformity.

The Gap Between Idea and Action

The corporate culture in Datamar is presented as a set of official beliefs and values that are transmitted to employees who are then expected to follow them. This conversion of ideas to action is assumed to be simple and direct. If this assumption were true it would follow that the relationship between idea and action would be clear and constant. However, the enactment of corporate culture in Datamar demonstrates

that the translation of the cultural is not so simple; instead it is interactive, individualized, and inconsistent.

Datamar's corporate culture in principle and the practices of individuals do not always coincide. Many of the beliefs and values of the corporate culture are vague, leaving them open to interpretation. Interpretive conflicts occur at many levels in the organization. First of all, in the translation of the L&L Path to the Datamar corporate culture, discrepancies between them are often grounded in the type of work done in the Datamar and the specific issues that result from it. Similarly, these conflicts are also illustrated within Datamar by differences in interpretation between managers and Phone Center employees.

Among individual employees, when examining workers' translations of the abstract concepts of the corporate culture we have repeatedly witnessed difficulties and differences in interpretation. Employees demonstrate the influence of their own experiences and backgrounds when they encounter the corporate culture. While the corporate goals and ways of behaving contained in Datamar's corporate culture *may* be internalized by workers, the expression of employees understandings of these ideas through their actions are individualized, not universal. Even the simplest of workplace processes and rules can result in contradictory interpretations by employees at all levels of the organization. Managers and workers alike struggle with elements of the corporate culture.

Our exploration of Datamar indicates that in some cases elements of the corporate culture are internalized by employees and directly shape values, beliefs, and actions. In other cases, people reject elements of the corporate culture, although they may do so quietly. Yet even if employees reject elements of the corporate culture, as "good" organizational members they may act as if they embrace it. Finally, employees may justify any action or belief by reference to the corporate culture. Thus, the organization may consist of public conformists who privately rebel against the dictates of culture.

Internal Inconsistencies

The elements of corporate culture are assumed to be internally consistent. If this were so, then there would be minimal problems of interpretation for employees and, as a result, the enactment of the corporate culture would be clear, consistent, and straightforward. What we have seen in Datamar is that there are many ambiguities, tensions, and dilemmas which make interpretation difficult. These are demonstrated both in the corporate culture itself and in employees' actions.

While the culture appears to be homogeneous and internally consistent in terms of the expectations, values, and curriculum advanced, it is heterogeneous in that it is reinterpreted both by the organization and by its members. This is complicated by conflicting values and nebulous concepts such as "individual," "diversity," and "team" which are easily misconstrued but are nonetheless integral components of Datamar's corporate culture. Workers, even managers, struggle with these values and often pick

and choose among them to suit specific circumstances. While the corporate culture is portrayed as monolithic, internal inconsistencies place contradictory demands and expectations on employees and frustrate their ability to act according to its intent.

Finally, within Datamar's corporate culture, managers have designed a set of values which accommodate and even encourage change. In an environment and a value system where change is imminent, there is a constant undercurrent of instability. This component of the corporate culture in and of itself challenges the internal consistency of the corporate culture by maintaining a process that rationalizes the fluctuations and dynamism of the organization and the industry.

The research presented challenges the assumptions upon which corporate culture is based. It establishes that there are myriad cultural influences in the workplace. It illustrates how and why the use of corporate culture requires translation and interpretation, often resulting in conflicts between ideas and action. Finally, it demonstrates that the internal inconsistency of the corporate culture obstructs its enactment. While it is not my intent to suggest that there are any easy solutions to the dilemmas faced by workers and managers in the complex environment of the workplace, the findings do suggest a number of practical ideas for consideration. The implications of the research are presented below.

Implications for Companies, Management, and Workers

The examination of corporate culture in Datamar has established that this management strategy does indeed have consequences for the organization and its

workers. Corporate culture does produce results, but often the real outcomes of the corporate culture are unintended and unexamined.

Clearly corporate culture can powerfully shape employee action: we have seen that employees struggle to make sense of it and to present themselves accordingly. However, we have also seen that workers meet this challenge with a great deal of ambiguity, variation, and conflict. As such, the use of corporate culture may be less effective, less predictable, and less humane than its framers imagine.

As managers conceptualize their organizational strategies there are a number of factors that might well be contemplated. Popular management strategies like manipulating corporate culture may not work equally for all organizations, circumstances, and situations. Organizations differ fundamentally in their structures, purposes, and goals, all of which influence the management of workers.

At the same time, there are similarities between organizations, such as hierarchical structures, occupational levels, reward systems, and the challenge to survive and profit. These elements, which often go unaccounted for in management planning, may also be the very qualities which can undermine the success of organizational strategies like corporate culture. Corporate cultures can be a process for masking underlying inequities within an organization. Datamar employees remind us that the values can be easily sidestepped or reinterpreted when the dollar or a promotion is the bottom line.

Fundamental differences are also inherent within a specific organization. For instance, a strategic planning unit contrasts greatly with a telemarketing unit. The work of an administrative assistant is quite different from that of a manager. As such strategies that attempt to constrain all workers within one set of policies or one set of values will necessarily be deficient. A process that works for one organizational unit will have different results when applied to another occupational category with different purposes and goals.

As work forces grow larger and more complex, the management of large numbers of individuals grows more complicated. Recognizing and accounting for the essential differences between individual employees and how these differences may affect their interpretations and actions is a challenge. A more thorough examination of the interplay of culture, gender, education, background, and occupational category is imperative. Techniques such as diversity trainings are only a cursory step to understanding the heterogeneous work force. Culture and diversity are complex concepts. Management attempts to use such concepts as part of a process for controlling workers may oversimplify and devalue these sources of culture and identity.

As workers learn to navigate organizational strategies, they too might be more attentive to the price that they pay for membership and compliance with an organization's managerial systems, like corporate culture. This is a real dilemma in an environment where simply having a job can be a measure of success. However, since

a process such as the management of corporate culture endeavors to change workers' norms, behaviors, attitudes, and feelings there are some very real consequences to be considered. We have seen evidence in Datamar that the corporate culture can be a very demanding value system, one that exacts a toll on workers' loyalties, time, and even self concepts. Workers might well ask what the culture is really asking of them and who or what they are meant to be loyal to: the organization, the corporation, the values of the corporate culture, their own values, or self fulfillment. It is questions such as these that might serve to keep workers free of the loss of personal autonomy that can result from allegiance to a system whose ultimate aims may not be in their own best interests.

The management of workplaces will continue to be an arena directed toward the achievement of organizational goals and stimulated by the challenge of regulating workers who may have goals of their own. Since work encompasses a significant portion of individuals lives, its consequences are of serious concern. This research has examined only one small domain of work life. The implications of this research, and the persistent influence of culture, organizations, work, and management, leads us to now look to future possibilities for gaining an even broader appreciation of the complex environment of work.

Areas for Future Research

This study has illuminated a number of questions that might enhance our knowledge of many issues surrounding culture, work, and workers in the context of

organizations and management strategies. If corporate culture continues to be an influential management strategy a more thorough examination of the influence of corporate culture on the individual is necessary. Even as new strategies emerge it will be important to explore the extent to which these new attempts to constrain workers affect individual workers and the role of culture and enculturation.

As work continues to demand more and more from workers, the organizational frontier gradually extends farther and farther outside of the confines of the workplace. In addition, a growing number of employees are telecommuters. The boundaries of work life merge into the homes, families, and private lives of workers, and the intersections of cultural traffic become even more pronounced. How far the corporate connection follows employees into the other structures, institutions, and associations in their lives is still uncertain and its pervasiveness should be explored more thoroughly.

A broader issue arises from the tension between the greater use of corporate culture and the increasing employment of temporary workers. This recent development in organizations, the rise of the temporary work force and the prevalence of outside contractors and consultants, expands organizational options and complicates cultural issues. These individuals are important in organizations, yet they may not be bound by the same constraints as permanent employees, since they are not equally enculturated. On the other hand they may find themselves operating with different constraints. We might examine how management treats these growing numbers of temporary and contracted employees. Furthermore, how these "outsiders" view their own positions in

the work force, in organizations, and in society is another significant area which stimulates further research.

Many implications for society writ large are manifested by the new source of enculturation generated by organizations. Assumptions about workers and workers roles prove inadequate in a world inhabited by deep actors behaving in ways prescribed by corporate culture, but who have different employment patterns and attachments to the organization. Employees consider the organization to be an important domain as is evidenced in their willingness to be shaped in the organizational mold. Individualism becomes sacrificed for the good of the company suggesting that, in fact, the basic foundations of society can become subordinated to the corporation. However, there are other forces at work than simple blind acceptance of organizational premises. Even the rugged individualism of the entrepreneur is constrained by an inability to control the environment and the pressures that industries, technology, organizations, and society exert.

These are just some of the directions that future ethnographic research into the area of organizations and culture may pursue. As this research demonstrates, the ethnographic study of culture in organizations provides a rich and comprehensive representation of a domain which is both relevant and influential in individual's lives and in society in general. Further exploration of the influence of organizations will strengthen our understanding of the dynamics of culture, corporations, industry, and regions, and the roles that these play in the lives of workers and society.

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