

The Importance of Employee Fit and Company Culture

Cultural fit is the congruence or compatibility between a person and their work environment. Several types of work environment have been identified and studied such as the organization, group, supervisor, or job.¹ However, cultural fit is perhaps most often considered as the person-organization relationship in non-academic literature although rarely is the distinction identified. A more localized and practical application of cultural fit may be between the person and the workgroup depending on how autonomous and culturally distinct the workgroup is from the organization. Difference may be because of factors such as geography (e.g., next office or across the country), incentives (e.g., sales vs product quality) or organizational tier (e.g., executive level or front line). Without these distinctions the workgroup and the organization can be synonymous.

The matching of cultural fit between individual and workplace has been characterized as the primary conceptual force in an organization² and at least as important as skills and experience. Good cultural fit has been identified to improve retention³, job satisfaction, influence job choice and work attitudes⁴, intent to quit, overall performance and organizational commitment or engagement.¹

The factors which influence fit between the employee and the organization are varied and numerous. The literature includes several models which include variables such as skills, needs, preferences, values, personality traits, goals, and attitudes.

Practically, measuring cultural fit has been determined from quantitative, i.e. interviews, to purely empirical methods like qualitative questionnaires although it's probable that a blend of both is desirable since even structured interviews or focus groups have significant bias. Empirical testing using quantitative questionnaires or other tools provides a more valid and reliable means of measuring and comparing both the organization's (or workgroup's) and individual's culture. Only then can a true cultural fit be established.

Good cultural fit questionnaires, assessing both the organization and potential hire, can provide information on the organization's climate discrepancy which is the dissonance between what participating employees perceive culture to be and what they believe it *should* be. These types of studies can provide leadership with information on engagement inhibitors and productivity barriers. Additionally, the organization can then build toward the goal of better cultural climate by hiring those who best fit their ideal culture and not necessarily their current culture.

Finally, and most practically, cultural fit assessments of new hires can provide actionable information on whether to hire a candidate or choose between two or more candidates.

If you are not using a reliable cultural fit metric in your hiring and assessing practice, Ahria uses a proprietary Cultural Fit Assessment Tool which can be applied to the workgroup, organization or any individual. Based on a competing values framework, this unique survey is constructed from cultural assessment research models and modified to be used for the Canadian workplace. We invite you to contact us to learn more about how you can measure cultural fit to improve your organization.

¹ Amy L Kristof-Brown, Ryan D Zimmerman, and Erin C Johnson. Consequences of Individuals' Fit at Work: A Meta-Analysis of Person-Job, Person-Organization, Person-Group, and Person-Supervisor Fit. *Personnel Psychology*. 2005, 58, 281-342

² Schneider B. (2001). Fits about fit. *Applied Psychology, An Internal Review*, 50(1), 141-15

³ Richa Verma, Tuilia Pandit, and Shraddha Verma. Fascinating Features for Job Selection: An Instrument to Obtain & Tactic to Retain Talent in the Organisation. *International Journal Of Core Engineering & Management* Volume 2, Issue 4, July 2015

⁴ Daniel M. Cablea, Timothy A. Judge. Person–Organization Fit, Job Choice Decisions, and Organizational Entry. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*. 1996, 67(3), 294–311