Study on the Mechanism Innovation of Enterprise Culture Construction

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Abstract: Using the normative analysis and comparative method, this paper points out that the main deficiency about the present enterprise culture construction in our country mainly lies in obscure organization subject, insufficient understanding of construction contents and unspecific construction targets. This paper argues that the enterprise culture construction is the important measure to enhance core competitiveness, and in order to implement enterprise culture construction down-to-earth, enterpriser need to build five mechanisms, including guarantee mechanism, communication mechanism, constraint mechanism, feedback mechanism and long-term effect mechanism, so that the enterprise culture construction has the duty of subjects and can penetrate into the minds of the employees, integrate into individual behavior, be repeatedly strengthened, and develop the aim culture in the end.
Keywords: Enterprise culture; Mechanism innovation; Guarantee mechanism; Long-effect mechanism

1 Introduction

Theory of enterprise culture was firstly proposed by American scholars when they compared management of the US with Japan in the late1970s. The theory lays people at the central and dominant position of management, focuses on the spirit of enterprise and common values of staff and thus forms the cohesive centripetal force. Enterprise culture has become a powerful competitive weapon between enterprises for its more lasting penetration and influence on enterprise. The development history of Chinese and foreign enterprises shows that all failed enterprises share out-dated and backward cultural background in common, while successful enterprises create brilliant achievements originating from their cultural. The theory has absorbed more and more attention of Chinese business managers and management theorists since being introduced into China. Many enterprises actively learn the theory of enterprise culture from the practice in United States, Japan, Europe and the "Four Asian Tigers" and many domestic management scholars also positively review the Western theory of enterprise culture and develop the theory about Chinese enterprises combining with the specific market environment in China. The research is gradually furthered and relevant papers, books and forums increase year by year. At present, the central government has established the guideline of scientific development and constructed strategic guidance of harmonious society, the enterprise culture construction is facing unprecedented opportunities and as well as challenges.

Enterprise culture construction is a constant process to enhance the competitive force of enterprise culture, which includes designing and developing culture of target enterprise in accordance with the need of enterprises development and the inherent law in enterprise culture, and then designedly implementing it in order to maintain, strengthen, change and renew the enterprise culture elements step by step (Zhang De, 2009). In recent years, with the establishment of China's market economy system and the increasingly fierce market competition, enterprise culture theory and practice are developed continuously and enterprise culture construction has also made some achievements. But there are also some common problems in enterprise culture construction as followings.

1.1 Obscure organization subject

Most enterprises are lack of exclusive organization to manage and overall plan enterprise culture construction. Even if the enterprise culture has been carried out, it also has the problems such as unclear responsibility, standing apart and by fits and starts. For example, in state-owned enterprises whether the party committee or administrative department should be responsible for enterprise culture construction is controversial. Many administrative leaders and business executives argue that enterprise culture construction is the role of party committee for its kind of ideological and political character, and thus the enterprise culture construction is paid insufficient attention and be prompted slowly. The training work of enterprise culture is lack of unified command and leadership, and training of different groups belongs to different management sectors, for example, the training of cadres is carried out by organization unit while the training of general staff by the union or human resources department, and even some training is by some institutes in society. Moreover, the content of the training is not niche so that training effect is not obvious.

1.2 Insufficient understanding of construction contents

Some enterprises ignore the spiritual essence why enterprise culture becomes "culture", and just take exterior part of enterprise culture, such as releasing brochure, uniting clothing and logo, changing the factory appearance, and designing the slogans, as the whole of enterprise culture, so that they ignore upgrading of ideas, the cultivation of values, integrity of the system, the regulation of behavior. The deep reason is that those enterprises don't put the enterprise culture into strategic planning of business development.

In different enterprises, the economic strength, technological conditions, management patterns, living environment and quality of personnel of each enterprise are also different, so the culture of different enterprises should differ from each other, while some enterprises leaders are not aware of the principle and thus cannot form the distinctive culture of their own enterprises. Some leaders rest on its laurels and are satisfied with their out-dated enterprise culture, and ignore the innovation of culture. But the 21st century is the era of knowledge economy, and innovation is the soul of the knowledge economy and determines the surviving capabilities of enterprises, so the ignorance of culture innovation decreases the surviving capabilities of enterprises.

1.3 Unspecific construction targets

Some enterprises are too utilitarian in enterprise culture construction and only take enterprise culture as a means of achieving economic goals, so they expect to receive an immediate effect. They deem that several propagandas or a few trainings about entrepreneurial spirits can make the spirit of enterprise penetrated into the minds of the staff and become the conscious actions and habits of staff. They ignore enterprise culture construction is a long-term and systematic project, which not only requires complete planning, long-term strategy, but also staggered mission and goals, and "down to earth" implements step by step.

2 The Mechanism Innovation of Enterprise Culture Construction

Crewe Kehong, an American cultural anthropologist, once pointed out that every culture is a complex of relations, and is ordered and interrelated multiplicities (Crewe Kehong, 1986). Culture consists of three hierarchies: superficial hierarchy, middle hierarchy and deep hierarchy. Superficial hierarchy of the enterprise culture, such as factory appearance, factory flags and songs, product image, is visible in the shape, heard by sound and belonged to explicit part; the deep hierarchy of enterprise culture is the accumulation of ideology in the heart of enterprises and their employees, such as the ideals and beliefs, ethics, values, codes of conduct, namely the implicit part; And the middle hierarchy of enterprise culture is between the superficial and deep hierarchy, such as business rules, organization and so on (Yang Jiameng, 2008). How to implement the three hierarchies of enterprise culture construction is the key to realize its mechanism innovation, and there are following five mechanisms (showed in figure 1) as important measures.
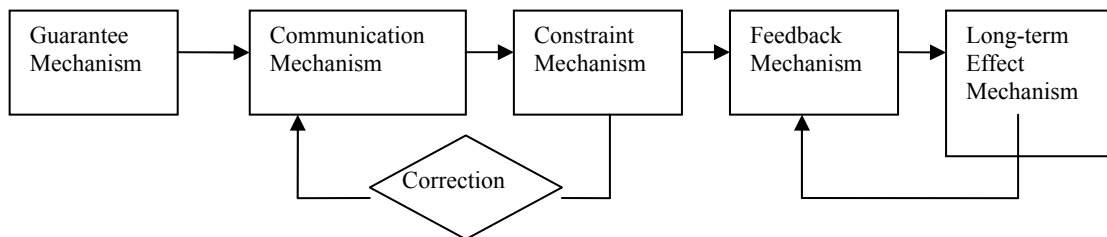

Figure 1   The Construction of Five Important Mechanisms

2.1 Constructing guarantee mechanism

Strong leading organization is an important driving force to promote work. The role of leading agency is to provide protection and preparation mainly from organization for enterprise culture construction, so that enterprise culture can be organized and orderly constructed under its leadership.

2.1.1 Establishment of enterprise culture construction leading group

The enterprise culture construction leading group should have the following structure: the head of the group should be assumed by general manager or secretary; the deputy director is assumed by deputy secretary or vice-general manager or the planning minister; the leading group membership consists of the responsible officers of union, administration, logistics, personnel, production, finance and other departments.

Furthermore, the standing body, namely Ministry (Department) of Culture, should be established to undertake specific implementation of culture construction, and this standing body can be placed in managing office or human resources. In the state-owned enterprises, this institute can be placed in party propaganda department, or takes "a set of men, two brands" approach, which means that it is the Propaganda Department in party system while it is the enterprise culture department in the administrative system. "Enterprise Culture Center" or "Enterprise Culture Department" should be established in LTD with modern enterprise system to undertake professional functions of enterprise culture construction.

The corresponding leading team should be set up to be responsible for the enterprise culture construction of the department in each subunit, such as branch, division and plant.

2.1.2 Definite job responsibilities

The duty of enterprise culture leading group is to establish decision-making and coordination mechanism and to make overall plan to promote enterprise culture construction. In detail, the enterprise culture leading group is responsible for planning, directing, organizing and coordinating resources including human, finance, material, time, and information resources, and then, helps to lead the enterprise culture all-round, all-process, and strives to not only have their own emphasis, but also make joint collaboration and concerted efforts to form an integrated force.

Standing body for enterprise culture construction, namely Enterprise Culture Department (Department), is responsible for the formulation of the work plan and work program of enterprise culture construction and the unified arrangement of the carrier, places and funding.

Subunits of the enterprise culture construction leading group, should work in accordance with the unified arrangement of superior enterprise culture construction leading group, and work creatively according to the reality of the subunits.

The enterprise culture can be implemented down to earth only with cooperation and participate of all functional departments.

2.2 Constructing communication mechanism

American management expert Tom Peters said: "Why the great organization is long-term survival, not because of the structure or management skills, but of the appeal of spiritual force known as faith to the organization." (Tom Peters, 1995). The purpose of constructing communication mechanism is to make the staff identify with   the common ideal, values and codes of conduct through propagation, and to penetrate them into the spirit of staff.

2.2.1 Selecting the dissemination information

Firstly, enterprise values system should be vigorously disseminated. The combination of enterprise vision, enterprise spirit, enterprise philosophy, business ethics, business philosophy, management pattern, business style with socialist core value system, could arouse the awareness that companies and employees are strong community of interests, responsibility, value and common destiny of community. Secondly, enterprise institution should be vigorously disseminated, for institution is not only the basis of an orderly operation of enterprise but also the enterprise management style and the key to shape the enterprise image. Thirdly, symbol system of enterprise culture should be vigorously disseminated to fully demonstrate the unique personality of enterprise and enhance the branding effect of enterprise.

2.2.2 Enriching communication carrier

The communication mechanisms should make full use of interpersonal communication, group communication, organizational communication, mass media and other means of communication, in order to transfer the selected enterprise culture information to the general staff with the support of function of various carriers. Enterprise Identity System (CIS) should be adequately utilized. Debates, group discussions, dialogue should be adopted, and various channels, such as the special column in newspaper, public service announcement, TV interviews, and enterprise culture network platform, should be used to propaganda and advocate enterprise culture idea and to form enterprise culture atmosphere. Through the effective communication, enterprise character and spirit will be highlighted and get the identity of enterprise employees and social public.

2.3 Constructing constraint mechanism

There are often two kinds of constraints on people. The one is external constraints, including legal and institutional; the other is the internal constraints, mainly including social moral and culture as values. Establishment of constraint mechanism is to combine the external constraints with internal constraints in order to make employee behavior be consistent with enterprise norms. Enterprise culture is not only idealistic, but also specific. Only when values, philosophy, requirements, desires and faith of enterprise culture is transferred into conscious behavior, enterprise culture can step into a higher hierarchy.

2.3.1 Using the institution to regulate behaviors

The most important part of enterprise culture construction is to transfer a series of cultural elements from ideology into concrete acts. Institution is one of the effective means to achieving this goal. Institution is to require people complying with the act of rules or guidelines for action. Institution is to require everyone to abide by the rules or the offices of action rule, with restraint, control and limited role. Enterprise institution is the foundation of the enterprise management and concrete expression of enterprise idea. Institution should be specific and executable, measurable and assessable, is also employee behavior standard and the unique and irreplaceable advantage of the enterprise culture. It can also act as a hint function to publicize and advocate some behaviors. Compared with culture, institution is "hard" in nature and an important adjunct to facilitate behavior. When the group values are merged into the enterprise institution, it will become the spirit of enterprise, and the staff will implement and comply with it consciously.

2.3.2 Using the rigid institution to guarantee implement

Institution is not always effective in regulating staff's behavior, because people are thoughtful and their actions are subject to the guidance of their thought. Especially currently, people revere for individual freedom and so that it is not possible to rely on people's fully voluntary compliance with institutions. A large number of facts manifest that as long as there is an opportunity, some people will breach institution, the main reason behind which is that the institution is relatively the constraints to human freedom, while "the individual will show a strong tendency to resist the behavior to limit their freedom" (Brehm, 1966). As a result, in the process of enterprise culture construction, rigid institutions should be established to strengthen the implementation of institution in order to help people to obey institution on their own "behavior."

2.3.3 Highlighting institution culture

When the scientific enterprise institution becomes an excellent institution culture, enterprise can obtain a long-term vitality (Xu Zhenyu, 2006). Institution culture is the culture that penetrating in physical institution. The constraint of institution can rapidly promote the individual behavior, but if long-term effects are arrived at, external pressure alone is not enough, which requires us to carry forward the long-term institution culture which can be insisted for long time. At the beginning, the lifestyle, behavioral norms and rules should be broken down and quantified and let the staff comply with the institution compulsively. When the employees actually agree to this institution and develop good habits to obey it, the institution will gradually become the "culture". Therefore, enterprise should vigorously disseminate the institution information, improve the individual behavior, and create an autonomic and heteronymous, forced and perceived cultural atmosphere to speed up the formation of institution culture.

2.4 Constructing Feedback Mechanisms

Only through information feedback, system can realize effective control so as to attain the goal; or it is impossible for system to realize effective control to attain the goal without information feedback system (Zha Youliang, 1999). The change of values and behavior norms can't be arrived at overnight. So it's necessary to use assessment method to inspect work performance of prophase. In the principle of facing to all staff, specific target, definite time limits, the assessment work should be carried out by the enterprise culture construction leading group, and through the continuous improvements, the enterprise culture will gradually mature.

2.4.1 Emphasizing the role of assessment

Through investigating and checking the work performance of prophase, the idea and behavior complying with the enterprise culture value orientation should be given affirmation and praise, and which can consolidate enterprise culture construction achievements, merge them into the enterprise spirit, and promote enterprise culture construction. As to the problems in prophase, the cause should be timely found out and corrected as soon as possible, which can gradually help to develop a supporting and encouraging power for enterprise culture, and make enterprise culture develop in right, healthy and stable direction.

2.4.2 Improving the contents of assessment

The embodiment of the communication effect, are mainly in the changes on minds, attitudes and actions on the disseminative objects caused by communication. The contents of assessment should focus on these settings indicators to give a comprehensive assessment of various enterprise culture elements and the implementation state of early stage. Through the inspection and assessment on employees, the cultural identity status can be acknowledged, which includes: the core values of cognition, loyalty degree, harmony degree, identity of enterprise system condition, the responsive state of enterprise spirit.

2.4.3 Optimizing the assessment methods

Assessment methods mainly include: field observations, symposium, questionnaires and individual interviews. The most common way is through "questionnaire of enterprise culture condition", "questionnaire of enterprise culture effect", carried on the questionnaire survey and interview. Professional investigation team should be organized to launch investigation, according to the size and business operation characteristics of the enterprise, either by stratification or by large-scale, and to get true and accurate information, and to figure out the basic situation of the enterprise culture. Exclusive "suggestion box" and "e-mail" should be set up to motivate the participation enthusiasm of the staff, in order to enhance assessment of the mass.

2.5 Constructing long-term effect mechanism

Cultural identity is a long process. The establishment of long-term effect mechanism is the key to solve the problem of cultural identity.

2.5.1 Setting up an excellent team

The role of enterprise culture is a smooth transition and constantly enriching process. After constructing the communication mechanism and institution of enterprise culture, the implementation of enterprise culture will need the establishment of the team for guaranteeing persistence. Enterprise needs to build a stable team that includes the key leaders and elites of staff, and the long time insist on constructing enterprise culture will pass on the enterprise culture generation by generation, unaffected by the change or mobility of staff and business leaders.

2.5.2 Stretching the role of typical model

The power of model is great and changes in human behavior are largely caused by the imitation. Therefore, in the process of enterprise culture construction, typical models should be shaped and popular model should be deliberately selected, so that their influence and emotional appeal on staff will contribute to enterprise culture construction. Leading cadres should play important roles in the enterprise culture construction as models and guides. Leading cadres should not only act as enterprise culture spokesman, the publicity of enterprise culture, but also practice enterprise culture as models. Enterprises should set up reward and punishment system, establish enterprise culture special award fund, and keep incentive sustainable, and thus promote the formation of long-term effect mechanism.

2.5.3 Develop the habits of honesty and self-discipline

Developing honesty and self-discipline behavior custom, is an important content of the construction of enterprise culture. Habits are behaviors which consolidate down by repeated practices, and are invisible force that can firmly control people in a fixed mode of thinking. If a group deals with something with almost the same attitudes and principles, the set will gradually form and then the habit will be developed. After the culture atmosphere is built up, it will exact influence and constraint power on environment. This kind of influence and constraint power is the unwritten rules or soft constraint, and further more, results from self-conscious.

3 Conclusion

Enterprise culture construction is a dynamically perfect process needing long-term endeavor. Guarantee mechanism lays the foundation, communication mechanism makes up measure, constraint mechanism works as the key, feedback mechanism constitutes the guarantee, and the long-term effect mechanism forms the root. Only the five mechanisms function in the whole process of the construction of enterprise culture, enterprise culture construction can get solid results.

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