The Ritz Carlton Hotel Company

Case Analysis of Organizational Culture

Prepared by Mike Ayers, Ph.D.
Case Analysis of the Ritz Carlton

**The Problem Defined**

This analysis examines the cultural characteristics of the Ritz Carlton Hotel Company for the purpose of providing insight into a question facing the business: Should major changes be made to the company’s long-standing “Seven Day Countdown”, a hallmark of the Ritz-Carlton’s well-defined hotel opening process?

The decision to alter the opening process rests in the hands of James McBride, one of the company’s general managers. McBride is a proven veteran at the Ritz-Carlton company. He was a key component in the hotel chain’s march across Asia serving as the general manager of the hugely successful, 248-room Ritz-Carlton in Kuala Lumpur. Mr. McBride’s most recent assignment was the opening of the new Ritz-Carlton in Washington, D.C.

The Washington, D.C. opening was unique. For the first time the Ritz-Carlton was establishing a hotel that was part of a multi-use facility. Owned by Millennium Partners and located in the historic Foggy Bottom district of Washington, D.C., the $225 million “hospitality complex” covered two-and-a-half acres and included 162 luxury condominiums, a 100,000 square-foot Sports Club/LA, a Splash Spa, three restaurants, 40,000 square feet of street-level restaurants and retail shops featuring the latest designs from Italy and other countries, as well as the 300-room hotel.

In the course of the opening Brian Collins, manager of hotels for Millennium Partners, expressed concerns to McBride about the Seven Day Countdown process. He questions whether the seven-day time frame limits the hotel’s ability to open at a higher occupancy rate and to reach the accepted standard of 80% occupancy in shorter amount of time. Because Collins also wants to ensure that the service established is flawless and a real draw for potential condominium residents, he speculates whether extra training would help the employees to further polish their service skills.

In spite of these concerns and even with the challenges of the new situation, Mr. McBride was successful in the Washington, D.C. opening utilizing the “Seven Day Countdown”. Yet McBride has now become anxious as he faces the option of change pertaining to upcoming assignments: Should he re-examine his approach to opening future hotels?

**Purpose and Scope**

This report will utilize literature review and past research regarding cultural dynamics and change considerations in organizations. These will serve as an outline and provide a framework to answer the question at hand.

The first section includes the definition and examination of three cultural dimensions of the organization which are relevant to this discussion: (a) levels of culture, (b) identity,
Case Analysis of the Ritz Carlton

and (3) the enculturation process. Next, the Ritz-Carlton will be evaluated against these dimensions. Theory and concepts will be used to substantiate observations and will include commentary as to what the Ritz-Carlton is doing right and wrong.

Definition and Examination of Three Cultural Dimensions Relevant To This Discussion

Levels of Culture

The Ritz-Carlton has a deeply embedded culture that has served them well for years. Their intentional distinctiveness has led them to the top of the hotel business and provided a reputation that brings customers back again and again.

There can be no doubt that the challenge that McBride faces is a cultural one. Culture may be viewed as the property of an independently defined stable social unit. Because of the unique identity associated with working at the company, the stability of the Ritz-Carlton social unit is stronger than in most organizations. The kinds of organizational experiences that both leaders and workers enjoy provide a powerful sense of identity. Schein (1987) states that a given set of people who have a significant number of shared important experiences leads to a shared view of the world around them and their place in it. This “shared view of the world” is a defining feature of culture and it supplies the social stability mentioned above. As will be demonstrated, this is certainly true of the culture at the Ritz-Carlton. In particular, the “Seven-Day-Countdown” has been not only a functional process for the company, but a quintessential example of their culture.

Therefore, when considering change "a deeper understanding of cultural issues in organizations is necessary not only to decipher what goes on in them but, even more important, to identify what may be the priority issues for leaders and leadership." (Schein, 1987, p. 2)

Culture Defined

"Culture is a pattern of basic assumptions - invented, discovered, or developed by a given group as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration - that has worked well enough to be considered valid and therefore, to be taught to the new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems." (Schein, 1987, p. 9)

Most definitions of culture resemble Schein’s (1987) and are not nearly as extensive. Hatch & Schultz (2002) for instance define organizational culture as “the tacit organizational understandings (e.g. assumptions, beliefs and values) that contextualize efforts to make meaning, including internal self-definition” (p. 8).
Case Analysis of the Ritz Carlton

Essentially, the term 'culture' should be reserved for the deeper level of basic assumptions and beliefs that are shared by members of an organization, that operate mostly unconsciously, and that define in a basic 'taken for granted' fashion an organization's view of itself and its environment. According to Schein (1987) culture solves two essential problems: "These assumptions and beliefs are learned responses to a group's problems of survival in its external environment and its problems of internal integration" (p. 6). These basic assumptions and beliefs come to be taken for granted because they solve those problems repeatedly and reliably. Therefore, culture should be distinguished from superficial artifacts and even held values, both of which are manifestations or surface levels of the culture, but not the essence of the culture.

The Components of Culture

Many authors have sought to define the components of culture. Schein (1987) denotes three "levels" of culture and the dynamics between them (see Table 1).

Level 1: Artifacts
This is the most visible level of culture. It is made up of the organization's physical and social environment. The dimensions included here are:
- physical space
- technological output of the group
- written and spoken language
- artistic productions
- overt behavior of its members
- the way status is demonstrated by members

Level 2: Values
This means the organizational sense of what "ought" to be. When values seem to work over a period of time, they tend to become beliefs (which describe reality) and finally assumptions about the nature of reality. These values achieve social validation by reducing uncertainty and anxiety. "Espoused values" predict what people will say in a situation, but not necessarily what they will do. Schein (1987) explains: "If the espoused values are reasonably congruent with the underlying assumptions, then the articulation of those values into a philosophy of operating can be helpful in bringing the group together" (p. 17). Behavior can only be reliably predicted by understanding the group's "basic assumptions."

Level 3: Basic Assumptions
Schein (1987) states, "When a solution to a problem works repeatedly, it comes to be taken for granted. What was once a hypothesis, supported only by a hunch or a value, comes gradually to be treated as reality" (p. 18). Basic assumptions have come to be so taken for granted that there is little variation within the group. These implicit assumptions actually guide behavior; they are non-confrontable and non-debatable.
Therefore, to change basic assumptions (called by some "double-loop learning") is extremely difficult. Unconscious assumptions tend to distort data. For example, if we expect others to try to take advantage of us, we will interpret their actions as being attempts to take advantage. Basic assumptions are difficult to locate because they are so taken for granted. Often they are just inferred from the artifacts.

Table 1: Levels of Culture and Their Interactions

Another way of looking at the components of culture comes from Seidel (1999). He illustrates the levels of culture with the analogy of an iceberg (see Table 2). Adapted from Schein (1987), Seidel's construct illustrates the more conscious and subconscious realities of culture.

Seidel's (1999) levels include: (a) The visible level, (b) the values level, and (c) the views of reality level. These visible things are the only true ‘conscious’ aspects of culture. Below the “surface” lie values and then views of reality.
Identity

Culture and identity are closely connected and the early literature on organizational identity often struggled to explain how the two might be conceptualized separately (Hatch & Shultz, 2002). Studies have led to the conclusion that the two constructs are inextricably interrelated yet have distinct characteristics.

When we consider identity we speak of “the collective aspect of the set of characteristics by which a thing is definitively recognizable or known” (American Heritage Dictionary, 2000). Much of the research builds on the idea that identity is a relational construct formed in interaction with others (Hatch & Shultz, 2002). The idea of identity as a relational construct is encapsulated by Mead’s (1934) proposition that identity “…arises in the process of social experience and activity, that is, develops in the given individual as a result of his relations to that process as a whole and to other individuals within that process” (p. 135). Mead went on to claim that identity has two ‘distinguishable phases’, one he called the ‘I’ and the other the ‘me’. According to Mead (1934): “The ‘I’ is the response of the organism to the attitudes of the others; the ‘me’ is the organized set of attitudes of others which one himself assumes. The attitudes of the others constitute the organized ‘me’, and then one reacts toward that as an ‘I’” (p. 175).

Commenting on Mead’s theory, Hatch and Shultz (2002) state:
The 'I' and the 'me' are simultaneously distinguishable and interdependent. They are distinguishable in that the 'me' is the self a person is aware of, whereas the 'I' is something that is not given in the "me". They are interrelated in that the 'I' is the answer which the individual makes to the attitude which others take toward him when he assumes an attitude toward them. The “I” both calls out the “me” and responds to it. Taken together they constitute a personality as it appears in social experience. (p. 4-5)

The discussion begs the question: Can individual-level theory be generalized to organizational phenomena? The research generally reveals that individual constructs of identity may be operationalized to an organizational level and appropriate comparisons can be made.

Albert and Whetten (1985) concluded on this basis that organizational identity is formed by a process of ordered inter-organizational comparisons and reflections upon them over time. Organizational identity is thus an organization’s view of itself in relation to the world and the characteristics that define that view. It is the framework of who and what an organization is. It consists of the borders and boundaries of the entity itself. Identity should provide an organization to know what to do and what not to do based upon who they are. In this case, function follows form.

Hatch and Shultz (2002) offer four processes rooted in individual identity theory that form identity and may be grafted into the organizational identity construct:

1. Mirroring- the process by which identity is mirrored in the images of others.
2. Reflecting- the process by which identity is embedded in cultural understandings.
3. Expressing- the process by which culture makes itself known through identity claims.
4. Impressing- the process by which expressions of identity leave impressions on others.

Their contribution lies in articulating the interplay of all four processes that together construct organizational identity.

Enculturation

The dictionary defines enculturation as “the adoption of the behavior patterns of the surrounding culture” (Free Dictionary, 2004). The concept of enculturation is a prominent one in organizational theory. The dynamic helps define processes (particularly for new employees) to “join the team”, own the vision, believe in the mission, behave consistently with the values of the organization, and “fit” socially in the
Case Analysis of the Ritz Carlton

organization. This cultural assimilation is of great importance for three reasons: (a) it defines the time frame by which employees will add value to the organization, (b) it represents employee satisfaction and retention, and (c) it perpetuates existing culture.

Enculturation takes place on an official and unofficial level. If the new employee does not learn the pivotal or central assumptions of the organization, that employee will feel alienated, uncomfortable, and possibly unproductive. He may even leave the organization. Even within the organization, each move, promotion, or change of department, etc., requires the employee to learn new sub-cultural elements. If the new employee learns elements of a subculture that run counter to the pivotal assumptions of the total organization or the managerial coalition that is in power, the result can be active sabotage, or the slowing down of the work of the organization (as defined by the coalition in power), leading eventually to stagnation, revolution, or the weeding out of the dissenter. If the new employee is "over-socialized" by learning every detail of the culture, the result is total conformity and an inability on the part of both the individual and the organization to be innovative and responsive to new environmental demands.

From the research we understand that enculturation involves levels or degrees. One organization may have more powerful qualities (whether intentional or not) that add to the level of enculturation. The higher the levels of enculturation, the faster and more powerfully individuals assimilate into that culture.

Stating that each culture has a visibility and "feelability" that either draws people into the culture or causes them to reject it, Schein (1987) enumerates four qualities present in organizational culture that influence the level of enculturation.

1. **Potency**
   Organizations look and feel different from one another. Inherent in the organization is a potency level as to their culture. Some organizations (sometimes due to the nature of their business) are more potent in their enculturational lure. In these organizations, culture is more prominent and seducing- and even possibly more intentional.

2. **Patterning**
   We look for patterns because "it is inherently anxiety provoking to deal with randomness or meaninglessness, because we cannot predict and therefore prepare for, what may come next" (Schein, 1987, p. 26). To the degree there are established patterns- even in the form of rules and policy, but particularly patterns in common behavior- the higher the enculturation. We also look for patterns in the behavior of others because we know how much of our own behavior is patterned. Schein (1987) states: "Experiments have shown that when we attempt to explain someone else's behavior we are likely to see it as motivated and patterned, rather than situationally determined or 'random'" (p. 27). It is easier for us to see the situational forces that modify the basic motivational patterns of our own behavior. Thus we accept more randomness in our own behavior than we do in others. "It is
harder to attribute such situational contingencies to others because we have a need to predict and control" (p. 27). The tendency then is to project whatever patterns we have in our own culture as an initial hypothesis of what is going on in the person from another culture.

3. **Demand Quality**
   We feel a need to respond or act when we experience a new culture, to "do the right thing", fit in, gain acceptance, etc. We find it hard to deal with the feelings of tension and uncertainty, and so we try to determine what is expected of us. We also may become angry when we feel pressure to conform without knowing what is expected.

4. **Over-projection**
   In a new cultural situation, we tend to attribute meaning and purpose to all aspects of the setting. We also often attribute a significantly greater element of intent to the behavior of others.

   For example, French waiters appear to Americans to be rude. Waiters in US tend to be friendly, helpful. Therefore Americans in Paris expect French waiters to be the same. When they are not, we attribute intention to them. Actually, in French culture there is a norm of individualism, in which individuals are expected to take care of themselves, therefore, service people do the minimum amount. This is not intent to be rude. Thus, projections reflect our own cultural bias rather than true intentions of others.

---

**Evaluating the Ritz-Carlton Company Against**  
**The Dimensions of Levels of Culture, Identity and Enculturation**

**Levels of Culture**

Review of levels of culture at the Ritz-Carlton company:

1. **Artifacts**

   Schein (1987) includes in this level aspects of technology, art, and visible and audible behavior patterns. Certainly artifacts could include anything superficial or external that could symbolize the culture.

   **Physical Environment**

   - $225 million “hospitality complex” covering two-and-a-half acres
   - Includes 162 luxury condominiums
   - A 100,000 square-foot Sports Club/LA
Case Analysis of the Ritz Carlton

- A Splash Spa
- Three restaurants
- 40,000 square feet of street-level restaurants and retail shops featuring the latest designs from Italy and other countries
- A 34,000 square foot Japanese garden with a cascading waterfall, bamboo plants and willow trees
- 300 rooms in the hotel
- Art valued at two million dollars
- Highest thread count Egyptian cotton fabric for linens
- Down comforters
- Guest room bathrooms are designed with beige and white marble

Customers
- “High end market” customers paying average daily rates of $202
- Meeting event planners

Recognitions
- Kuala Lumpur hotel- 1998 “Best Hotel in Asia-Pacific” in the eighth Business Traveler/Pacific magazine Travel Awards Subscribers’ Survey
- Kuala Lumpur hotel- “Best Business Hotel in Malaysia” presented by Business Asia and Bloomberg Television for two consecutive years.
- “Malcolm Baldridge National Quality Awards”
  o 1992: First and only hotel to win the award
  o 1999: First and only service company to win the award two times
- AAA Five Diamond Awards
- Conde Nast Traveler, Business Travel Awards
- Conde Nast Traveler, 2000 Gold List
- 2000 Best of Florida Award, Florida Living Magazine
- Mobil Travel Guide Five Star Awards
- Travel and Leisure, World’s Best Awards (1999)
- Travel and Leisure, World’s Best Service Awards (1999)

Words Related to Culture

- “We respect our employees”
  - Leonardo Inghilleri, corporate VP of human resources
- “Fourteen years ago, I set out to find a job- but what I began was a career. Along the way, the Ritz-Carlton has maximized my talent.”
  - Kate Monahan, general manager
- “The Ritz-Carlton has been a kind and generous employer. I have always been treated fairly and as a gentleman, with the utmost respect for my talents.”
  - Alex Garza, executive sous chef
- “We have created an environment where there is no fear of retribution”
  - Leonardo Inghilleri, corporate VP of human resources
Words Related to the Enculturation Process (“Seven Day Countdown”)

- “If they have the talent, and if they want to serve people, we can train them. We can teach them the skills they need to perform any number of different functions. As long as we make sure that we chose people who fit out culture, we can work with them.”
  - Marie Minarich, human resources director
- “You are not servants. We are not servants. Our profession is service. We are Ladies and Gentlemen, just as the guests are, who we respect as Ladies and Gentlemen… If we do what we do right, we become as important as they are.”
  - Horst Shulze, president and COO
- “We Are Ladies And Gentlemen Serving Ladies And Gentlemen”
  - company motto
- “The motto is a deeply believed feeling and demand on the organization. A promise by the organization that everyone would be treated as ladies and gentlemen. It is also a demand on all employees, especially managers and leaders.”
  - Horst Shulze, president and COO
- “During the next few days, we will orient you to who we are—our heart, our soul, our goals, our vision, our dreams—so you can join us and not just work for us… We will get a great hotel for our guests, but what about us? We should have a great work environment, too.”
  - Horst Shulze, president and COO

Words Related to Conflict

- “I’ve got to tell you that I love James McBride. James McBride is just fabulous. He’s successfully opened up lots of Ritz-Carlton’s. But a year from now?”
  - Brian Collins, manager of hotels for Millennium Partners
- “I pushed James [McBride] to hire more people than the Ritz-Carlton staffing plan would lead them to hire in Guest Recognition.”
  - Brian Collins, manager of hotels for Millennium Partners
- “We picked out all the art. You won’t see one English hunting scene in this hotel— and it’s been painful for the Ritz. Their competition is the Four Seasons, and the Ritz has been resting on its laurels— ‘We’re an English kind of hotel!’ and that’s just not going to get it done in the 2000s. It’s just not what people want.”
  - Brian Collins, manager of hotels for Millennium Partners
- “There’s all this construction activity going on around here, finishing floors, testing the fire alarm system. And they have 400 people they have to convert to Ritz-Carlton employees in the next seven days.”
  - Brian Collins, manager of hotels for Millennium Partners

Behaviors
Case Analysis of the Ritz Carlton

- Individuals who applied for jobs but did not make the cut were treated the same as everyone else during the job fair.
- During the job fair everyone from McBride on down, pitched in to serve as escorts, paperwork runners, and interviewers.
- During the initial phase of the employer-employee relationship, new employees were treated as customers with their own unique set of needs, and the hotels managers were accountable for their satisfaction.
- On the first day of the countdown, new employees joined other members of their division outside the hotel for what can only be described as a pep rally. Carrying signs and chanting (“House-keeping, House-keeping”), each division vied to be the loudest, most enthusiastic group of new employees. Coming into the hotel, the hotel’s managers lined both sides of the curved marble staircase and each employee was sincerely welcomed as a new member of the Ritz-Carlton family.
- This was followed by an enthusiastic and visionary address by Horst Schulze, president and COO.
- Training took place regarding the “Gold Standards”, the service philosophy, leadership orientation, vision, and skills.

2. Values

These are values that have become beliefs in the organization conjectured from the data and review.
- Quality is job one
- Heavy emphasis is on human resources (Employees matter)
- The customer is the single most important focus of the company… everything revolves around customer satisfaction
- Teamwork and camaraderie is highly valued
- Employees are respected and to be developed professionally
- Resources are allocated to the Ritz-Carlton target market; money is spent aggressively to sustain their market share
- It’s not enough to have a good hotel. With the ownership of Millennium Partners condominiums are an important part of the business and concessions must be made for this reality.
- The Ritz-Carlton must compete with their rival The Four Seasons

3. Basic Assumptions

These are the basic “taken for granted” assumptions (or views of reality) believed to be a part of the Ritz-Carlton culture
- Work and life are not mutually-exclusive. Life, meaning and self-actualization are accomplished through work.
- All human beings are to be valued and have inherent worth.
Case Analysis of the Ritz Carlton

- Environment produces reality. The synergy of the space/time environment provides experience for human beings as well as a judgment with respect to the quality of that experience.
- The nature of human relationships is that people find fulfillment through a shared vision and involvement in the accomplishment of that vision with others they respect. Life and work is not to be lived in a vacuum.

Levels of Culture Conclusions:

In the investigation of the influence of culture, researchers look for incongruent aspects between the cultural levels. In other words, does the organization have integrity with respect to the levels of artifacts, values and basic assumptions? Are the things which the company does at the external levels congruent with its deeper character? And, is there a rational flow between these levels? The answers strongly influence the diagnosis of the health of the organization (Schein, 1987). In the Ritz-Carlton there is high integrity between the levels. Although, within the leadership of James McBride and Brian Collins we witnessed incongruence as to a priori views as to what the company should be culturally. McBride holds the view that the company is about being a hotel. His values and decisions line up with this belief. Collins, on the other hand, includes with the hotel business the profit dimension of multi-use facility and condominiums. Our analysis recommends that this “view” be reconciled and indeed impacts culture of the organization. Without a clear cut “view of the business” there will be continual problems.

Identity

There is a strong “I”/“me” dimension to the culture at The Ritz-Carlton. Employees see themselves in light of the identity of the Ritz-Carlton culture. They incorporate that identity personally. In fact, our research shows that the culture of the Ritz-Carlton company enhances the identity of the employee. This in turn feeds and gives strength to the collective identity of the company. Corporate identity and individual identity are mutually dependent factors and each affects the other.

Formation and strength of identity at the Ritz-Carlton:

1. Mirroring- this involves how the identity of the company is mirrored in the images of its employees. The Ritz-Carlton has a strong connection between identity characteristics of the company and its employees. The gap between the two is narrow thus giving credence to the strength that the company possesses in identity. The motto: “We Are Ladies And Gentlemen Serving Ladies And Gentlemen” can be seen as the defining mirroring image for the company. This phrase along with other powerful “identity markers” or “boundary markers” provides the unique connection between company image and employee image.
2. Reflecting - is the process by which identity is embedded in cultural understandings. This would indicate aspects where employees, on their own, practice the values of the company in “real-time, real-life” situations. Antecedent signs of strong “reflecting” at the Ritz-Carlton are (a) the assessment of quality indicators by the employees themselves rather than managers and leadership, (b) employees monitoring their own performance and reviewing their own level of competence, (c) the trust given to the employee in issuing them authority to do ‘on-the-spot’ what they need to do to please the guest, i.e. the company needs and wants the employee on the front line to make necessary decisions without the time-delay of ‘checking with a manager”. This is called “Instant Guest Pacification”.

3. Expressing - this is the process by which culture makes itself known through identity claims. The company possesses strong identity particularly due to the power of this dimension. The Ritz-Carlton does an exceptional job of communicating “who it is” to the people in the company. The “Three Steps of Service”, “The Employee Promise”, “The Credo” as well as the outlined “Ritz-Carlton Basics” provide prominence to the expression of identity. The expression of identity construct itself is a defining characteristic of the culture at this company.

4. Impressing- is the process by which expressions of identity leave impressions on others. This has to do with methodology and may be of particular concern as to the “Seven Day Countdown”. This opening process provided strong expressions of identity at many different levels to the employees with the result being strong impressions. The enthusiasm, the vision, the planning, and the initial modeling that employees matter… all these lead to powerful and emotional impressions as to identity.

Identity Conclusions:

More than any other company studied, the Ritz-Carlton has strong identity components—both in the individual aspect and the corporate/organizational aspect. The only concerns are two-fold:

a. Again- reconciliation between views of identity between Collins and McBride must take place. Our research shows that over time, a lack of clarity in leadership about this issue causes both respective identities held to be weakened. This cultural analysis reveals that perhaps the company is trying to be “too many things” in the hopes of being “multi-use”. Studies have shown companies that diversify often struggle with culture and identity (Schein, 1987). We recommend strongly this concern be investigated and measurements take place as to the confusion that such diversity might cause. In the long term, will the company thrive having multiple purposes (and even multiple identities) combined into one setting?

b. We also recommend needed analysis of the “mirroring” dimension of identity. Within this resource we have no substantial knowledge as to the degree
employees actually mirror the image of the company. What are the accountability procedures to insure this takes place? Are employees actually “reflecting the company image”?

**Enculturation**

With the realization that each culture has a visibility and “feelability” that either draws people into the culture or causes them to reject it, we now enumerate the components of enculturation at the Ritz-Carlton:

1. **Potency**

   We would rate potency high for the Ritz-Carlton. Every dimension of the company’s environment (see “Artifacts”) and the intentional impressions of cultural identity, all provide a strong enculturational lure.

2. **Patterning**

   These cultural patterns were intentional and conscious at the Ritz-Carlton. In the “process of opening” patterns were organized so there was a reduction of randomness along with an increase of what employees could predict. This resulted in higher and faster enculturation. Thus, instead of employees changing the culture of the Ritz-Carlton, they were inculcated into the company’s.

3. **Demand Quality**

   This seems to be an issue of intensity with respect to culture. The demand quality at the Ritz-Carlton was high in the opening process because it inherently created tension and uncertainty with the new hires. The abrupt nature of the opening process may have indeed caused them to be overwhelmed or intimidated. Just because a demand quality is high and the purpose of such is accomplished (i.e. by new people adjusting quickly into the culture) does not mean this is positive from the standpoint of the new employee. Nonetheless, we would rate the demand quality high, with concerns of intimidation and pressurized emotions that might be overwhelming and have long-term negative ramifications.

4. **Over-projection**

   In a new cultural situation, we tend to attribute meaning and purpose to all aspects of the setting. We also often attribute a significantly greater element of intent to the behavior of others. Because in this analysis we lack information as to the response of employees to the “Seven Day Countdown” this aspect of enculturation is difficult to
Case Analysis of the Ritz Carlton

report upon and thus eliminated from the analysis. The need for more data is evident here.

Enculturation Conclusions:

Although the evidence shows that the opening process known as the “Seven Day Countdown” is effective functionally, we lack confidence that in the long-term it provides employees what it needs. As such, Collins concerns are noteworthy for these reasons:

a. The possible overwhelming nature of the countdown. Although filled with vision and enthusiasm, the company (by employing this culture) is teaching employees (particularly leadership) about the way things get done—rapidly, with high volume and high content, and emotionally. When leaders model something before followers, it particularly cements assumptions as to the way followers should do things in the company (Schein, 1987). Events such as the “Seven Day Countdown” teach and have immense, precedent-setting power… particularly to new employees.

b. One also has to wonder about the impact upon, not only those being enculturated, but also upon those leading the charge during the countdown. No doubt this work is a tremendous undertaking and the question is: Does the process undermine the company’s ability to keep good people in the long-term due to the stress associated with this “shot-gun” approach? Is this event, in a long-term way, negatively affecting leadership?

c. Is the “Seven Day Countdown” consistent with the overarching culture of the Ritz-Carlton? In other words, do other things get accomplished in this manner? Is there congruence between this process and the quality, pace, and content of other processes in the company?

d. Finally, one must ask a simple question: Are there alternative ways to accomplish the function of opening a hotel differently than the way its currently being done? We recommend this be investigated due to the cultural implications of this study. We also say that we believe there is likely a form to the opening process different from the current form that would be more consistent with the culture of the Ritz-Carlton and could in fact enhance both the enculturation process and the function behind the process.
Case Analysis of the Ritz Carlton

References:


