

Chapter no. 4

Core Values of Japanese Management

Group Orientation:

The Japanese do things in a group; be it eating, playing or working. To them, it's the team that comes ahead of the individual. For example, while introducing, they describe themselves as members of a group and then give their names. Like, "I am from Hitachi. My name is Sato. I am with HRD." All employees, including the officers, share one large open office. There are no cubicles and corner rooms. New recruits are hired once in each April so that they can be given group induction. This is intended to develop a sense of group loyalty. Across the board, Japanese employers expect the newly hired to stay with them throughout their lifetime.

For most Japanese workers nothing is as important as teamwork in the workplace. Most of the Japanese labor unions are "company unions" rather than trade unions. Union members are quite cooperative with management and look upon it as 'our' company. Group decision-making is a marked feature. Under the "Uchi-Soto" principle, the Japanese looks at the other person as belonging to "uchi" (inner circle) or to "soto" (outer circle). Once a person enters "Uchi" then the bond remains forever. However, in recent times both the system of seniority and that of lifelong loyalty are beginning to diminish.

4.2 Perfectionism

The Japanese love perfectionism. Like, they prepare food and eat it in an attractive manner. Haphazard eating is not for them. The supreme example is the "Maku-no-uchi" style boxed lunch that consists of small portions of space for variety of food items. Also, when they receive a gift they unwrap it neatly so that the wrapper can be reused. It's an expression of gratitude to the giver. All the factories have "zero defect" as a goal to be achieved. They are such perfectionists that they don't work by the clock. Completion of work is far more important to them than going home at the allotted time.

In a TV program on cooking an expert would specify that salt is to be added "a quarter of a spoonful" rather than just "a splash". Zero-defect is a goal they

strive to practice at the work place. All the organizations follow 5s campaign, which is Seiri (organize the workplace), Seiton (keep it neat), Seiso (keep it clean), Seiketsu (maintain standardized condition) and Shitsuke (follow discipline). The consumers are hard to please. They expect quality products and worse still expect it to be packaged, delivered and price well.

4.3 Innovation

Japanese look at the minutest of details. Nothing is too small for them. They have an information thirst syndrome. For the Japanese new is better than old. That is the reason why they rebuild their symbol of nation, “Ise Shrine” every 20 years. Almost all the companies have “new business development” divisions. Kaizen, also known as continuous improvement, originated in Japan and is today followed the world over.

For instance, production engineers adopt numerical control devices, flexible manufacturing methods, etc. to achieve cost reduction, quality improvement and increased productivity. Curiosity may have killed the cat but not the Japanese. The Japanese have a never ending interest in how their counterparts in foreign countries do their work, what is their experience and outcomes. They flock to trade fares to scour for new knowledge. They love to create and recreate things, which are convenient to them. It’s not the same as innovation. While innovation is dramatic and perhaps a onetime phenomenon, kaizen is subtle and continuous.

4.4 Diligence

The Japanese work hard and work long. They value learning, rather intensely. Their education does not cease even after they get into a job; in-fact, they even learn different aspects of a job. . Most Japanese continue to put great effort into their studies; nothing will stop their appetite for knowledge. Yes, they are knowledge hungry. Every Japanese company spends 10% of their expenditure on employee training. Long hours of work is in the Japanese mindset is a virtue.

Most people who have climbed the top of the corporate ladder have done so by dint of their hard work. This has inspired a generation of Japanese to follow the precept of work hard. The Japanese have also had a propensity to overcome

calamities with equanimity and speed. Interestingly, the Japanese do not take leave from work. They do not even take 2 full days off every weekend. They do not utilize even half their allotted 16 days of annual leave! Little wonder, Japan is the only country where “Karoshi” or death by overwork’ is an officially recognized issue.

4.5 Agility-It is defined as the organization ability to react quickly and effectively to the market changes in order to surviving in the hyper-competitive environment that characterized by continuous and unexpected change. while agility refers to the speed with which organizations can detect and respond to environmental threats and opportunities, a true test of agility and its implications for performance lies in how easily and quickly firms can revise their behaviors based on unfolding marketplace events .

Benefits of enterprise agility:

1. Higher customer satisfaction-An agile organization places a lot of focus on customer. It is done through extensive research, qualitative and quantitative which will lead to customer satisfaction.
2. Higher employee-satisfaction scores- By definition, agile organizations focus on empowering individuals and teams and on pushing decision making down in the organization as much as possible. This leads to a work environment that is much more attractive for younger talent and more rewarding for all employees.
3. Superior operational performance- Japanese organizations are often good at executing the work that falls entirely within one function. However, a typical improvement area is their ability to collaborate well across functions not getting slowed down by organizational barriers, reporting lines, or political sensitivities.
4. Greater resilience-. The inherent resilience of agile organizations has become even more relevant in a world struck by the sudden disruption of COVID-19 lockdowns, with a substantial share of corporate employees across the globe moving to a remote work setting. In an agile world, the organization consists of a large network of small, strong, empowered, and autonomous teams, which do not depend on top-down guidance and decisions for their day-to-day work.