



# Defining Organizational Culture Through the Decision-Making Lens

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In today's dynamic business environment, understanding and defining organizational culture has become increasingly important. While culture is often seen as an abstract concept, the lens of decision making offers a tangible and effective way to analyze and define culture within an organization. By examining the company's decision-making environment and the individual decision-making processes that comprise that environment, we can gain insights into the attitudes, values, and behaviors that shape an organization's culture.

## The Challenge of Defining Culture

Defining culture has always been a challenge for organizations. Traditional approaches focus on values, behaviors, and interactions, but these definitions can vary greatly depending on individual perspectives and biases. One's definition of a company's culture may differ from another person's, even when describing the same organization, because each person may choose to focus on the areas that are important to her or him but not to the other person.

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“Culture by definition, is a nebulous term. It needs something tangible and we believe that our own research, alongside The Financial Times, shows us that decision making is literally the lens through which you can define culture.”

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## The Role of Decision Making in Defining Culture

In a Forbes article titled, "[How does Company Culture Affect Business Performance?](#)", Joe Camberato points out that culture is often poorly defined. He offers a more tangible definition, stating that culture is "the attitudes, behaviors, and values of everyone working at your company. It shows up in interactions your employees have with each other and with your customers. It is also evident in the decisions your employees make." This perspective highlights how decision making is a crucial aspect of culture and may actually be one way of clearly defining it.

To define culture through decision making, we must first look at the decision-making environment within an organization. This includes factors such as the decision-making structure, the presence of a defined process, and the level of agency given to employees and leaders. For example, some companies allow individuals to make decisions independently, fostering a culture of empowerment and innovation, while others may have a hierarchical structure that limits individual decision-making.

The individual leader's decision-making process is equally important in defining culture. Factors such as comfort with uncertainty, risk-taking propensity, and the presence of a decision-making framework all contribute to an individual's decision-making style. Combining these two aspects – the decision-making environment and the individual's decision-making prowess and process – is how you define the fit between a company's culture and an individual.

Additionally, understanding the connection between decision making and employee satisfaction can offer valuable insights for both recruitment and retention strategies. Let's examine these aspects closely:

### Concrete Examples Speak Volumes

One of the benefits of analyzing culture through decision making is the availability of concrete examples. For instance, the way decisions are made within an organization can reveal a lot about its collaborative nature, hierarchy, and risk tolerance. The involvement of multiple stakeholders or the reliance on committee-based decision-making processes can indicate a different cultural dynamic than a more decentralized decision-making approach.

Being able to describe culture in detailed anecdotes (e.g., "we were faced with a critical decision to make, and here is exactly what we did") vs. needing to rely on platitudes or broad themes (e.g., "collaboration", "results", "honesty") allows for much more accurate, helpful, and specific answers to questions like "what is the culture here?"



## The Connection to Satisfaction and Fit

Research shows that discussing [decision making during interviews](#) can lead to higher satisfaction among candidates. [A study conducted by Kingsley Gate and the Financial Times Group's FT Longitude](#) revealed senior executives who were asked about decision making in their interview are 1.4 times more likely to be satisfied with their jobs overall and are over twice as likely to be satisfied with the organization's decision making. This highlights the importance of aligning an individual's decision-making style with the decision-making environment of the organization to ensure a better fit.

## Addressing Frustration and Improving Satisfaction

Exit interviews play a crucial role in uncovering frustration with any number of aspects of a job, but decision-making processes and the decision environment may be currently overlooked by exit interviewers. Given that 63% of senior executives have either resigned or considered resigning due to frustration with decision making, it may behoove HR departments around the world to dig deeper into what specific facets of a company's decision-making process really drove the frustration. Doing so can yield improvements for future hires and prevent recurring issues.

## Moving Towards a Decision-Centric Culture

To make decision making a core element of an organization's culture, it should be woven into everyday conversations and practices. By shifting the focus from abstract culture to decision-making processes, organizations can create a more productive and satisfying environment. This requires ongoing dialogue, an understanding of nuanced decision-making styles, and the recognition that different parts of the organization may have different decision-making dynamics.

Defining organizational culture through the lens of decision making offers a valuable and practice benefits. By examining the decision-making environment and individual decision-making processes, organizations can gain a deeper understanding of their unique culture and better figure out which elements they want to preserve and which they want to discontinue.

Embracing decision making as a lens for culture can lead to more informed hiring decisions, improved employee satisfaction, and ultimately, greater organizational success.



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Recognizing the pivotal role of decision making in shaping workplace dynamics, [Kingsley Gate](#) has seamlessly woven it into its entire approach to executive search, including candidate assessment and selection. The company prioritizes an in-depth understanding of decision-making styles, aligning them with the organizational environment. This strategic move not only enhances the synergy between individuals and the company culture but also positions Kingsley Gate at the forefront of organizational success through a decision-centric approach.

## **Elevate Your Leadership Journey with Kingsley Gate**

Our expertise in identifying top-tier leadership talent can enhance your journey towards organizational excellence. By centering [decision making](#) as the primary lens for identifying, evaluating, and selecting outstanding executive leaders, we ensure that your organization's success remains our key focus.

With a track record of successfully assisting over 1700 client organizations in hiring and onboarding decision-making executives across diverse industries, functions, and markets, [Kingsley Gate](#) has consistently demonstrated the ability to identify exceptional leaders who drive performance. Headquartered in New York and operating globally since 2015, our consultants bring a wealth of experience and insights to the table, ensuring that organizations can attract and retain the best talent for their leadership positions.

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