

Understanding Organizational Culture

Every workplace has its own unique culture and distinct identity. The culture of an organization or department reflects in the behaviour and daily work practices of their employees, which impact the office environment. This includes methods of communication, quality of client services, accepted practices and unwritten rules, conflict management and dispute resolution processes.

How to learn about the workplace culture during job search

While conducting a job search, it is important to research the culture of organizations that are of interest to you to determine if you would fit in well within their workplace culture. Below are some tips for assessing the workplace culture in the job search process.

Company website and online resources- One way to understand the workplace culture is by looking at their company website. Check out their mission, vision and values. It can also help to view their social media company profiles, such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, where you can find their recent activities, pictures from events and possibly testimonials from their clients. You can also visit websites like, [Glassdoor](#) to read reviews of companies by employees, [Canada's Top 100 Employers](#), [Business Insider](#) and [Forbes](#) to access the annual lists of organizations offering exceptional workplaces for their employees.

Connect with people who work there- If you have a list of companies you would be interested to work with, you can learn more about the company by conducting informational interviews with people who work there. Being a York Student, you can consider participating in the [T.A.S.T.E. Mentoring program](#) to meet with professionals who are employed by your potential employer to get a sense of what it is like to work there. You can also check your LinkedIn connections to see if you can talk to people who work in those organizations for gaining better insights.

Ask appropriate interview questions to assess cultural fit- Interview questions are mostly customized to assess whether someone is a good match for the available position and organizational culture. However, as an interviewee, you can also choose to ask good questions to assess cultural fit for yourself. Simply asking, “How would you describe your company’s culture?” or “What continuing learning opportunities do you have for your employees? can help to learn about the work environment and know if they encourage continuous learning and consider professional advancement valuable for the progress of their employees and for the growth of their organization.

During initial phase as a new employee or intern:

As a new employee, apart from just reviewing the orientation manual, you should also pay attention to everything happening around you in the workplace, listen to what people say and the way they act, and actively participate in office, business and social events to get familiar with the company's culture. It is important to learn, understand, appreciate and adapt your behaviour to your work environment and values for contributing to a positive work environment and for your own professional success within the organization. "Read the signs and tune in!"

Watch how people communicate: In the initial few days in your new workplace, you can learn a lot about the communication style and preferences of your co-workers just by observing the way they interact with each other. Pay attention to how they act and present themselves. Notice the most preferred mode of communication within your department. Is it through email, phone or in-person? In what manner do people share their ideas and comments in team meetings? Do most people eat lunch in their office or at their workstation or do most of them eat in the shared kitchen space to meet and network? How do managers interact with employees? What is the management style?

Watch your surroundings: Take the time to get familiar with the entire office space. Become well-informed about the protocols for making use of various office equipment, (e.g. computers, printers, fax machines and photocopiers). Read bulletin boards and observe resources or promotional materials displayed in the common areas. Notice how shared kitchen space is being utilized and follow your co-workers' cleaning routines, in terms of washing your cups and dishes after you use them.

Talk to other employees: Talking to your senior co-workers and asking them appropriate questions can also help you learn more about the workplace culture. For example, "What do you like or enjoy the most working here? "What kind of people do you think will face challenges in this work environment? Is there anything that you would suggest should be changed or improved to make this a better workplace?"