**Corporate culture and satisfaction at work**

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**Objectives**

The present article discusses in its first part the situation of Belgium as far as employment,

corporate culture and satisfactions at work are concerned. We will consider working

conditions, relationship with colleagues, quality of management and implication as well as

everyday life within the organisation. Dissatisfaction factors as well as stress, work accidents

and “male-female” inequalities will also be mentioned.

In the second part of the article, we will present results of an exploratory study referring to

corporate culture, satisfaction at work, strategic objectives and corporate social responsibility

carried out with human resource managers in different sectors of activity. We will try to

purpose, in the limits of the study, one model of corporate culture.

**I. Employment, corporate culture and satisfaction at work**

*Employment*

According to the “European Foundation for the improvement of working conditions” Belgian

employment rate in 2007 was about 60%. That means that Belgium is situated in the average

of all European countries if we consider that the highest level is recorded in Denmark with

75% and the lowest in Poland with 52%. There are also significant differences between the

regions in Belgium in terms of employment rate: 55% in Brussels-Capital, 66% in Flemish

region and finally 57% in Walloon region (Statbel).

Regarding the rate of unemployment, on the European scale, again Belgium is situated in the

average with 8% which is relatively low compared with Polish situation (18%) but is rather

high if compared with Norway where it is fixed on 3%. The rate of unemployment is

calculated on basis of working population added to the unemployed population (Eurostat). If

we consider purely national situation, on basis of active population, the highest rate of

unemployment is recorded in Brussels-Capital region with 17% followed by Walloon region

with 10,5% and finally by Flemish region with only 5,7% (Statbel).

As far as temporary workers are considered, Belgium occupies a relatively high ranking

among other countries of the EU. Indeed, the rate of temporary workers is 8,6% whereas rates

in the neighbour countries are much more higher (France and Germany 12% and 32% in

Spain). This fact implies, as a hypothesis, that Belgian employers are seeking to build long term relationships with their employees and even to develop their loyalty to the firm where

they are working (Eurostat).

However, when part-time work is considered, Belgium does not distinguish itself from other

EU countries with its rate of part-time workers situated at 21,5%. This places the country on

the top list with Germany (22%) and Norway (29%). When analysing the evolution of number

of part-timers, we can distinctly see that there is a sensible increase: if it was only 18% in

1997, it is now 24% in 2007 (Eurostat).

In addition, data reveal that very often women occupy part-time jobs. In Belgium the rate of

women working as part-timers is 40%, after Norway with 46%, United-Kingdom with 43%

and Germany with 41,6%. Men accepting part-time jobs are fewer than women: respectively

7,8% and 42,6%. Moreover, the trend strengthens with age. Indeed, elderly women are more

often offered part-time jobs than younger ones or than elderly men (Eurostat).

Sectors that in Belgium employ the majority of people are: manufacturing, trade, education,

health services and public administration. This trend is very similar to what happens in other

European countries. Data show that the major part of workers is employed by small and

medium-sized firms and Belgium is not an exception. Indeed, more than 30% of people are

working in companies with 10-49 employees and 25% are working in micro-firms (2-9

persons) (Eurostat).

*Corporate culture*

Corporate culture can be defined as a set of shared values, the basis of every corporation

which favours its stability. It is also a “set of rituals, beliefs, signs and symbols, a position on

the market and in respect to the competitors; it is also what defines an organisation and gives

it an identity” (we translate) (Thevenet M, 1984, p.7).

A recent study that we carried out in 2008 with Human Resource Directors of different

companies highlights the way they perceive corporate culture. This qualitative research

carried out in 16 companies, brings to light the importance of “informal roles”, “behaviours”,

“procedures” and “values”. These elements enable to define the way individuals are

interacting with others. Corporate culture is “shared fundamental values that manifest in the

behaviours of everyone”. It is also “rules”, “traditions”, ‘habits’ of an organisation which

“determine the way of acting and working of the members of the organisation”. Among cited

values we can mention “service to client”, “team spirit”, “skills”, “quality”, “helpfulness”,

“expertise”, “intellectual curiosity”, etc. (for more detail refer to the second part of the

article). Culture may vary from one department to the other in the same company and subcultures may exist.

Corporate culture also evokes a style of management and strategy of the firm. Are associated

to the corporate culture: “main attitudes of the managers”, “service to clients”, “the best

quality / price solution”, “the quality of the company services”. Corporate culture permits to

differentiate “one company from the other acting in the same sector”.

*Satisfaction, quality of management and implication*

According to a research of Securex (2007) among 512 participants, here are the five most

important determinants of the workers’ general satisfaction in 2007:

“Change policy- degree to which workers estimate they are sufficiently acquainted

and accompanied when change occurs

The degree to which workers feel implicated in the organisation

The content of the job and notably the perceptions of the job key features (enough

variety, autonomy, feedback, identification with the task and contacts with others)

The quality of management (participation, team coaching, respect, etc)

Perceptions linked to stress and to the general atmosphere at work”

Although, global satisfaction in Belgium (6,63/10) is weaker than in France (7,02) and

Luxembourg (6,84), it considerably increased in 2007 with regard to 2005 (after years of

decrease) and attained new level of satisfaction compared to those found in 2002 and 2003. In

2005 and 2004 theses scores were respectively 6,44 and 6,42 out of 10 which was very

inferior to previous years. It is surprising that we only see an increase in Flemish region and

Brussels-Capital region. In Walloon region the satisfaction did not increase nor decrease. That

is the reason why the satisfaction in Flemish part is higher than in Walloon part in 2007.

An increase of global satisfaction is mostly due to:

“An increase of loyalty and employment (Belgian declare more often that their

firm counts for them and that they are proud of working for their organisation)

More positive perceptions to the internal communication (specifically workers

perceive a greater transparency and diffusion of information)

Greater satisfaction with management (and above all the motivation coming from

the management)

More positive perception of the carrier (workers better know what goals they want

to achieve in their carrier)

Greater satisfaction related to stress and to the atmosphere at work” (we translate).

The most important elements of satisfaction are:

“Content of the job (7,32 in 2007, 7,39 in 2005)

Internal communication (6,93 in 2007, 6,59 in 2005)

Team work and colleagues (6,86 in 2007, 6,75 in 2005)

Motivation (6,80 in 2007, 6,70 in 2005)

Management (6,74 in 2007, 6,41 in 2005)

Loyalty and employment (6,68 in 2007, 6,25 in 2005)

Change (6,63 in 2007, 6,51 in 2005)

Values and corporate culture (6,44 in 2007, 6,44 in 2005)

Working conditions and job charges (6,37 in 2007, 6,05 in 2005)

Carrier (6,18 in 2007, 6,06 in 2005)

Wages and bonuses (6,01 in 2007, 5,71 in 2005)” (we translate).

*Corporate culture and working conditions: two essential elements to the satisfaction at work.*

Several studies were carried out concerning satisfaction at work and the importance given to

the corporate culture and working conditions. The research, which was financed by

SDWORX and conducted among 3500 people from different regions and working in different

sectors, shows interesting results.

It shows the importance given in 2005 to schedules and working conditions as well as to

relationships with colleagues and financial bonuses. Schedules, working conditions and

relationship with colleagues are also items which scored the highest in terms of satisfaction. It

is essential to underline the importance of a direct superior, whereas the relationship with

other departments and with clients is considered to be less important. However, items that

received the highest importance in 2005 are not considered the same way in 2006. Even

though, schedules and working conditions still remain essential, corporate culture and stability

are progressing. Besides, it seems that more importance is given to the department where the

employee is working. However, colleagues, bonuses, job, direction, and strategy of the firm

receive less importance.

According to the same study, it seems that in 2006, 79,6% of Belgian workers are globally

satisfied with their work. Some 11,9% are even very satisfied. This represents an increase in

respect to the previous year (11%). The element that catches our attention is the move of 10%

of the respondents from the category “satisfied” (decrease from 56,6% to 44,9%) to the

category “fairly satisfied” (increase from 13,3% to 22,8%).

In 2007, corporate culture and stability remain the most important factors of satisfaction. Here

by corporate culture and stability we should understand: “mentality, openness, honesty,

clearness of communication, reputation and the image of the company, employment security

and confidence in the future of the organisation”. The authors of the study underline that

“workers unsatisfied with corporate culture and the stability of the firm are generally

unsatisfied with their job” (SD WORX).

Corporate culture and stability of the organisation are therefore the determinants of the

general satisfaction at work, and this is since several years now. Colleagues are considered as

less important element in 2007.

The elements of satisfaction highlighted in 2007 are (in decreasing order): “culture and

stability, direction and management, nature of the job, higher position, learning and carrier

opportunities, schedule and working conditions, salary, other departments and clients,

colleagues” (SDWORX).

*Relationship with colleagues*

Even though colleagues are situated in the end of the list and their importance varies from one

year to another, they represent nevertheless an element of satisfaction. This importance was

brought to light by a research carried out with 10000 people in 2006. Persons contacted, who

were working of worked in the past, were asked to give their degree of satisfaction regarding

various aspects of their work, by giving scores going from 0 to 10. And the result was that

colleagues scored the highest (7.9 out of 10) as well as the content of the job (7.8)

(Elchardus&Smith, Research 2006).

*Decreased satisfaction…*

The explanatory factors of negative satisfaction are pressure at work (6,2) and absence of any

promotion opportunities. The latter obtains a score of 4,8 out of 10. Belgian employers should

urgently think about the reorganisation of the carrier. Hope and ambition, which are

considered as powerful factor of motivation for a good quality work, are under-exploited on

the employment market (Elchardus&Smith, Research 2006).

Permanent stress and psychological problems that also cause physical problems, negatively

influence satisfaction at work. Besides, those who are the most dissatisfied are looking for

another job in 71% of case (SDWORX, 2007).

*Everyday life within the organization*

A research financed by Randstad was carried out in 2007 with 3000 people from 18-65 years

old working in different sectors and occupying different jobs. The following themes were

discussed: personal relationships, lunch time, job location and clothing.

Relationships with colleagues

“Employees consider that their colleagues are of great importance”. “Satisfaction related to

the relationships with colleagues is also very high (7,6). Flemish-speaking employees are a

little more satisfied than the French-speaking (7,7 against 7,4)” (Research Randstad).

Lunch time

Employees consider that lunch break is very important to them (7,8/10). “French-speaking

workers are more attached to this break than their Flemish colleagues (8,1 against 7,6). Young

people consider lunch more important than those who are 40 years old and more (respectively

8,1 and 7,4). Lunch break provokes a great sense and satisfaction (7,5)”. The break allows

people to eat, have contacts with others and “recharge one’s batteries”.

Job location

The average score given to the job location is 8 out of 10. The satisfaction rate is relatively

high (7,6).

Dress code

Belgian care about this aspect (7,7/10) and are satisfied with it (7,7/10). One third of

contacted persons mention the existence of a dress code; one fifth of them evoke the existence

of an ‘unofficial’ dress code. According to 40% of the surveyed persons there is no dress code

within the firm they are working for. “Official dress code is usually used in large companies

(48%), in public sector, industry, transports, building, cafés and restaurants (uniforms)”

(Randstad research).

*Stress*

Stress is an important factor of dissatisfaction at work. Working conditions survey conducted

by the European Foundation in 1996 and 2000 indicates that 28% of workers say to have

problem caused by stress. Other research (47) in the United-Kingdom reveals that 50% to

60% of the working time is lost because if stress.

“Belstress survey over 12708 participants confirms that there is a relationship between stress

at work and absenteeism related to illnesses. At the origins of stress there is an inadequacy

between an individual and its job, conflicts between his roles at work and after work and the

fact that he does not possess full control over his job and his life.

Stress at work may be caused by a high number of factors, e.g.:

Excessive or insufficient job charge

Not enough time to completely finish the employee’s task

No precise description of the job or of the management

No recognition and no reward for the well executed task

No possibility to express one’s complaints

Too much responsibility but nearly no authority or power of decision-making

Superiors, colleagues or subordinates who one cannot rely on

No control or pride of the final result

Job insecurity, temporary job

Negative stereotype based on age, sex, race, ethnicity or religion

Dangerous or uncomfortable working conditions

No opportunity to develop one’s aptitudes and personal skills

Risk of error which can cause serious and even disastrous consequences”

The incidence of these elements varies among individuals. That is, not all of them necessarily

imply stress problems and they do not necessarily induce health problems for all individuals.

“However, it seems that the list of health problems related to stress at work is longer than the

list of health complaints revealed in the worker survey” (we translate) (European Foundation

2007).

*Work accidents*

The frequency of work accidents in all sectors of work this year is identical to the figures of

last year (26,07). Nevertheless, there are four sectors where the rate increased: food industry

(+0,66), other services provided by companies (+1,98), metallurgy (+1,41) and health and

social sector (+1,83). Among these, there are two areas with the greatest volume of

individuals employed: social and health sector and other services provided by firms

(respectively 12% and 13% of the global employment volume). “The highest rate of accidents

occurs in companies employing 20 to 199 people and the lowest rate is recorded in companies

either with less than 10 workers or with 200 to 499 employees”.

Most serious accidents are mainly provoked by men more than by women. “Men’s’ frequency

for accident to occur is 1,7 times higher than the women’s one. Often, accidents occur when

men do “production, transformation, processing and storage activities”. Women also have

accidents when doing production, transformation, processing and storage activities (38%) but

they also occur during commercial, buy-sell activities” (19% of accidents against 8% for men)

(Fond des accidents de travail).

*Equality between men and women*

Recent survey carried out by SDWORX shows that salary differences between men and

women still exist. Indeed, men earn much more than their female counterparts. The presence

of men in the high-salary section (more than 2500€ gross) is more important (64%) than the

presence of women (38%). The more the salary increases the less women are represented

(more than 6000€ gross: 89% are men and 11% are women). An interesting fact is: even if

women are mainly working part-time, it is men who receive the highest salaries.

Besides, women are under-represented in the boards of direction! In 14,5% of companies,

there is a joint board of directors (that is 50% of women and 50% of men are represented).

Then, female representation decreases and there is no women in board of directors in 25% of

firms.

On the European level, the gap between men’s and women’s salary in Belgium decreased

(17% in 1996 and 15% in 2006). Regarding its neighbours, Belgium is well situated (the gap

in Germany is 22%, 12% in France and 14% in Luxembourg) (Eurostat).

*Corporate social responsibility and corporate governance*

A survey carried out by FEB (Belgian Employers Federation) reveals that 9 firms out of 10

estimate that they have a greater role than just making benefits. Indeed, these firms care

about social aspects and environment.

Deeper analysis shows that more than 50% of organisation do more than just respecting laws

concerning workers’ training, work security, recycling of garbage, etc. Renewable energy is

not currently used as it is not well developed but more efforts will be done in future.

The survey shows that:

“Organisations operating in developing countries care more about corporate

responsibility and invest more in human capital and environment

50% of firms communicate regularly their corporate responsibility results to

employees, authorities and clients. However, communication towards providers,

local community and NGO’s is considered as less important.

Knowledge and application of corporate responsibility tools are limited. Besides,

organisations generally declare the unwillingness to use them in future. The

principal reasons are lack of relevance, administrative problems, lack of time and

workforce. These arguments are more used by small companies than by large

ones.”

That means that organisations do not desire a creation of new obligations (fear of too much

paperwork) but they do want more information as to the way to integrate corporate social

responsibility in day-to-day management.

As far as corporate governance is concerned, Belgium has developed a code named Code

Lippens. A survey conducted by FEB and Belgian Corporate Governance Institute shows that

nearly 75% of the contacted companies do publish the Code of Governance (CG). Small

companies made a significant progress (78,6% against 59,5% in 2006). Large organizations

that all publish the CG played a role of pioneer concerning the respect of the code.

The study shows that a great number of essential sections of the Code are respected by 85% of

the companies. That concerns: obligation of publication (e.g. shareholding structure and the

pay structure); creation of the audit committee; composition of the board of directors, etc.

“Nevertheless, companies have some difficulties related to certain sections of the code (e.g.:

publication of the comment over the interest conflict, acts concerning the manager hiring and

walkout, etc.)”.

*Conclusion*

As a conclusion, it seems that corporate culture and stability play an important role in the

personnel’s satisfaction. Besides, it can be easily seen from the statistics that the rate of

satisfaction in Belgium has been increasing since three years. Another element of the global

satisfaction of employees remains contacts with colleagues. Stress is pointed as the essential

part of the dissatisfaction. This can cause the departure of the employee and thus loss of a

high-skilled worker.

As far as Corporate Responsibility is concerned, it seems that more and more companies pay

attention to this aspect. Most investments are made in human capital and environment. In

addition to this, according to FEB, Corporate Governance is taken seriously and the Code

Lippens is largely respected.

**II. Exploratory research**

*Methodology*

Our study carried out in April-June 2008 concerns corporate culture and values of enterprise.

It is based on a sample of 92 companies acting in following sectors: bank, insurance, financial

audit, retail, automobile, electronic, and steel industry. The selection of companies was made

from the list of 100.000 enterprises situated in Belgium and edited by Top Trends. These

companies are classified by their turnover. For each sector mentioned above, we selected the

first fifteen companies. Within steel industry, only two companies were retained.

In each firm, the contact was established with a key person (generally it was Human Resource

Director or responsible for communication who were able to fully respond to the

questionnaire). The rate of response is 17% (from the total of 92 companies contacted, 16

replied). Replies to the questionnaire were more often made via e-mail but also by phone and

face-to-face interviews (on average, an interview lasted one hour, one hour and half). The

number of recalls is two to four times.

Finally, we obtained following results:

7 replies out of 45 for bank, insurance and financial audit sectors

4 replies out of 15 for retail sector

3 replies out of 15 for electronic sector

2 reply for steel industry

No reply from automobile industry so far.

One of the reasons of a quite low rate of response is the period of the administration of the

questionnaire (election of trade union representatives). Besides, some parts of the

questionnaire are rather sensitive and therefore are difficult to be answered. Finally, certain

companies had already realized a survey on the same theme, certain experience some social

conflicts and others considered the information demanded as strategic and thus confidential.

*Some principal themes*

*Responsibility and risk taking*

All respondents fairly agree and even totally agree to say that their ideas are valued and are

taken into account by management. This may be due to the fact that the respondents to the

study are occupying important positions in the firm and in its hierarchy. Besides, the majority

of the respondents would accept a higher managerial position with thus more responsibilities

if the situation requested it. The willingness to take risks is also high among the respondents

but only with the permission of management. Opinions of the executives diverge a little when

they are asked if it is normal to sacrifice something for the good sake of the firm (only one

negative reply whereas 6 out of 13 are unsure about this point).

In general, executives estimate to have an important role to play within he firm they are

working for: 10 out of 13 respondents disagree with the following item “sometimes I feel

myself a screw in a large machine”.

*Reactivity to market changes and innovation*

In the companies we met, all the persons agree to say that efforts each member provides are

directed to the common goal to achieve. The majority of the respondents, except 4 executives

who doubt about the clarity of objectives of the company, all others estimate that these targets

are clearly defined at all levels of the enterprise. In addition, the mission that the company

sets is stimulating and gives sense to the employees. Besides, it can be noticed that the

majority of executives rather agree with the following proposition: “the current vision

stimulates employees”: 8 out of 15 fairly agree, 5 out of 15 totally agree.

As far as innovation is concerned, opinions diverge over the fact to know if new ideas have to

be applied in order to not become obsolete; two thirds of respondents are unsure about this

point. In fact, in the organizations met, new ideas appear to be taken into consideration and

are implemented.

Concerning flexibility of the organization faced with changed market, all respondents agreed

to say that their company is able to restructure rapidly if the market requires it. However,

respondents are unsure over the fact that their organization is not rigid, whereas it is essential

to be flexible. Besides, the majority of executives say that their management is able to

forecast changes, be prepared to them and thus react thereof. Most enterprises surveyed affirm

that they are seeking for competitive advantage to counter the competitors (the most important

element is the qualification of the personnel). Thus, organizations do their best to remain

superior to their competitors present on the same segment of the market.

*Satisfaction at work*

On average, the majority of participants of the survey are satisfied with the actualization of

their skills at work (7 out of 15 are rather satisfied and 6 are very satisfied). The same

phenomenon is observed as far as the range of skills is concerned. The majority of executives are satisfied with conditions of work (light, noise, heating, etc.) The respondents estimate by majority that the trust relationship between employees and management as satisfactory and even very satisfactory.

As far as salary and bonuses are concerned, the opinions of executives are divergent but on

average they are satisfied with it (2 out of 15 are not satisfied, 2 are unsure, 7 are rather

satisfied and 4 are very satisfied). Besides, the two thirds of the respondents are satisfied with training provided by the

company.

When the question of equality between men and women is arisen, the opinions of employees

differ. Indeed, they are 10 out of 15 to be satisfied or very satisfied with it, 3 are more or less

satisfied and 2 are not satisfied at all. Data reveal that opinions of women and men do not

differ on this point.

Finally, the relationship between colleagues represents one of the most important elements of

satisfaction at work. In fact, all the respondents are satisfied with their relationship with other

employees.

*“Employee-management relationship”*

Opinions of executives diverge over the fact to know if employees participate in the definition

of the performance objectives of the firm (4 out of 15 disagree, 6 are unsure and 5 rather

agree). This can lead us to say that participation and its parallel implication in the

organization is made unequally among enterprises. However, all the executives surveyed

agree to say that employees receive feedback on their activities which is one of the most

important elements of motivation and of their efficiency. Besides, executives agree to say that

good performance is recognized and rewarded in their companies. It appears that respondents

diverge on subject of reward. Indeed, some of them (6out of 14) say that the reward for good

performance is not given the department whereas all the people made efforts (5 do not agree

and the rest is unsure). When asked nevertheless if reward must be given to the department, 7

out of 15 do not agree and 5 agree with this statement (others are unsure).

Finally, all the executives are unanimous: employees receive support from the management if

they need it. This is important for workers and their efficiency. In addition to this, managers

are ready to give advice on how to improve one’s performance.

To conclude this part, we can say that executives feel valued by the company and are

therefore more eager to take risks and responsibilities when the situation demands it. Besides,

all the organizations met seem to be flexible and put accent on innovation to remain

competitive. Staff is considered as one of the most competitive advantages.

As far as satisfaction at work is concerned, it seems that employees are satisfied with their

organization either with acquisition of skills, with level of salary or with relationship with

colleagues.

Finally, the participation of employees in the decision-making process is quite unequal among

organizations whereas all agree that employees receive feedback and advice on their

performance when they face problems.

*Typology trial*

As far as main/strategic objectives are concerned that are defined by surveyed organizations,

they mainly refer to the development of sales on long term period and improvement of the

quality of offered goods as well as establishment of steady relationship with clients.

Main values spontaneously mentioned by executives are the following: “team spirit”,

“professionalism”, “respect”, “customer satisfaction” and “communication”.

When the question of the definition of “corporate culture” is asked, it can be clearly noticed

that replies are very different from one person to another. Each of the respondents has indeed

his proper view of what corporate culture is. Some see it as something that permits to

differentiate one organization from the other acting in the same sector; others see it as a set of

habits, rules, priorities that are common to one organization; and some others see it as

something that makes different people act the same way when confronted with the same

situation. All respondents, except one, agree that corporate culture can be changed but not

without difficulties and only on long term period.

All the companies surveyed declare try to respect “work-life” balance with more or less same

tools. The two most used tools are flexible schedules and part-time work. Certain

organizations put elaborated programs in place such as: summer camps, baby-sitting service

and sometimes work from home.

As far as corporate social responsibility (CSR) is concerned, it can be easily noticed that CSR

practices are very different from one organization to another. Indeed, it extends from simple

local community sponsoring to the creation of a foundation by passing by volunteering, work

with NGO’s and socially responsible investments.

After analysis of different items mentioned above, it appears that performance is the main

objective of all surveyed organizations with however some particularities. We can, from the

interviews conducted with different executives, highlight following features: in “finance”

sector “professionalism” dominates whereas in “electronic” and “retail” sectors it is “service

to clients” that matters. Finally, in steel industry the accent is put on “leadership”. These

features depend without doubt on the area of activity, the situation of the organization in the

sector or the history of the firm.

The definitions of “corporate culture” given by executives during interviews permit

hypothetically to classify theses organizations in four categories:

The importance of client (“quality” model)

Respect of rules, habits, behaviors, priorities (“rational” model)

Shared values (“relational” model)

Ethic behavior associated to the acquisition of skills, to information and adaptation

(“learning organization” model)

Some organizations combine “rational” and “relational” models.

*Conclusion*

As a conclusion, some of the executives met during this exploratory study highlight the

importance for organizations to achieve a high level of performance with some particularities

for each sector. In the actual competitive environment, organizations define “corporate

culture” in various manners but underline the importance of service to client, habits,

traditions, rules, priorities to respect, shared values, exchange of information and of learning

that we can associate to “learning organization”. Besides, CSR practices are various and differ

from one firm to another.

**Conclusion:**

We can conclude, according to different studies carried out in Belgium, that corporate culture

and working conditions represent the two most important elements of satisfaction for workers.

Indeed, employees are rather happy with their work and are thus satisfied. Elements that

influence satisfaction at work are: corporate culture, stability at work, relationship with

colleagues and finally salary.

These findings could be compared with those resulting from interviews conducted with

various human resource managers of different organizations. The exploratory study carried

out shows a great variety of definitions given to “corporate culture”. Indeed, it goes from simply “what distinguishes one firm from those acting in the same market” to “informal rules,

procedures, values that determine the way workers interact”. In addition, it seems that the

implication of personnel and the quality of management are two items influencing satisfaction

as well. Our interviews with human resource managers revealed that executives judge their

management of good quality and are implicated in the everyday life of the organization as

well as in the achievement of its objectives.

As far as dissatisfaction is concerned, research carried out in Belgium shows that stress and

excessive work charge are two mail elements of dissatisfaction at work. Besides, inequalities

between men and women still exist in Belgium. Men generally receive higher salary then their

female colleagues and we often assist to the “glass ceiling” phenomenon. Moreover,

interviewed executives are not unsure about the respect of “men-women” equality in their

companies.

According to the exploratory research, in the corporate social responsibility field, we observe

that companies organize various programs in order to be active in this area. Each company

has established activities such as sponsoring, implementing a code of ethics, common work

with NGO’s, etc. The code of Lippens seems to be respected by all companies that adopted it.

Finally, it seems that all the companies we met are opened to new ideas and to innovation.

This is done in order to remain competitive and superior to other companies doing business in

the same market. Thanks to the exploratory study, we could classify the companies we met in

four different categories. Indeed, they either act according to “rational” model, or “relational”

model, or “learning organization” model or finally to “quality” model.

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