**Charles Handy: task culture, role culture, power culture and person culture**

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| **Meet the author** |
| Charles Handy was born in 1932. He was educated at Oriel College, Oxford, gaining a First Class degree in Classics, History and Philosophy in 1955. He started a graduate career at Royal Dutch Shell, leaving the corporate world in 1966 and studying at the Sloan School of Management, MIT. At MIT Handy gained an MBA and then returned to the United Kingdom to jointly establish the London Business School. |

**The model**

Culture is a set of beliefs or values that is shared by a certain group of people. We see culture within a particular geographical region or country, within an ethic group and in a business setting within an organisation. All organisations have some form of culture that has often been developed over a period of time. Often these organisational beliefs are deep-rooted and determine the way in which employees are controlled and authority exercised. Organisational culture provides a sense of identity to the organisation’s stakeholders and shapes the way in which tasks are completed. All organisational cultures will be unique and some businesses will have a stronger culture than others.

Charles Handy’s organisational culture model was introduced in 1999. It splits organisational cultures into four main types:

* Power culture (web)
* Role culture (building)
* Task culture (grid)
* Person culture(sometimes called support culture) (culture dish)



1. Power culture: Handy described power culture as being like a spider’s web – the spider sits in the middle of it with complete power over the whole web network. Handy believed that this is how many family owned businesses operate, with the key family owners in the middle. The nearer the employee is to the middle of the web, the more influence they can exert over the owners. In this type of culture, power and decision-making is concentrated in the hands of a few key individuals.
2. Role culture: Handy selected an image of a Greek temple to depict role culture. Here the main strategic decision making takes place at the tip of the roof. The columns depict the functional areas of the business – those that undertake a specific role such as marketing or operations. In other words, the culture of the business is strongly related to functionality – a small group of senior managers making the decisions and then communicating these to the functional areas of the organisation. This type of culture reacts slowly to change and therefore is more suited to a stable environment.
3. Task culture: Within task culture the emphasis is on ‘getting a job done’. Task culture is often observed when the environment is rapidly changing and the product life cycle might be relatively short. Here, teams are established with the objective of completing the project or task. The importance of the team, rather than key individuals, is the important factor within Task culture. Influence amongst the team is determined by the level of skill and experience that an individual has rather than on personalities.
4. Person culture: This is not a common form of organisational culture. Indeed, firms would not be able to survive if they were dominated by Person culture. This form of culture exists when individuals within the organisation dictate the firm’s policies and strategies in order to gain their own personal benefits. Here individuals rather than teams form the focus for the firm. Although most organisations will have corporate goals and therefore other forms of culture, there are elements of person culture in all organisations.

