



Safety Culture as an Element of Organisation Culture of Transport Companies



Olga V. EFIMOVA



Yulia V. KOMAROVA

*Efimova, Olga V., Russian University of Transport, Moscow, Russia.
Komarova, Yulia V., Russian University of Transport, Moscow, Russia*.*

ABSTRACT

To perform the basic management functions, a developed organizational culture is required. It is based on a system of common values, beliefs and norms that are formed for all employees of a given organization as a result of a complex process of interacting.

The article proposes to consider the «safety culture» (including, for example, traffic safety culture, environmental safety, labor activity safety culture) as an element interconnected with all other elements of organizational culture. This is especially relevant for transport companies, including JSC Russian Railways, where technology development and technological sophistication are progressing rapidly and

where, for objective reasons related to nature of the activity, the level of occupational injuries is high.

Organizational culture is considered in the article, as a set of functional cultures in the field of corporate management, interaction and communication, labor organization, safety culture, and interaction with external clients.

JSC Russian Railways uses modern technologies and sophisticated technology in its activities, while there are infrastructural restrictions; all this is a source of safety risks and threats. Therefore, the maturity level of safety culture, as well as its assessment are of great importance both for development of the organizational culture, and for the company.

Keywords: transport, organizational culture, corporate culture, safety culture, functional culture, elements of transport, organizational culture.

*Information about the authors:

Efimova, Olga V. – D.Sc. (Economics), professor, head of the of department of economics, organization of production and management of the Institute of Economics and Finance of Russian University of Transport, Moscow, Russia, ovefimova@mail.ru.

Komarova, Yulia V. – leading engineer of the Cabinet of MBA programs of the department of modern studies of the Higher Transport Business School of the Institute of Economics and Finance of Russian University of Transport, Moscow, Russia, yuvkomarova@gmail.com.

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Introduction. A well-developed organizational culture is one of the factors which help to achieve labor efficiency, high productivity, feasibility and profitability of projects, employee commitment to achieve goals and the overall success of any company, including a transport one.

The works of many scientists are devoted to the study of organizational culture, to the influence of its elements, such as values, mission, company goals, behavior and communications, symbols, work culture, on quality of fulfilling the tasks and of achieving the objectives set.

Since transport is a source of enhanced danger, transport equipment and technologies are developing at a fast pace, a safety culture becomes especially relevant as a necessary element of organizational culture of transport companies, and therefore requires further study.

The *objective* of the study is to determine the place of safety culture in the organizational culture of transport companies using the example of JSC Russian Railways.

The study used general scientific *methods*, as well as empirical methods inherent in the study of control systems, including documentation analysis, theoretical and empirical methods, and theoretical methods.

Organizational and corporate culture: general approaches and definitions

Research on organizational culture at enterprises began as early as at the beginning of 20th century. Elton Mayo is considered the founder of research in the field of organizational culture of management. Under his leadership, in the period from 1927 to 1932 an experiment was conducted, the purpose of which was to study the influence of organizational culture on the productivity of employees as a result of which it was revealed that it «...depends on their desire to work, and the latter is determined by assessment that they give to their activities in the company, their earnings and relationships with other employees and management structures» [1, p. 99].

In the 1950s, an American scientist Melville Dalton conducted research on formation of organizational culture and its subcultures based on assumption of different needs of employees [2]. In the same period, a group of English sociologists from Tavistock

Institute of Human Relations conducted a detailed study of organizational culture [3, p. 23].

At the turn of 1980–1990s, studies appeared that claimed that organizational management culture was an important factor contributing to the economic efficiency of a company.

Besides the term «organizational culture», the concept of «corporate culture» is often found in literature. The definitions of «organizational culture» and «corporate culture» have much in common, but most scholars interpret the concept of organizational culture more broadly than corporate one: «The culture of an organization is understood as a general, universal, comprehensive concept, and corporate culture [is understood] as a particular one applicable to a particular organization» [4, p. 7; 5, p. 7].

On the other hand, these concepts are largely similar and represent a system of values, beliefs, rules of conduct and other elements that employees follow in their activities to achieve strategic goals of a company [5, p. 14; 6, p. 45; 7, p. 10; 8, p. 135].

If we talk about the most important elements of culture in more detail, then they include the values, mission, goals of a company, behavior and communication (norms, standards, codes, ethics and etiquette, organizational climate, image), symbols (mottos, slogans, brands, logos, rituals, traditions, legends), work culture (working conditions and safety, work tools, social responsibility).

Moreover, not all elements of organizational culture (for example, values, beliefs) during its formation and development are recognized and shared by all employees, that results in the emergence of subcultures (subculture is understood as a set of values that distinguishes a particular subgroup within an organization).

Employees of a company, on the one hand, are carriers of organizational culture (by virtue of the social nature, a person is subject to influence of the organizational culture, that is, culture is above people, governs and corrects people's behavior in accordance with generally accepted norms and values), on the other hand, they actively shape it, changing and improving its inherent characteristics. Culture, therefore, is a product of interacting of company employees linked by a common goal.





Pic. 1. Organizational culture as a set of functional cultures.

Safety culture

Life and health of people are priceless. Accidents that cause disability or death not only undermine the economic efficiency of the company in which these cases occur, but also damage the country, and hinder its competitiveness in the world market. This is especially relevant for transport companies, where technology and technological sophistication are developing at a rapid pace, and where, due to the specifics of the main activities related to transportation, the level of industrial injuries is high.

All this leads to emergence of a new element of organizational culture which is the safety culture, since the organizational culture can be considered as a combination of functional cultures (Pic. 1):

- management culture is determined by a style, methods of management used by company management;
- culture of interaction within the company is determined by consistency of actions of functional units and employees of the company;
- culture of interaction with external clients is determined by the level of customer focus of the company, and the level of customer satisfaction with quality of service;
- work culture is determined by the psychophysical, sanitary-hygienic, socio-psychological working conditions, the system of social support for employees, the level of

material logistics, the use of advanced labor methods;

- safety culture (including, for example, traffic safety culture, environmental safety, labor activity safety) is determined by the level of protection of the system against risks of occurrence of dangerous situations; by the level of prioritization of safety in comparison to, for example, financial or production indicators.

«The term ‘Safety Culture’ was first introduced in INSAG’s Summary Report on the Post-Accident Review Meeting on the Chernobyl Accident, published by the IAEA as Safety Series No.75-INSAG-1 in 1986, and further expanded on in Basic Safety Principles for Nuclear Power Plants, Safety Series No. 75-INSAG-3, issued in 1988» [9, Foreword by the Director General]. In the report of the International Nuclear Safety Advisory Group «Basic Principles of the Safety of Nuclear Power Plants» (No. 75-INSAG-3, 1989; No. 75-INSAG-3 Rev.1), safety culture was described as a crucial concept and one of fundamental safety management principles [10, pp. 5, 7]. The report on the Safety Culture of the International Advisory Group on Nuclear Safety (No. 75-INSAG-4, 1991) defines safety culture as follows: «Safety culture is that assembly of characteristics and attitudes in organizations and individuals which establishes that, as an overriding priority, nuclear plant safety issues receive the attention warranted by their significance» [9, p. 1].

Safety culture in transport is also a top priority.

The essence and significance of the element «safety culture» in the activities of JSC Russian Railways is determined by social responsibility of the employer towards employees of the company and responsibility of the company towards the society.

In terms of corporate culture, safety culture factor in railway transport organizations, including JSC Russian Railways, plays a significant role particularly regarding respect of traffic safety rules and operation of railway vehicles.

Attention to solution of safety culture issues in the field of railway transport was paid in many countries. Methodological guidelines were developed and put into effect to create, evaluate and monitor safety culture in railway organizations. The result of investigations of railway crashes abroad that occurred at the end of the 20th century led to conclusion that the identified immediate causes of such crashes were predetermined by the «insufficient safety culture». Based on the synthesis of this experience, the European Parliament and the Council have developed the Directive on railway safety [11]. The peculiarity of this document is that it recommends to develop safety culture by incorporating it into the safety management system [11, e.g., art. 9].

Safety culture is a complex of relations emerging as a result of employees' understanding of importance and responsibility in ensuring all types of safety.

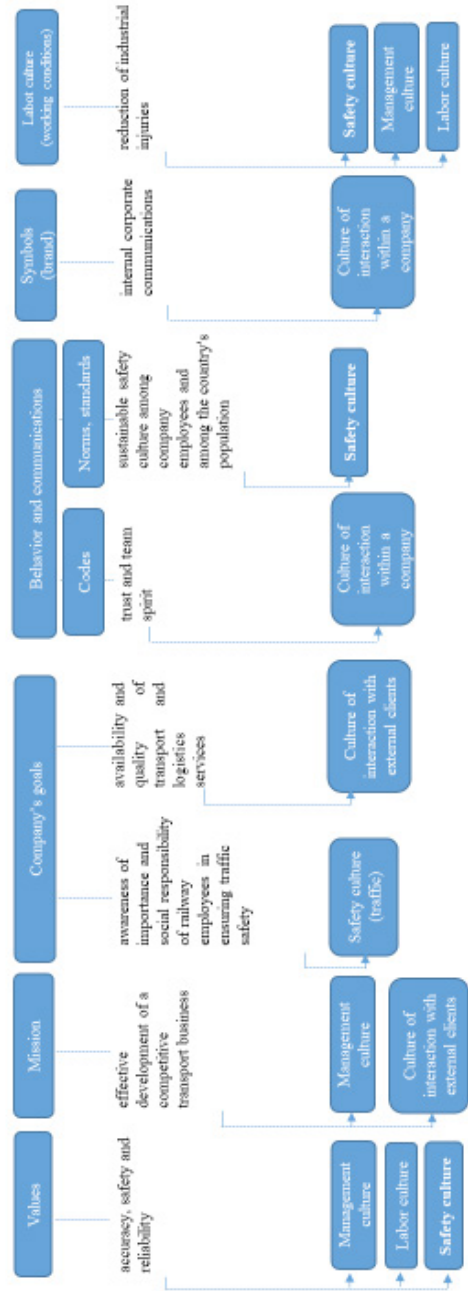
Safety culture in the activities of JSC Russian Railways

For JSC Russian Railways, safety culture as an element of organizational culture is associated with other elements.

Thus, safety is an integral part of brand values [12], of a number of corporate competencies.

One of the main ethical principles defined in the Code of Business Ethics of JSC Russian Railways, approved by regulation No. 1143r of 06.05.2015, is that decision-making should be balanced and «guided by the principle of safety priority» [13]. In addition, when interacting with subordinates, managers are required to ensure safety at workplaces.

Since the core activities of JSC Russian Railways refer to processes of carriage of goods



Pic. 2. The relationship of elements of organizational culture in corporate culture of JSC Russian Railways.



and passengers, traffic safety culture plays a leading role in safety culture.

One of the strategic goals of the company is «improving quality of work and safety of transportation».

At JSC Russian Railways, the term «*traffic safety culture*» is defined in the «Strategy for ensuring guaranteed safety and reliability of the transportation process in the holding company Russian Railways. «Traffic safety culture is the result of recognition of importance and social responsibility of railway employees in ensuring traffic safety, achievement of which is a priority goal and personal need for all work affecting traffic safety» [14]. Traffic safety culture is an integral part of corporate culture of Russian Railways holding company and characterizes quality of the elements of System of traffic safety management (SMBD) [14].

To identify completeness and complexity of how traffic safety culture is considered in the regulatory and methodological documents of JSC Russian Railways, a logical matrix has been formed to reflect safety requirements of the transportation process in the statement of values, mission, company goals and other elements of organizational culture (Pic. 2).

Brief analysis of the relationships

The formulation of the holding's mission reflects the objective of effective development of a competitive transport business: «The mission of Russian Railways holding company consists in effective development of a competitive transport business in the Russian and world markets, the core of which is effective fulfillment of the tasks of the national rail carrier of goods and passengers and the owner of the public railway infrastructure» [15], thus, it reflects culture of management and a culture of interaction with external clients.

The goals of the company are defined in the documents «Long-term development program of JSC Russian Railways until 2025», «Quality management strategy at Russian Railways holding company», «Strategy for ensuring guaranteed safety and reliability of the transportation process in the Russian Railways holding company». Particularly, a goal of the Long-term development program of JSC Russian Railways until 2025, which reads as «attainment of the level of traffic safety that will correspond to the place of the holding company, occupying a leading position among world

railways in terms of safety of provided infrastructure services, safety and reliability of all processes», assigns the task of «development of traffic safety culture within the holding company», while main tracks of enhancement of traffic safety management system comprise «maintaining of positive level of traffic safety culture through awareness of holding company's employees of importance and social responsibility while executing work, that has an impact on traffic safety, followed by synchronous integration of mandatory and compulsory rules of conduct into all job processes» [16]. Goals of creation, operation and development of the quality management system comprise elements of the culture of interacting with external customers: «ensuring availability and quality of transport and logistics services in the field of cargo transportation and of passenger transportation in accordance with social standards, as well as growing satisfaction of the customers through growing services' quality at competitive transportation rates» [17].

The Code of Business Ethics as an element of organizational culture is aimed at developing trust and team spirit, thus reflecting the culture of interaction within the company: «JSC Russian Railways develops a *culture of effective corporate communications* based on trust and team spirit» [13].

The use of symbols (brands) are aimed at formation of internal corporate communications, reflecting the elements of culture of interaction within the company: «The Russian Railways brand platform is the basis for formation of the *ideological content of internal corporate communications*» [18].

Work culture (working conditions) are aimed at reducing occupational injuries: «Employees of JSC Russian Railways have to comply with labor protection requirements in performance of their labor duties, comply with labor protection instructions, internal labor regulations, observe production, technological and labor discipline, comply with instructions of the work manager, to participate in monitoring of the state of working conditions and labor protection, to correctly use personal and collective protective equipment...» [19]. This wording reflects elements of culture of management, labor and safety.

The analysis shows that regulatory and methodological documents of JSC Russian Railways are aimed at developing an

organizational culture in terms of certain functional cultures. At the same time, in order to develop a safety culture in the activities of business units of the company, it is advisable to include a complete set of the elements of safety culture into corporate regulatory documents.

Conclusion. Organizational culture as, on the one hand, a set of functional cultures (management culture, culture of interaction within the company, culture of interaction with external customers, safety culture, work culture) and as, on the other hand, a set of elements (values, mission, goals of the company, behavior and communications, symbols, work culture), is a dynamic system that changes during development of the organization itself.

Therefore, it is important to assess the maturity level of all the elements, especially of the safety culture, as a necessary condition for development of organizational culture and, as a consequence, for development of the company as a whole.

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