

# WORKPLACE CULTURE

## Training Tool



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## CREATION OF THE EDUCATIONAL MATERIAL

It is widely accepted that inclusion in a country or a workplace requires time and effort from both sides, a two-sided approach, meaning that a newcomer and the hosting system/group both make a step forward towards adjustment.

One of the elements of being included is being familiar with the dominant culture of a group, sub-group, ethnic group, corporate environment, etc.

**Generation 2.0 RED** has been implementing employability programmes, among which is the **Worldplaces-Workplaces Working with Migrant Women** project, which include workplace culture seminars for individuals of migrant background who have never worked before in Greece. This type of seminar has played a vital role in supporting job candidates better understand expectations within a workplace in Greece, common practices, Dos & Don't's, etc. In this way, we have found that a newcomer increases their chances of job retention and of a smoother inclusion in the work environment.

For that reason, this tool, developed under the **Worldplaces** project, is aiming, on the other hand, to support employers in including successfully in their workplace people of migrant background who possibly have no prior work experience in Greece. It consists of a theoretical part, to better understand the concept of culture in the workplace, and an activity part, which you may include in your Induction and training period for newly hired employees.

# UNDERSTANDING THE ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

**Workplace culture is a concept which includes:**

- Beliefs, way of thinking, attitudes, etc.
- Ideologies and principles of an organisation.

The workplace culture of an organisation is part of a wider national workplace culture unique to a country, which, however, demonstrates variations depending very much on the location: urban place, town, village, etc.

Another factor that could influence the culture of a workplace is the type of organisation. Specifically, in Greece, the majority of organisations are SMEs, with a big percentage of them being “very small” (up to 10 employees). The culture in an SME, a family business, a non-profit organisation and a multi-national have significant differences, even for someone who is familiar with the Greek culture overall.

The workplace culture is shaped by the leadership, the values, the business strategy and the corporate history, and it can influence significantly employees’ attitudes and behaviour, job satisfaction and retention.

There are multiple theories on workplace, or rather, organisational culture, two of which are described in the next page:

- **Organisational Culture Model** (Edgar Schein), 1985,
- **Theory of Corporate Cultures** (Terrence Deal and Allan Kennedy), 1982.

You may use the below models to better understand your workplace culture.



Edgar Schein

“Organisational culture is the pattern of basic assumptions that a given group has invented, discovered, or developed in learning to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, and that has worked well enough to be considered valid, and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems.”.

# UNDERSTANDING THE ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

## Organisational Culture Model (Edgar Schein), 1985

Schein's model recognises that culture is complex, and it is affected by various factors like leadership and environment.

This model helps us understand the layers of culture and their interaction. Those three layers are:

### (1) Artifacts And Behaviors

The most visible elements of an organisation: the layout of a workspace, dressing code, symbols or rituals, and behaviors.

### (2) Espoused Values

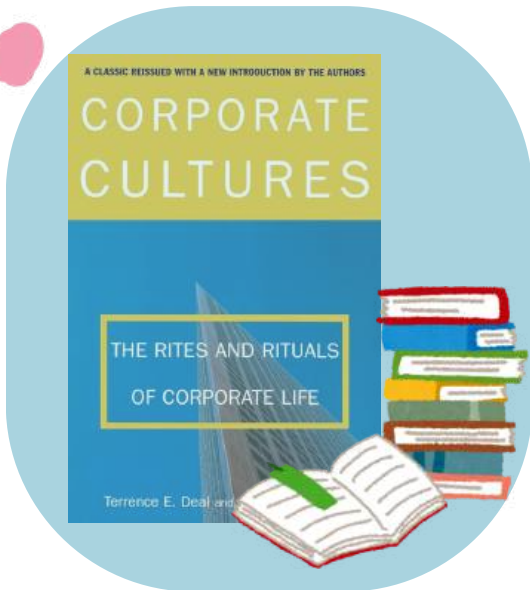
Organisation's values and rules in terms of behaviour which are apparent in official messages or public statements (e.g., human-centric).

### (3) Basic Underlying Assumptions

These are the least evident organisation's beliefs that define how the team thinks and feels.

**Source:** <https://thinkinsights.net/consulting/schein-organizational-culture/>

## Corporate Cultures (Terrence Deal and Allan Kennedy), 1982



Terrence Deal and Allan Kennedy developed a theory on corporate culture presented in their book "Corporate Cultures: The Rites and Rituals of Corporate Life."

According to Deal and Kennedy, work culture is shaped by five key elements:

1. **Values:** Shared beliefs and philosophies that guide employees' actions, which are the principles that drive an organisation's decisions.
2. **Heroes:** Individuals who embody corporate values and can be seen as role models (founders, executives, or other employees).
3. **Rituals:** Practices and activities that boost organisation's values and create a sense of belonging (events or informal celebrations).
4. **Cultural Network:** The informal internal communication through which culture is transmitted and preserved (stories, common experiences, etc.).
5. **Environment:** The actual space and decoration of the workplace, which can influence but also speak of the work culture.

**Source:** <https://www.mindtools.com/avnhbho/deal-and-kennedys-cultural-model>

In the next pages, you will discover topics for discussion and activities you may use in your induction programme with people of migrant background but also as part of the induction phase in your corporate culture for everyone.

Certainly those suggestions reflect, in general, the common workplace culture met in organisations and, as mentioned before, that can vary depending on the type and size of the organisation, leadership, the services provided, etc.

Your unique workplace culture is expressed through your policies, code of conduct, communication procedures, workplace etiquette etc.

# TYPES OF COMMUNICATION

- Verbal communication (words we use)
- Non-verbal communication (expressions of face, how we move, gestures, eye contact, space, pitch, tone, etc.).
- Written communication (words that we write)
- Visual communication (images, symbols, etc.)

Communication is a skill which can be developed in its different forms and adapted to various contexts to transmit better the message.

## Verbal Communication

- a. Interpersonal
- b. Group
- c. Public
- d. Mass

### Weaknesses of Verbal Communication

- When we communicate verbally, there is, also, room for non-verbal communication, which can surely emphasise the verbal communication but also contradict it, leading to misunderstandings
- It is not adequate with people with hearing impairments
- When strong emotions exist, it can lead to conflicts/misunderstandings.

### When to use

At the workplace, it is better used for face-to-face interactions, meetings, brainstorming sessions, and cases where instant resolution is needed or team building.

**Source:** *The 4 Types of Communication – Definitions and Examples*,  
Colin James  
Last Updated February 12, 2024

# Non-Verbal Communication

Non-verbal communication can take place even without communicating verbally. It influences greatly the message we transmit when we also use words.

**FACE EXPRESSIONS,  
GESTURES,  
POSTURE, VOICE TONE &  
PITCH, EYE CONTACT,  
PROXEMICS, ETC.**

## Weaknesses of Non-Verbal Communication

- Face expressions, despite their universality, can be perceived in different ways from one culture to another, or from one workplace to another, from one situation to another, and for sure, from one person to another
- Non-verbal communication cannot transmit complex messages, and we should not rely on that if we wish to make sure someone has understood
- Non-verbal is not a complete communication, at least in a workplace
- Not everyone has control of their facial expressions/gestures and this type of communication can transmit more than it is needed in the workplace
- It is not ideal for remote communication or people with visual impairments.

## When to use

Non-verbal communication is extremely useful when we wish to convince, encourage, inspire, negotiate, etc. in group meetings, presentations, public speaking, etc.

*Source: The 4 Types of Communication – Definitions and Examples, Colin James*

Last Updated February 12, 2024



## TIPS ON COMMUNICATION

# PATTERNS OF COMMUNICATION IN GREECE

**Indirect Communication:** People in Greece can be quite indirect communicators.

To avoid conflict or confrontation, they often take an **indirect approach** to pass their message sensitively and tactfully.

**Verbal/Non-Verbal:** People in Greece tend to use **theatrical language**. This communication style can seem **exaggerated**, whereas they **show their emotion** in their speech. This can be accompanied by gestures and face expressions, just for emphasising a point.

**Voice Pitch:** People in Greece can speak very loudly to make themselves heard and understood or to show their anger, disappointment, often in an exaggerating way. A raised voice can be, also, an expression of **excitement** rather than a sign of anger.

**Silence:** People in Greece generally can feel uncomfortable with periods of silence.

So, they seek to fill them even speaking about casual things.

Alternatively, if you receive a silent response, it is fair to assume that the person you are communicating with is feeling **negatively** about what has been said.

# NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION IN GREECE

**Social Proxemics:** The distance where we feel at ease with co-workers and collaborators is closer than of other European citizens.

**Eye Contact:** Direct eye contact is sought during a conversation. It shows attention and sincerity and is very much appreciated.

**Shaking hands:** It is highly appreciated to shake hands when meeting someone for the first time or when they are a client/customer. No other touch is encouraged when first meeting a person

**Pointing with the finger:** It is considered extremely impolite to point at someone with the finger.

**Touch:** Through hugs and tapping on the shoulder, we can express to colleagues our appreciation, encouragement and support.

## MEETINGS & APPOINTMENTS



- Meetings can be extended if there are more to talk about. Expect interruptions, delays and multiple conversations at once in a group setting
- Conversations can become heated during meetings, because free-flowing discussion and ideas are generally encouraged.
- Meetings with colleagues or collaborators are ideally scheduled some days in advance to facilitate availability of others. However, urgent issues can be resolved in spontaneous meetings.
- Being a little late for a meeting is acceptable if you have an excuse and if not repetitive. In any case, up to 5 minutes it is acceptable.

## DOS & DON'TS

Regardless of the workplace culture where you will find yourself, there are always some tips on what to avoid and what to do to navigate safely the first period at work.



- It is always nice to ask about the wellbeing of your colleague, supervisor before going on with your daily tasks. It shows you care.
- It is common for people to ask about their colleague's personal life (residence location, family status) and appreciate when others do the same. This is an effort to get to know each other.
- When a conversation goes out of topic, show some patience and allow to the person to finish what they have to say before redirecting the conversation back to the topic.
- Express any doubt in a polite manner and towards the person directly involved in the matter.



- Avoid criticising any culture, people or nation. Specifically, for Greeks, despite the fact that many openly complain about their country, they could feel offended to hear this from someone who is a newcomer.
- Try to avoid any stereotype for any nationality or culture. Stereotypes can be offensive and create a hostile environment in the end.
- Avoid making comments in public that imply that someone is not honest or nice, before posing the matter in person with them.

## Greek Workplace Tips

### Activity 1

*Participants practice role playing on behaviours valued generally in the Greek workplace.*

#### Material needed:

- Pens/pencils
- Worksheet **Greek Workplace Tips**

1. Start with the question: “**What helped you be successful in your past job(s)?**” Those information shared among the group could be considered “tips” on success in the workplace.
2. Then, ask participants to find a partner. Share the **Greek Workplace Tips** Sheet (see next page) for each pair. Allow participants to read the **Workplace Tips** and, after choosing one Tip, to prepare a short role-playing to demonstrate that Tip through a situation at work.
3. Ask from each pair to do the role-playing for their Tip. Make questions to clarify and understand better between “performances.”
4. You may use some of the following questions:
  - What would you advise someone who starts working in your home country? Are these advice the same for Greece or they differ?
  - Were any of the **Greek Workplace Tips** surprising to you?
  - Have you noticed anything else about the Greek culture that seems to be significant for the workplace?
  - Do you know in which other ways you can get familiar with the workplace culture at your new work?

**Source:** Rita Resources-Job Readiness Curriculum (Higher): Succeeding in the Workplace, [https://www.ritaresources.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Section-9\\_Succeeding-in-the-Workplace-Higher.pdf](https://www.ritaresources.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Section-9_Succeeding-in-the-Workplace-Higher.pdf)

## Worksheet Greek Workplace Tips

### Activity 1

**Be respectful of the work hours and offer to help if you have available time.**

**If you finished your work, see what else is left to be done.**

**If you don't understand, make questions.**

**Show trust to the procedures.**

**Show enthusiasm for what the organisation does and what you do.**

**Build good relationships with colleagues and supervisors.**

**If you have made a mistake, take responsibility of that and suggest solutions.**

**Show the intention of going the extra mile if needed.**

## Professionalism in the Workplace

### Activity 2

***Professionalism may be too vague, and the concept could differ from one workplace to another.***

***A survey in 2012*** (Professionalism in the Workplace Study, Center for Professional Excellence at York College of Pennsylvania) ***has found that soft skills (communication, time management, etc.) and work ethic are indicatives of professionalism.***

#### **Material needed:**

- Whiteboard and markers
- Worksheet ***Greek Workplace Tips***
- Worksheet ***Professionalism in the Workplace***

1. On the whiteboard, write down the characteristics: **a.** Interpersonal skills, **b.** Communication skills, **c.** Appearance, **d.** Time management skills, **e.** Work ethic (found as traits of professionalism).
2. Then, ask group participants what is “Professionalism” to them and how this is expressed in the workplace. Write down the answers you get on the whiteboard by the corresponding group e.g. if this concerns Appearance, put it below Appearance.
3. Then share the worksheet ***Greek Workplace Tips*** and ask where each Tip can be categorised under the characteristics of Professionalism.
4. Divide the group into pairs and share to each pair the worksheet of the next pages (***Professionalism in the Workplace***). Ask them to choose some of them and discuss on how they think those contribute in professionalism.

**Source:** Rita Resources-Job Readiness Curriculum (Higher): Succeeding in the Workplace, [https://www.ritaresources.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Section-9\\_Succeeding-in-the-Workplace-Higher.pdf](https://www.ritaresources.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Section-9_Succeeding-in-the-Workplace-Higher.pdf)

## Worksheet Professionalism in the Workplace

### Activity 2

- Get to know your coworkers. For that, you can use the time before work, during breaks or after work.
- Utilise every learning opportunity. This indicates your intention to want to know more about the work.
- If you don't understand or remember something, say it. In this way you will make sure that you do things properly and with safety.
- Follow the common dress code at work. A dress code is "rules" about what to wear. It can be written or never mentioned, but by observing you will be able to grasp it. In case you wear a uniform, keep it clean and be cautious to use the safety equipment
- Show enthusiasm. It matters a lot to show you care about your work.
- If you are going to be late, call or text your supervisor. Make sure you have saved your supervisor's phone number.
- Emphasise on having nice relationships with everyone you work with.



## Worksheet Professionalism in the Workplace

### Activity 2

- Make questions if you need to. In this way you show interest in your work and that you are willing to learn more.
- Use handshake with the people you meet for the first time or with whom you have a more formal work, and keep eye contact with everyone you talk with.
- Dress safely: Most organisations require closed-toe shoes. If your job involves physical work, then it is even more important to protect your toes.
- If you need to be absent, inform your supervisor the soonest possible. The same goes for going to work later or leaving earlier.
- If you are finished with your tasks, you can see what else is there you can do or how you could help a colleague.
- If there is a conflict with someone, you first need to check if there is any procedure you need to follow. If not, you need to try to solve it with the other person, and unless this happens, then you can address it to your supervisor.

# A FEW WORDS FOR THE iWORLDPLACES workplaces working with migrant women PROJECT

- Since December 2021, **Diversity in the Workplace**, with the project "Worldplaces-Workplaces Working with Migrant Women", **co-funded by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund of the European Union**, introduces **best inclusion practices** at the workplace, by supporting **women of migrant background**, while focusing on the **Work-Life Balance Policy**, with other European partners.

**Generation 2.0 for Rights, Equality & Diversity** is building the **Greek Worldplaces Network**, where **companies and non-profit organisations** have the opportunity, apart from network with other members in Greece and Europe, to **access tools and resources** for best inclusion practices, **from the gender and origin perspectives**, and as well participate in trainings on the following topics:

- **"Non-discriminative Recruitment policies & Best Corporate practices on Childcare"**
- **"Non discriminative and Inclusive Policies at the Workplace"**

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