

2a

Corporate culture

Questionnaire

What kind of company do you work in?

- 1** In your organisation, criticism:
- a) is aimed at the task, not the person
 - b) is only given when asked for
 - c) is mostly negative and takes the form of blame
 - d) is avoided because people are frightened of hurting each other
- ◆ —
- 2** In your organisation, conflict:
- a) is controlled from above
 - b) is controlled by rules, procedures and definitions of responsibilities
 - c) is resolved by discussion of work issues
 - d) is resolved by discussion of personal needs and values
- ◆ —
- 3** In your organisation, hierarchies:
- a) are unnecessary because each person is working for his or her own professional development
 - b) are necessary to show who has authority over whom
 - c) recognise the power and authority of leaders
 - d) are sometimes useful for getting the job done
- ◆ —
- 4** In your organisation, change:
- a) comes from above
 - b) is a question of re-designing rules and procedures
 - c) is a considered response to changes in objectives
 - d) is a constant process
- ◆ —
- 5** In your organisation, people are motivated:
- a) by the possibility of promotion to positions where they have more responsibility
 - b) by the opportunity to participate in valuable or creative processes
 - c) by seeing that their work is appreciated
 - d) by pay or bonuses for goals achieved and problems solved
- ◆ —
- 6** In your organisation, most learning takes place:
- a) when people are finding practical solutions to problems
 - b) through analysis and logical thinking
 - c) as an integral part of the process of working
 - d) when people make errors and are helped to identify and correct them
- ◆ —
- 7** In your organisation, the most important personal quality you can have is to be:
- a) loyal
 - b) creative
 - c) professional
 - d) rational
- ◆ —
- 8** In your organisation, status is given:
- a) to people who find creative ways to help the organisation grow
 - b) to people who contribute to achieving goals
 - c) to distant and powerful leaders
 - d) to close and powerful leaders
- ◆ —
- 9** In your organisation, people are principally:
- a) human resources
 - b) creators
 - c) experts
 - d) members of a family
- ◆ —

This questionnaire is adapted from *Riding the Waves of Culture: Understanding Cultural Diversity* by Fons Trompenaar; 1993; Published by Nicholas Brealey Publishing Ltd, London.

Key

Incubators, Guided Missiles, Families and Eiffel Towers

The questionnaire classifies companies as four basic types. Which type is your company? You will probably find it has characteristics of more than one type, perhaps even all four. Add up your score and then read the descriptions.

Question	Family	Guided Missile	Eiffel Tower	Incubator
1	b	a	d	c
2	a	c	b	d
3	b	d	c	a
4	a	c	b	d
5	c	d	a	b
6	d	a	b	c
7	a	b	d	c
8	d	b	c	a
9	d	c	a	b
Totals				

— *The Incubator* —

The function of the organisation is to enable people to fulfil their potential.
 Relationships grow between people as they work on tasks together.
 Leaders are treated with scepticism.
 A high value is placed on creativity.
 Change can be fast and spontaneous.
 There is an emotional commitment to the work being done.
 Managers are enthusiastic.
 Everyone is equal and there is as little formal hierarchy as possible.
 Most commonly found in Sweden. Typical of new start-ups and partnerships: doctors, consultants, lawyers.

— *The Guided Missile* —

Everyone is equal, while having different roles.
 The organisation is oriented to performing tasks and achieving goals.
 People must do whatever it takes to achieve the goals of the organisation.
 The organisation may break up or alter when its goals have been achieved.
 Individual contributions are recognised and lead to pay rises or promotion.
 Managers set clear objectives.
 A high value is placed on practicality.
 People take a pride in their professionalism.
 Most commonly found in the USA, Canada and the UK. Typical of large, decentralised companies.

— *The Family* —

There are strong relationships between people at work.
 The leader is seen as a father-figure.
 Differences in status between people are seen as natural.
 Everyone is valuable.
 Decisions are made at the top.
 The main types of reward and punishment are the approval and disapproval of superiors.
 People can act together because they understand each other and the organisation.
 A high value is placed on loyalty to the company and to superiors.
 Most commonly found in Spain, Italy, Greece, France, Belgium, Japan and Singapore. Typical of small and medium-sized firms.

— *The Eiffel Tower* —

There are explicit definitions of roles and relationships.
 Authority belongs to roles, not to the people who occupy them.
 Everyone is replaceable.
 People have a strong sense of duty and responsibility.
 The organisation functions because everyone obeys the rules.
 Decisions are made at the top.
 The hierarchy is complex and is described formally.
 Leaders are distant.
 Most commonly found in France, Germany, Austria and the Netherlands. Typical of large, mature companies.

Teacher's Notes

Corporate culture Worksheets **2a** and **2b**

NOTE: This activity does not work with students who have very little or no work experience. However, students on vocational courses may be interested in looking at the definitions of different types of company on the answer sheet and comparing them to companies they have studied.

ACTIVITY

Individual and groupwork: reading, speaking

AIM

To discuss four archetypes of company culture and compare them to the students' company/ies.

GRAMMAR AND FUNCTIONS

Present simple

Talking about work and how companies operate

VOCABULARY

criticism, task, blame, conflict, rules, procedures, definitions of responsibility, issues, values, hierarchy, professional development, authority, objectives, motivated, appreciated, goal, bonus, solution, analysis, error, loyal, contribute, leader, human resources, medium-sized firms, mature companies, decentralised, to fulfil potential, scepticism, creativity, spontaneous, commitment, oriented, pay rise, promotion, practicality, relationships, status, approval, disapproval, loyalty, role, to occupy a role, replaceable, obey, at the top (of a company)

PREPARATION

Make copies of Worksheets 2a and 2b for each student. Have dictionaries to hand if possible.

TIME

25-35 minutes

PROCEDURE

- 1 Write the words *corporate culture* on the board and ask students, in pairs, to discuss what it means to them. Allow 2-3 minutes.
- 2 Ask different pairs to report to the class on their discussions.
- 3 Tell the students that they are going to answer a short questionnaire which will help them to think about the culture of their company/ies.
- 4 Give out the copies of Worksheet 2a.
- 5 Ask the students, working alone, to answer the questions. They may need to refer to the dictionary or ask each other about vocabulary. Allow at least 10 minutes.
- 6 Write the words *incubator, family, guided missile* and *Eiffel Tower* on the board. Tell the students that these are the four categories that they are going to use to define the culture of their company/ies. Check they know the everyday meanings of guided missile and incubator.
- 7 Give out the copies of Worksheet 2b.
- 8 Allow 3-5 minutes for the students to add up their scores.
- 9 Divide the class into groups of four to discuss their results. If the students work in different countries or are different nationalities they will be able to compare the companies they work for. If they work for the same companies they can compare their perceptions of the company. Allow 8-10 minutes.
- 10 When the discussion finishes, ask the students their opinion of the categories. Are they a valid way to describe corporate cultures? What are the advantages and disadvantages of the different models? Which type do they feel would suit them best personally?

FOLLOW-UP

Students write 75-150 words on the culture of their company/ies.