1. Imagine you are invited to give a talk to leaders and members of an organization about organizational culture. Using material from lecture and your Miller textbook, explain the following to your audience: (a) what organizational culture is; (b) why it is important to be aware of it; and (c) what the relationship is between communication and organizational culture. For each of these sub-points (a, b, and c above), use examples that you are familiar with (from your personal lives, from current events, from previous case studies, etc.) to illustrate the point. Be sure to use examples other than the ones utilized in lecture or in the Miller textbook. (20 points)

In our book, Edgar Schein defines organizational culture as “the assumptions, values, behaviors, and artifacts that an organization exhibits as it attempts to adapt to internal and external organizational contingencies (Miller, p. 82). Some additional characteristics of organizational culture that were discussed in both the book and in lecture are that organizational culture comes from a diverse set of cultural makers, they are constantly emerging and shifting as organizational members interact, they include subcultures, and can often times be ambiguous (lecture notes, Feb. 10, 2011).

One example of how artifacts can define an organization’s culture comes from my observation of my sister’s Job. My sister works for a rapidly growing email marketing company called ExactTarget. When entering the workspace of the company I was shocked by how inviting and integrated the workspaces were. Instead of cubicles the employees work in “pods” which allow them much more social interaction with their coworkers because they are more open than the standard cubicle. The dress for the company is very casual, even allowing jeans and t-shirts, and the walls are decorated with splashes of color. By looking at ExactTarget’s physical as well as social environment you can convey that the culture is very laid back and relies heavily on the social interaction of employees.

It is important to be aware of organizational culture because you wouldn’t want to do business with or work for a company that you clashed culturally with. You have to take into account the beliefs, values, and behaviors of an organization before successfully interacting with them. For example, we watched a video about working for Google in lecture. The video highlighted the endless perks of working for Google, such as on site laundry, free meals, pods for naps, cars for transportation, and many other benefits. However, some people believe that all of these perks are instituted in order for Google to keep their employees working there forever, instead of allowing them to branch out to other companies or pursue their own ideas (lecture notes, Feb 17, 2011). Someone who values a more conservative culture that relies less on employee benefits to elicit performance would probably not want to work for Google.

An organization’s culture is dependent upon communication among the organization’s group members. An example of how communication is key when defining an organization’s culture comes from the case study on Nick’s Pizza. Nick’s organizational culture valued getting the most bang for your buck, while still holding high standards for quality and service. Nick made sure to communicate to his staff how much he valued excellence, whether it pertained to food or customer service. By Nick communicating his goals to his employees he helped to establish the values of the individuals and the business as a whole, which helped to define the organization’s culture.

1. Using a **cultural approach to organizing** as your analytical lens, analyze Dante’s organizational experience as it is described in this case. In your response, provide at least three ways in which aspects of organizational culture contributed to his dilemma. Be sure to explain those points thoroughly and note how these points are related to culture. In your analysis, also explain how the nature of communication among/between parties in this case study relates to what you are discussing. Finally, be sure to give detailed examples from the case study to support your points. (25 points).

In this case study the organizational culture of Bedrock Communication seemed to be geared towards a work-hard, play-hard culture, which we discussed in lecture. This type of culture elicits rapid feedback and rewards, highlights that success comes with persistence, displays good customer service, is team oriented, and ideal for energetic people. On the downside, this cultural model goes for a quick fix to a problem, which leads to lack of attention to detail (lecture notes, Feb 8, 2011). One way in which Dante faced a dilemma when encountering this type of work environment was that when he got a glimpse of success he let his work ethic decline. In the case study it said that Dante was routinely going into work on the weekends, but when he received the reward for New-employee of the Year he decided to ride this single wave of success instead of keeping up the persistent hard work.

The second way in which Dante clashed with this culture is that he seemed to misinterpret their values. The Miller book describes values as what the organization believes “ought” to happen (Miller, p. 91). The organization obviously relied heavily on being a team player. They frequently went to lunches together and socialized often in the workplace. Dante was immediately welcomed with open arms by the creative team. However, Dante displayed numerous times that he did not understand this concept of teamwork. For example, when Dante came up with a campaign that ended up being unsuccessful he blamed external forces, including his team, for the failure of the campaign instead of taking responsibility. Also, when Dante received a harsh evaluation from Emmett, he said that the creative team was slowing him down. The communication between Dante and his coworkers displayed that he was willing to play hard with his team, but not necessarily work hard with them.

The third way in which Dante faced a dilemma at Bedrock Communication dealt with Deal and Kennedy’s views of “strong cultures”. There are four components of strong culture: values, heroes, rites and rituals, and the cultural network. The component that I am going to highlight is the rites and rituals. As discussed in the Miller book, these are how an organization displays their values (Miller, p. 83). One ritual that Bedrock Communication had was their Christmas party. At this party there was socializing, dinner, an awards ceremony, and most importantly, an end-of-the year roast. The roast included skits and comedy, and members of Dante’s team told him it was a great time as long as he had thick skin. Dante was up to the challenge and wrote his own roast about his team. When Dante began to poke fun at his own team, no one seemed to think he was funny. The next week at work his team was cold towards him and didn’t socialize with him. Dante did not understand the ritual of the roast; that you don’t poke fun at your own team. This caused members of Dante’s team to see him as a “backstabber”, and caused them to ostracize him. Dante quickly began to fulfill Stan’s fear of the organization perceiving Dante’s confidence as arrogance.