EXAMINE THE EFFECT OF KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT ON THE ORGANIZATION CULTURE AND THEIR RELATIONS WITH THE EXTENT OF CUSTOMER–ORIENTATION IN PUBLIC ORGANIZATION "A CASE OF IRANIAN ORGANIZATION"

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the paper was to examine the effect of knowledge management on the organizational culture and their relations with the extent of customer – orientation in public (governmental) organization of Iran. To collect data the three questionnaires (organizational culture with a reliability of 0.87, knowledge management with reliability of 0.86 and customer – orientation with a reliability of 0.92) were used. The statistical population under study included employees and public organizations and general offices of the west Azerbaijan where four business, Commercial, Housing and Urban Development, Finance and Industry and Mines along with 548 employees were selected. The sample of this paper was 190 people. Findings revealed that there was a significant relation among the organizational culture, knowledge management and customer-orientation in public organizations of the province. Also, the analyses of the research findings provided the result, by using the AMOS software, there was a relation between knowledge management and customer – orientation %97, between knowledge management and organizational culture %94 and between organizational culture and customer-orientation %85.

KEYWORDS: Knowledge Management, Organizational culture, customer –orientation, Public organization

Changing world require organizations to look for a new tool to survive. One of these tools that can help organizations in these goals is knowledge management. Knowledge management is a process that helps organizations find important information than select, organize and release it. As a tool for activities such problem solving, dynamic learning is essential. Knowledge management can improve a range of organizational features by enabling organizations to smarter performance. In fact knowledge is the only source that its value was not reduced by its use and its value has increased. Other rhetoricians in leading organizations and management believe that an organization’s investment on knowledge is more profitable than materials (Tabibi et al, 2008).

But this is not enough alone. Knowledge management in order to be usable requires being coordinated with organization culture. Because each unique organization has its unique culture that shows people the way of understanding and give meaning to the events. Organizational culture can act as a resource for creating sustainable competitive advantages because some cultures easily cannot be imitated by competitors. Weak organizational culture will prevent people trying to preserve personal power base and performance, share their knowledge and publish their formation. Therefore, to facilitate the participation of individuals and create knowledge, organizational culture is important. So when organizations are not aware from the organization culture, its dimensions and indicators will have numerous problems such as organizational conflict, lack of institutional cohesion and performance reduction. So culture recognition will help managers to use strengths with full knowledge and vision to dominated space and anticipate necessary measures to its weaknesses (Rahimiya & Alizade, 2007).

One of the orientations of the modern management is to consider the principle of customer-orientation and customers' satisfaction. Customer-orientations not simply related with private and business organizations, rather as citizen and management centered theory was introduced, customer-orientation gained a higher importance in state organizations. Factors such as speed, exactness and accuracy in doing the customers' affairs and quality of servicing, the way customers are treated and service costs are incurred, transparency and appropriate information, are factors that would provide peoples’ satisfaction in the area of receiving services from the state organizations. Customer-orientations one of the discussions that in today’s world that has motivated organizations to rethink an establishment of coordination solutions with a wide range of customers in capturing this extended knowledge. However, it dares to say establishing an effective relation with customers won't be possible unless knowledge management is applied. To increase efficiency and efficacy of the organization and to make sure of the provision of favorable goods and services to the customers and to gain their satisfaction, one has to manage his own knowledge concerning customers. Thus, knowledge management is an inherent part of customer – orientation (Shafei,2009).
KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

Knowledge management can be defined as: To motivate people to contribute their knowledge with the others. Knowledge management according to Prosac is effort to discover the latent knowledge in peoples' minds and transform this treasure to organizational possessions, so that a huge group of people, involved in decision making processes can have access to this wealth and use it (Hosseini, 2006). Sheila Carroll maintains: Knowledge management is a management philosophy that combines good job in managing targeted information, with the organizational learning culture in order to improve the performance of business (Petzinger and McLuhan, 2001). Knowledge management is awareness and the act of management arises out of initiation, dissemination, distribution and application of knowledge for the organization's strategic goals (Berdrou and Lin, 2003). Knowledge management is a set of activities (including assessment, definition and goal setting, expansion of group work, allotment of sources and etc…) done with the aim of making sure of work, project progresses, qualitative improvement of processes and products. Knowledge is typically defined as a set of laws, rules and structured information that enables people to make decisions and solve problems. Hence, knowledge management is technology that deals with problems with concentration and emphasis on knowledge in problematic situations (Spector and Edmonds, 2002).

KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT GOALS

Davenport (1998) defines four objectives as knowledge management goals: 1) creating reservoirs and resources of knowledge 2) to facilitate and improve access to knowledge and its distribution 3) strengthening knowledge environment and 4) effectively manage knowledge as an asset (Abtahi & Salavati, 2006).

GENERAL MODEL OF KNOWLEDGE IN ORGANIZATION

General knowledge model is composed of four main activities (Fig 1):

1) Create Knowledge: this stage involves activities that are associated with entering new knowledge to system that includes development, discovering and conquering.

2) Maintaining knowledge: consists of activities that maintain knowledge in the system. In this context the most important factor experts point to is the institutional memory and it is simply the organization's ability to preserve and maintain knowledge.

3) Conversion and transfer of knowledge: refers to activities associated with that knowledge flows from one section to one section and includes translation communications, conversion, knowledge interpretation and refine.

4) Applying knowledge: includes activities to be associated with the implementation process of organizational knowledge (Abtahi & Salavati, 2006).

Figure 1: General model of Knowledge in Organization (Newman & Conard, 1999)

ROLE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF KNOWLEDGE

To fulfill their objectives, organizations have various sources and properties. Some of the sources are valuable, and peculiar and are pivotal to gain competition advantages. "Knowledge " is an example of these cases in such away it is considered a final substitute to production, wealth and monetary investment. In fact, knowledge is the only source whose value is nor reduced as it is used, rather its value is added. This knowledge is established and latent in procedures, guidelines, views and organizational measures and decisions and it gains doubled importance when transformed to valuable products and services. Hence, it can be concluded that the only sustainable organizational competition advantage is foremost that which is known and second how fast the knowledge is applied. Knowledge is important with respect to the effect on the clients' satisfaction level. A dissemination of knowledge affects the speed of the performance and that of the organization (Fig. 2). Improved speed and promotion of organization's performance quality will boost the level of the clients' satisfaction (Hosseini, 2006).
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**ORGANIZATION CULTURE**

Defining the organizational culture, Edgar Shain (1985) says: "Organizational culture is values, beliefs, norms, expectations and assumptions that link people and systems together." Arthur Sharpin (1985) considers the organizational culture as a system consisting of values (what matters and what does not) and peoples' beliefs (how they act and how they do not) that is in a reciprocal relation with human force, organizational structure and control system and as a result forms behavioral norms in the organization (Urmezdi, 2007). Nelson and Quick (1997) have defined the organizational culture as: "a paradigm of fundamental assumptions introduced as a valid thinking and is taught to the members of the organization as a way of ascertaining, thinking and feeling. Duberein (1997), maintains that organizational culture is a list of shared values, beliefs, and opinions where these shared values and beliefs affect the behavior of the employees. Chris Argeres called the organizational culture as a living system and defined it within a behavioral frame that people expose in practice, a way on which they think and feel and a manner that they actually behave with one another (Hosseini, 2006).

**DENNISN PATTERNS OF ORGANIZATION CULTURE**

Daniel Denison (2000) name cultural features in his model:

1. Involvement  
2. Consistency  
3. Adaptability  

One of these features is measured with the three indices (Fig 3):

**Involvement:** Effective organizations empower their people build organizations based on the working group and develop human resource capabilities at all levels. Faculty members are committed to their work and feel themselves as part of organizations. People feel that are involved in decision making at all levels and these decisions affect their work and their work directly linked with organizational goals. The specificity of this model is measured with three indicators: 1) Empowerment: people have power, initiative and ability to manage their work. This is a sense of ownership and responsibility in the organization. 2) Team orientation: in organization, group working is valued for common goals of organization. These organizations do things rely on groups. 3) Capability development: Organizations to provide their needs and remain in competitive scene continually develop employee skills.

**Consistency:** Research has shown that organizations are most stable and effective and integrated and behavior of staff is originated from fundamental values. Leaders and followers in reaching agreement have skills and organizational activities have been continuously well-coordinated. Organizations with such features have strong and distinct culture and have enough influence on employee behavior. It features three indicators: 1) Core values: members of a group share in values that make their nature and expectations. 2) Agreement: members are able to agree on an important difference. The agreement also includes agreement in components of third level and other levels. 3) Coordination and integration: organizational units with different functions can work together very well to achieve common goals. Organizational boundaries not cluttered with this work.

**Adaptability:** Organizations that are well integrated they are hard to change. Therefore, internal integration and external adaptability can be organization benefit. Friendly organizations are guided by the clients, make the risks, are reminded of their mistakes and have experience and capacity of changing. They are continually improving organization ability to give value to customers. This feature examined with three indicators: 1) Creating change: the organization is able to provide ways to answer needs and can recognize environment of institutions and chew future changes. 2) Customer focus: organization understands customer and responds to them and want to answer future needs. In fact, customer-orientation shows the degree to which organizations conduct customer satisfaction. 3) Organizational learning: Measure the extent of environment symptoms that organizations receive, translate and interpret and create opportunities to encourage creativity, knowledge and development styles.
Mission: Perhaps the most important features of organizational culture are mission. Organizations that do not know where they are and what their situation is, are often astray. Successful organizations have a clear understanding of their goals and direction so that define organizational goals as strategic objectives and draw vision of the organization. Bothsome organizations are organizations forced to change their mission. When an organization is forced to change its mission, changes in strategy, structure, culture and behavior is required. Strong leader in this situation determines prospects of organization and create a culture that supports the vision. This feature is evaluated by three criteria: 1) Strategic direction and intent: strategic orientation shows organizational goals direction and every person can participate in the part. 2) Goals and objectives: objectives are linked to mission strategy and view horizons and define individuals working. 3) Vision: Organization has a shared vision of the future situation. It expressed the fundamental values, thoughts and hearts along with human resources made for the same time also makes clear.

Stable spectrums- flexible and internal and external: as we saw in Dennison model this model have two vertical and horizontal axes that divide model into 4 parts. Vertical axis includes extent and type of organizational culture. This axis is ended to internal center in one hand and on the other hand is ended to external center. Horizontal axis point to organization flexibility that is ended to static culture in one hand and is ended to flexible culture on the other hand (Monavvariyan & Bakhtai, 2007).

Figure 3: Denison model of organizational culture (Denison, 2000)

CUSTOMER – ORIENTATION

Customer – orientation has various definitions whose fundamental principle is to place the clients at the strategic focus of the organization. customer –orientation means to create values for the customers. The values created leads to increased loyalty among the customers. Researchers maintain that customer orientation is thought to be one of the main principles for the organizations (Baska et al, 2008).

Customer – orientation is collection of the information related with the customer and make use of this information in trading units (Stoke and Hoyer, 2005). Customers- orientation refers to an extent to which organizations and people working in there amass their efforts on ascertaining and understanding the satisfaction factors of the customers and to the inclination and skills of the employees in the framework of their activities to encounter the customers' needs. In another definition customer orientation is a degree to which the personnel attempt to assist their customers in deciding what to buy (Brown et al, 2002). Customer – orientation is a type of organizational culture that would establish necessary behaviors for considering as valuable the customers through the most effective and efficient form (Divandari, 2005). Once companies can hold on to their own customers when they pay special attention to them. This "special attention" is a product of a customer –orientation culture. Customer - orientation is a reality beyond the phrase brought in the communiqué by the organizational mission. This is also beyond the simple belief in mottos like "always the customer is right".

This sense must be part of the views, values and attitudes of the individual employees of a unit (Shafe'ee, 2010). In various researches, the characteristics of customer – orientation are stated like the following:

First, customers' high confidence in the company, customers accept some companies that besides high products quality, engender economic profit for them (Shafe'ee, 2010).

The second characteristic is quality. To compete in today's world, companies need high quality services and goods, proficient people and a prestige among the public. Quality is known to create values added and this value added allows the companies to charge appropriate process for their products (Zhou, 2007).

Third, that customers to avoid possible losses will make new decisions. Thus, when customers look at the companies as a service provider, this impression should not be made that companies look at the customers as a permanent element. Rather, it should be born in mind
that companies only meet their customer's needs (Baska et al., 2008).

The fourth characteristic is the special attention of the companies to the shared interests of the customers. Of these interests are inclination to be respectable, inclination to be an important person, willingness to have feeling of security. Put it simply, we can say that clients are willing to have a relation with the company that could after all guarantee respect and recognition of them being as individuals; Of course, clients will very well notice the difference of the real service with some words (Shafei, 2010).

IMPLEMENTED RESEARCHES

Zare and Niromand (2008) in their study researched knowledge management and Nonaka theory elements: socialization, externalization, combination and internalization and its relationship with organizational culture in A organization. Based on study conclusion combination in the knowledge management area in high level and externalization and internalization are in other levels. In Tabibi et al. (2008) there was meaningful relationship between organizational culture and knowledge management in training center of Zanjan. Mean value established for organizational culture and knowledge management of centers was weak. The most correlation relationship was between management, individual creativity, art style, organizational belong and with knowledge management. Moharram zade et al (2008) showed in one research that organizational culture and its components by establishing knowledge management of Physical Education Department of West Azerbaijan Province of Iran have positive and meaningful relationship. Hoseini (2006) results in his thesis that organizational culture and knowledge management in Tarbiyat Moddares university have average position and there is meaningful relationship between two variables, and establishing knowledge management needs change in organizational culture, organizational culture is powerful lever in order to establishing knowledge management. Shakery (2006) in mashhad Azad University in researching position of knowledge management and its relationship with organizational culture showed that between organizational culture and internalizing there is meaningful relationship but there is no meaningful relationship between organizational culture and externalizing. Nemat(2005) states in his research that organizational culture has a key role in production, knowledge share and facilitate of knowledge management process in university. Zare’ matin et al., (2010) in a research with the subject of the relation of client-oriented organizational culture aspects for the municipality and agriculture Jihad organizations found out that the customer - orientation culture in the organization has a direct relation with the organizational structure and strategies. They also maintain that the client-oriented organizational culture will help increase the employees' performance. Sajedi esjhan(2010), demonstrated that how relations between the organizational culture and structure could be a success factor in organizations that are more customer-oriented. Kavoosi et al., (2009), began to investigate in Shiraz the customer – orientation culture from the viewpoint of educational hospitals' nurses. In this research, that was an analytical-descriptive research, the view of the nurses regarding customer –orientation culture in the educational hospitals of the Shiraz's medical sciences faculties were investigated. Ganjali(2005), at the university of Imam Sadegh investigated the design and explanation of a favorable organizational culture paradigm with a customer –oriented approach. In designing his conceptual paradigm, the patterns of organizational culture (levels, types, aspects and element of the organizational culture) were used for identifying patterns components and aspects and the features of the customer - oriented organizations in particular were applied as paradigm indices. In a research Gholamian et al. (2007), examined the role of the knowledge management in relation with customer –orientation and concluded that customer - oriented knowledge management will allow the organizations to be able to recognize emerged opportunities and to increase their own competition advantages.

Simon and Radou(2009) investigated the relation between organizational culture and knowledge management and found out that as environmental complexities increase in any of the small and medium economic units, one should more rely on knowledge as property and expansion of sources. In other words, the organizational culture acts like an intermediary between the personal knowledge and organizational knowledge. May field(2008) in his study by title of organizational culture and knowledge management in electric production state that deficiency of knowledge and its skills is a challenge in electricity production. Leinder and et al (2006) study culture role in knowledge management and concluded that organizational culture affect through affect on organization members, innovation completeness and knowledge transfer. Balthazard and Kula(2004) in an essay about organizational culture and success of knowledge management resulted that knowing organizational is essential for who design knowledge management. Because organizational culture affect on needed knowledge to design knowledge management and full cooperation and members engagement in knowledge
management. In Lawson (2003) survey relationship between organizational culture and knowledge management is researched and shows that there is positive relationship between them. Also results that organizational culture is the main prevention and influence of knowledge in organization as a property. Holowzki (2002) study the relationship between knowledge management and organizational culture and showed that as much as wisdom management is essential in obtaining competitive priority is important in defining and identifying organization strategies. Flint(2011) holds that predicting the values of the customer is a strong stimulus for the customer' satisfaction and creating loyalty in him, i.e. creating satisfaction in the customer is thought to be like an intermediary for faithfulness. Richard and Weisberg(2009) concluded that the mechanism of knowledge contribution could affect the customer–orientation. In an investigation performed on a group of people working at a communication company they concluded that explicit and implicit knowledge contribution will leave a positive effect on increased customer-orientation. Gillisp et al (2008) found out that the organizational culture has a significant impact on the customers' satisfaction. They maintain that as components of organizational culture change, management of communication with customers will become better. Willinews (2006), recognizes these aspects a combination of ideas, organizational knowledge and skills that would help propagate the culture of confidence building and obligation amongst the employees and as forming of the customer – orientation culture. Saldana (2001) introduced the aspects of the customer – oriented organizational culture as behavior of employees, attitude and policies of the organization.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

1. Knowledge management affects the organizational culture in organizations under study.
2. Knowledge management affects the increase of customer – orientation level in organizations under study.
3. Organizational culture is effective on the organizations' customer – orientation level.
4. Knowledge management through affecting the organizational culture aspects will increase the organizational customer-orientation.

METHODOLOGY

This study is descriptive and applied. Statistical community includes all employees of total public organizations and agencies of Iran. The public organizational selected as sample units are: Commercial, Finance, Housing and Urban Development, Industries and Mines with 548 staffs. Samples number were calculated by Formula Cochran that after calculation 226 person were obtained that total 190 questionnaire completed. 190 Questionnaire were analyzed.

Here, in this research to collect data, a standardized questionnaire was used that includes demographic information, organizational culture, knowledge management and customer-orientation.

Data were collected by standard questionnaire, including demographic information of samples and their view to organizational culture and knowledge management. In demographic information part, sex, age, education and history of staffs were studied. In part two that is about organizational culture four elements include: involvement, consistency, adaptability and mission with totally 35 questions. In part three that is related to knowledge management four knowledge creations, knowledge store, distribution and using knowledge were selected and totally 25 questions provided. In the fourth section of the questionnaire that is concerned with customer – orientation five components of quality of services, speed of services offering, access to services, services incurred cost and social respect an station with a total of 21 questions are provided. Five degree Likert scale was used to score questionnaire options (1= more low, 5= more high).

In order to obtaining validity test questions studied using supervisor comments and guidance and ambiguities removed. In order to obtain reliability of test questionnaire of knowledge management and organizational culture, 30 samples randomly were selected and Cronbach's alpha coefficient using SPSS calculated that obtained for organizational culture questionnaire 87% and for knowledge management questionnaire 86% and for customer – orientation questionnaire 92%, that shows internal stability and consistency.

FINDINGS

11% participants in study were women and 89% men. Age average was 21 among 20 and 30 years old, 53% between 30 and 40 years old and 26 percent were above 40 years old. Job experience of 39 percent was between 7 and 15 years and 33 percent were above 15 years. Education of 88.9 % was Bachelor degree and 10% MA and 1.1% dr.

In order to studying hypothesis in meaningfulness of statistics, firstly scores normal distribution was tested. In order to test normality of distributions, T test was used. There was meaningful
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difference between persons view to organizational culture
and knowledge management and its measures (table 1).

Table 1: T test for organizational culture, knowledge management, customer orientation and its dimensions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig</th>
<th>Mean Difference</th>
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<td></td>
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<td>2/7615</td>
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<td>2/88304</td>
<td>2/7863</td>
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<td>2/91754</td>
<td>2/8225</td>
<td>3/0126</td>
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<td>2/7491</td>
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<td>Create Knowledge</td>
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<td><strong>Customer orientation</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Quality of services</td>
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<td>0/000</td>
<td>3/67143</td>
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<td>Speed of services provision</td>
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<td>3/99474</td>
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Due to the fact that scores distribution is normal in the scale of organizational culture, knowledge, and customer - orientation and its subscales, the Pearson correlation method was used to examine the hypotheses of the research. As shown in table, 2, the estimation of the Pearson correlation coefficient tells that there is a significant relation among the organizational culture and knowledge management and customer – orientation in public organizations of the west Azerbaijan province. In other words, the highest relations is respectively the intensity between knowledge management and organizational culture (p=0/000 and r=0/82), knowledge management and customer – orientation (p=0/000 and r=0/69) and customer orientation and organizational culture (p=0/000 and r=0/74).

Table 2: Pearson correlation test

<table>
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<td>number</td>
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<td>190</td>
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<td>Customer orientation</td>
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<tr>
<td>number</td>
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Also, the analyses of the research findings provided the result, by using the AMOS software, there was a relation between knowledge management and client-orientation %97, between knowledge management and organizational culture %94 and between organizational culture and customer-orientation %85. Also, using the software the following results were obtained: Subscales of knowledge creation, %75, knowledge storage, %76, knowledge transfer, %80, knowledge application %77 are effective in establishing knowledge management. As shown in fig. 4, the subscales of getting involved in work is %73, conformity %80, adaptability is %89 and mission is %85 that affect the organizational culture. Also, the subscales of service quality %78, speed of service provision %80, access to services %63, service incurred costs %63 while social respect and station %90 all affect customer-orientation level.

Figure 4: Study model with AMOS software

![Study model with AMOS software](image)

Table 3 shows that study model has adjusted fitness index of 0.920(NFI), relative fitness index of 0.900(RFI), fitness index 0.959(IFI) and indexes compare was 0.958(CFI) that all of them are above 0.9. When these indices are near to 1, model is more worthy. RMSEA is 0.101 that this amount, shows logical deviation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>NFI Delta1</th>
<th>RFI rho1</th>
<th>IFI Delta2</th>
<th>TLI rho2</th>
<th>CFI</th>
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RMSEA

<table>
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<th>HI 90</th>
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<tr>
<td>Default model</td>
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<td>0.302</td>
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</table>
CONCLUSION

One of the biggest challenges of the 21st century is to keep customers and to create the conditions for keeping customers, it is imperative to have an advisable culture. That which is expected from a client-oriented culture is that it should feel responsible against the clients, jobs should be transferred from one part to another, an open environment for the public activities needs to be available, service provision should be done stably, and as person changes, quality of service should not change. Here, shared opinions and language should be created and feedback should always happen.

By studying organizational culture we can change interaction pattern of persons and benefit from knowledge management as a priority. Existence of weak and without flexibility culture in an organization cause that staffs fall into habit of organization and do not want innovation and will fear to transfer their knowledge and skills to others. However a dynamic culture that is known for its members reflect for quick changes and promotes organizations in development path.

Rapid advancements in the area of technology and IT have engendered the development of knowledge and management processes. Knowledge management is pivotal in collecting, transferring, exchanging and expanding knowledge. Knowledge management helps organizations to act cleverly and insightfully. As knowledge management is administered, organizational resources will be saved from destruction and the resilience of that organization will go higher.

Future looking companies have every well understood this point that their future human force will have the highest efficiency when they can use their own knowledge. Not only successful organizations have a client-oriented attitude, but also they are able to link this knowledge with their main decisions. It is imperative for the creation of a client-oriented culture that fundamental changes be done in the area of systems, procedures, organizational structure and other organizational affairs. There are various ways for changing the culture of organizations. Of these ways and trends, we can refer to the process of employee option, choosing, transferring people from one unit to the other, promotion of people, restructuring, patterns building for role play, boosting the positive behavior, and finally training. Improving the quality of providing services and easiness in the customers' access to them are of main objectives of the customer-orientation attitude. Thus, training employees, material and spiritual support for their empowerment and innovations, designating enough powers to them in the area of their responsibilities and applying their recommendations and viewpoints and finally their full satisfaction for providing services are of guidelines that are necessary reconditions to attain customer-orientation and top the list of priority to ever upgrade organizational charisma.

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