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The study of organizational behavior is an academic discipline concerned with describing, understanding, predicting, and controlling human behavior in an organizational environment. Organizational behavior has evolved from early classical management theories into a complex school of thought—and it continues to change in response to the dynamic environment and proliferating corporate cultures in which today's businesses operate. Crafting an organization that functions as efficiently as possible is a difficult task. Understanding the behavior of a single person is a challenge.

Understanding the behavior of a group of people, each one with a complex

relationship with the others in the group is an even more difficult undertaking. It is, however a worthy undertaking because ultimately the work of an organization is done through the behavior driven actions of people, individually or collectively, on their own or in collaboration with technology. Therefore, a central part of the management task is the management of organizational behavior.

### THE BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES

Organizational behavior scientists study four primary areas of behavioral science: individual behavior, group behavior, organizational structure, and organizational processes. They investigate many facets of these areas like personality and perception, attitudes and job satisfaction, group dynamics, politics and the role of leadership in the organization, job design, the impact of stress on work, decision-making processes, the communications chain, and company cultures and climates. They use a variety of techniques and approaches to evaluate each of these elements and its impact on individuals, groups, and organizational efficiency and effectiveness. The behavioral sciences have provided the basic framework and principles for the field of organizational behavior. Each behavioral science discipline provides a slightly different focus, analytical framework, and theme for helping managers answer questions about themselves, non-managers, and environmental forces.

In regard to individuals and groups, researchers try to determine why people behave the way they do. They have developed a variety of models designed to explain individuals' behavior. They investigate the factors that influence personality development, including genetic, situational, environmental, cultural, and social factors. Researchers also examine various personality types and their impact on business and other organizations. One of the primary tools utilized by organizational behavior researchers in these and other areas of study is the job satisfaction study. These tools are used not only to measure job satisfaction in such tangible areas as pay, benefits, promotional opportunities, and working conditions, but also to gauge how individual and group behavior patterns influence corporate culture, both positively and negatively.

### ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOR AND CORPORATE CULTURE

The terms "corporate culture" and "organizational behavior" are sometimes used interchangeably, but in reality, there are differences between the two. Corporate culture encompasses the shared values, attitudes, standards, and beliefs and other characteristics that define an organization's operating philosophy. Organizational behavior, meanwhile, can be

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understood in some ways as the academic *study* of corporate culture and its various elements, as well as other important components of behavior such as organization structure and organization processes. Organizational behavior is the field of study that draws on theory, methods, and principles from various disciplines to learn about *individual* perceptions, values, learning capacities, and actions while working in *groups* and within the total *organization*; analyzing the external environment's effect on the organization and its human resources, missions, objectives, and strategies. Therefore, managers need to develop diagnostic skills and be trained to identify conditions symptomatic of a problem requiring further attention. The problems to watch for include declining profits, declining quantity or quality of work, increases in absenteeism or tardiness, and negative employee attitudes. Each of these problems is an issue of organizational behavior.

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**Hillstrom, Northern Lights**

**updated by Magee, ECDI**

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