

Prologue

1. The purpose of this book is twofold

To give value for money. This is directed at all those who want to have the culture of their organization adequately analyzed.

To take the concept of organizational culture to a higher level of sophistication. This is directed at all those who want to get a better understanding of organizational culture and the way to handle it most successfully.

2. Cooperation between Geert Hofstede and the author of this book

I met Geert Hofstede in 1980 and we worked together until his death in 2020. I then translated his research results into practical applications.

Hofstede created *two models* from his research, one describing differences among national cultures and one describing organizational cultures (OC).

Over time, I created an architecture around his OC model to allow clients to measure their culture, if so desired, independently.

In order to avoid confusion between his two models, Hofstede asked me to call his OC model “Bob’s model”. There were two more reasons behind this:

- It was at my request that Hofstede conducted his second major re-search study, now in the field of organizational culture.

- As Hofstede said: “I never used the results of my research afterwards, but you have been doing so since the 1980s.”
- For that purpose, the following logo had been created with the blessing of Geert Hofstede:



3. Play your culture

The admonition “Play your culture” may sound frivolous, but that is not the intention. We believe that practitioners in this field are often burdened by failures which occur when they try to change the culture of their clients. Many people therefore claim that changing a culture for the better is an arduous task, if not an impossible one. We are, though, convinced that culture change can be conducted lightheartedly and successfully.

Much to my sorrow, many providers have apparently not thoroughly studied the concept of OC. This doesn't only apply to small management consultancy firms or obscure professors but to all those who have come up with devices to map OC.

Here is one example, without naming the firm concerned. I contacted not all that long ago the managing director of a big, prestigious management consulting firm in my country, the Netherlands. I asked him whether he would be interested in using the research results of Geert Hofstede on OC. He told me that he appreciated the work of Hofstede very much but that he first had to consult his HR department. After some time, he told me that his HR department was not interested as they wanted to develop something themselves. This wasn't the first time I'd had this response from a management consultancy firm and from HR departments and it wasn't peculiar to the Netherlands.

Below I will explain why this response reflects either ignorance or quackery, consciously or unconsciously, even though all these firms claim that their work on culture is based on scientific research.

4. The question is, what is required to assist clients to play their culture lightheartedly, though successfully?

- It is a basic requirement that “professionals” realize that cultures of organizations are reflections of one of the most complex systems on earth, if not the most complex system of all. Thus, coming up with clever questions to measure culture doesn’t suffice. Sadly so, management consultants are lucky as, due to the complexity of OC, it is hard for clients to know whether providers are giving value for money.
- Our pictures of reality are innately subjective, so we need to ask how we can get around subjectivity.
- We must be willing to learn from psychologists, most of whom have by now accepted **one model**, called **The Big Five**, to measure personalities. However, in the case of OC, there exists a plethora of models.
- Therefore, the way cultures are measured should be based on rigorous research, which is even more demanding than measuring personality characteristics. The reason for this is that a person is a less complex system than a group of individuals together.

In addition, we claim that:

- Change should be based on a solid foundation.
- Making change happen should be enjoyable, although this may not always work out for top managers.

In the different sections of Chapter 2, titled “How to Handle OC Successfully?,” I will explain the points made above.

If you feel already unsure about the question regarding which providers to use, please refer to Annex 4. There you will find questions that are suggested for you to ask potential providers (PPs) to discover whether you will get value for your money.

5. Who is this book for?

We hope this book will be read or at least be flipped through by leaders and managers, by strategists and HR managers, by management consultants and change agents, and by scholars and students:

- By leaders and managers because OC can be used as a very effective additional tool for management.
- By strategists and HR managers because strategy and culture belong together. If culture is not aligned with your strategy, realization of such strategies will remain suboptimal.
- By HR managers, because if they successfully align the company's strategies and culture, the importance of HR within the organization will be upgraded. After all, even in the century of IT, we, human beings, remain crucial, certainly for the time being.
- By management consultants and change agents to make them realize that dreaming up models or making use of their own experience does not suffice to assist clients properly.
- By scholars and students to ensure a continuous upgrading of know-how, experiences, and tools to handle the most complex system one can deal with more effectively.