On the semiosis of corporate culture

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Knowledge of corporate culture represents a powerful tool for organizations. Since the early 1980s, attempts have been made to find a more effective approach to understanding the life of an organization, particularly the cultural mindset of its executives and employees. The list of new publications devoted to organizational symbolism testifies to this new interest.

As noted by Henrik Gahmberg of the School of Administration at the University of Helsinki: 'The recent vogue of corporate culture among practising managers and the corresponding activity of studies on organizational symbolism with the organization and management field may be interpreted as indicators of a longer shift in attitude and research paradigm' (Gahmberg 1989: 1).

A new school of thought has developed in current strategic management research, based on the analysis of corporate culture. Thévenet, Schein, Deal, and Kennedy are among the best representatives of this trend. Corporate culture has become a tool for operationalizing changes within organizations.

Both organizational development theory and corporate transformation have referred to the concept of corporate culture, and now this field has emerged in its own right. The importance of understanding one's culture for successful and effective communication is a recurring theme throughout the literature.

The present article deals with the engineering of executive culture and illustrates how this culture can be used as a tool for strategic management.

The concept of corporate culture

In the past few years I have had the opportunity to study in depth the subculture of senior executives working as assessors in the Career Assignment Program. I have been working with 10 women and 41 men (Boily