

The Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument (OCAI)

The 'Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument' (OCAI) developed by Kim Cameron and Robert Quinn is a validated research method to examine organizational culture.

Much research went into the development of the OCAI. The American professor Robert Quinn and his colleague Kim Cameron developed the model of the Competing Values Framework. This framework consists of four Competing Values that correspond with four types of organizational culture.

Every organization has its own mix of these four types of organizational culture. This mix is found by the completion of a short questionnaire. This questionnaire is a valid method to indicate handles for change. The OCAI is currently used by 10,000 companies worldwide.

OCAI-questionnaire

The participant is asked to divide 100 points over four alternatives that correspond to the four culture types, according to the present organization. This method measures the mix of or extent to which one of the four culture types dominates the present organizational or team culture. By taking the test a second time, this time dividing the 100 points over the same alternatives according to what the participant would like to see in the company, the desire for change can be measured.

The questionnaire can be found in the appendix.

Participants will judge the six dimensions of their organization:

1. **Dominant Characteristics** (what the overall organization is like)
2. **Organizational Leadership** (leadership style and approach that permeate the organization)
3. **Management of Employees** (the style that characterizes how employees are treated and what the working environment is like)
4. **Organizational Glue** (bonding mechanisms that hold the organization together)
5. **Strategic emphases** (emphases that define what areas of emphasis drive the organization's strategy)
6. **Criteria of success** (success that determine how victory is defined and what gets rewarded and celebrated)

The results

From Quinn and Cameron's extensive research it was found that most organizations have developed a dominant culture-style. An organization rarely has only one culture type. Often there is a mix of the four organizational cultures.

Conflicts within the Competing Values Framework may be caused by the fact that the values and the corresponding organizational cultures compete with each other. This is because organizations can spend their money, attention and time only once.

Quinn and Cameron found that organizations which are flexible in their structure are most effective, which sometimes leads to contradictions within the organization. The 'best' organizations can handle competition within this framework well.

Every culture type works best in the activities domain corresponding to that particular culture type. So sometimes there is no ultimate 'best' organizational culture, although a specific type may be better than others in particular situations.

How to utilize the OCAI

Organizations use the OCAI for different reasons.

- The OCAI will provide you with an impression of what the staff considers important.
In that sense it can be used to gauge whether employees are content.
- The OCAI can also be used as a zero measurement preceding any company changes.
Once these changes have been made, a second assessment can be performed.
- The OCAI helps to improve internal communication, if different cultures are mapped between different departments or locations.
- The OCAI is a useful tool in mergers or reorganizations
- The OCAI can also be used if there is a high staff turnover or absence through illness.