

Organizational Science Abroad

Constraints and Perspectives

Organizing consists of making other people work. We do this by manipulating symbols: words, exhortations, memos, charts, signs of status. We expect these symbols to have the desired effects on the people concerned. The success of our organizing activities depends on whether the others do attach to our symbols the meanings we expect them to. Whether or not they do so is a function of what I have sometimes called "the programs in their minds" - their learned ways of thinking, feeling, and reacting - in short, a function of their culture. The assumption that organizations could be culture-free is naive and myopic; it is based on a misunderstanding of the very act of organizing. Certainly, few people who have ever worked abroad will make this assumption. The dependence of organizations on their people's mental programs does not mean, of course, that we do not find many similarities across organizations. Some characteristics of human mental programming are universal; others are shared by most people in a continent, a country, a region, an industry, a scientific discipline, or even a gender.

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