

The New Normal

For Twisha it was a fair day as she moved out of the interview room facing a grilling round by a panel of experts. She had mixed feelings about the interview and the organization too. Twisha was confident and smart with great interpersonal and communication skills, she was a self-made person and had gone through a lot of ups and down in life but she felt, ultimately those experiences made her a stronger person. She was different from her group of friends wherein most of her friends chose to get married at an early age, she chose career as her priority and her enthusiasm was relentless. Though she felt she has been quite strict with herself and underestimated her capabilities and at times wondered if she has the Imposter Syndrome and then would laugh at it. She had been working for almost 9 years and took a break after getting married. Shifting to a completely new city with a culture which was quite different from what she had been brought up in. Before getting married she had managed to grab a job in her dream company and that was quite an achievement for her. But somehow her relationship with her former manager turned sour and that took quite a toll on her mental wellbeing and confidence. This new phase of her life gave her new hopes and aspirations and now after her break she started looking for a job.

It was her third visit to this company. Sitting in the cab going for her final round of interview she pondered over her last two experiences with this company. Her second meeting with the management was not very pleasing and she felt them to be a bit rude, but she ignored the fact and assumed it to be a part of a stress interview. She was recalling the day when on a hot afternoon, alone in her house, scrolling down the website of a Job Portal she came across a vacancy of a senior sales executive. This was the profile she was looking for as she wanted to shift from her previous profile and try her hand in what she was more interested in, so she grabbed the opportunity and applied for it and soon she got a call.

It was her first day in the office and she was shown her cabin by the HR head. She showed her around and introduced her to people around, it couldn't be called a very warm welcome but then she refrained from making any prejudice and talked to everyone around. Couple of days passed and she noticed that people rarely talked to each other each one had a group of their own and confined themselves to that group. They would often order eatables to their own cabins and would rarely go the cafeterias, they would sit in front of their screens for the entire day and would stay back for long even after the work hours. She reminisced about her coffee breaks, funny chats and gossips, team lunches, festival celebrations that were more of stress busters. In no time Twisha made friends in her new office as well and became a part of them, even she would order coffee on her desk, work for long hours and kept her experiences more to herself. She was happy about the fact that her productivity has improved as the company was very cautious about their product quality and development and they had developed it as their competitive advantage and hence they were able to maintain goodwill in the market and this made her more conscious about her work and learnings though at times it would be a bit taxing as there were a lot of last moment decisions made and surprise elements which would lead to stress but she was learning to handle it as well.

Everything was going well and she was adjusting to the new environment when the deadly Covid 19 pandemic hit the entire world and officially hit India and India reported its first Covid 19 case on 30th January, 2020. There was an entire lockdown from March, 2020 onwards and the entire world stopped, like nature took an official break from people. Masks, sanitisers and work from home was the new normal. Where there were some who got a break from their hectic schedule, for Twisha and her colleagues it became tougher as the workload increased and everyone got almost no time to adjust to the new ways of doing everything virtually. The struggle was not only on the professional front, it was equally at the personal front too. Everyone was concerned for their family's safety and well-being, one had to stand in long queues to get even the basic, barely available groceries and medical facilities. Amongst all this, companies were laying off or resorting to pay cuts, things were no different with Twisha's company either. She decided to stay with the company and not give up on them as everyone was going through circumstances that were unavoidable. Twisha, her colleagues and their boss had frequent long meetings after the work hour where they would discuss the further course of action and how one can go about it and bring new business to the company. She gave her best and worked day and night, office timings were diluted and there were no transitions from work to home or home to work. She would see other people posting screenshots of video calls with their colleagues and friends but here to her amazement no one would talk to each other or ask about each other's well-being like they were least bothered or even happier without meeting each other, all this was a bit disappointing for her, it was more of a cultural shock. Though she was getting better at her work, deep down she was not happy, she tried but could not find any sort of connect with the organisation or the people she was working with. She wondered what she should do, look for another job or simply accept it as the new normal and adjust to the culture.

Questions

1. With suitable justification, specify what you would do in this situation if you were Twisha?
2. Outline the various dimensions of employee attitude and artifacts of organisational culture evident in the case above.

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