Organizational Life Style Analysis as an Assessment Tool
for Organizational Health and Effectiveness

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Abstract

This study is introducing the application of adapted constructs of the Adlerian Style of Life or Life Style Analysis, to assess the culture of an organization, and to correlate those characteristics with the overall health and effectiveness observed and measured within an organization.

The Organizational Life Style Analysis, a framework originally designed by Dr. William J. Premo (2008) for his Organizational Lifestyle class at Adler Graduate School, is intended to uncover the underlying behavior and interpretation patterns of the organization in a similar way that the traditional Adlerian Life Style Analysis uncovers the framework in which we as individuals interpret experience, control experience through goal oriented private and social behavior, and predict experience, based on previously created convictions. The Organizational Life Style unites the organization, and indicates how the organization makes creative use of resources and subjective understandings to behave in the world.

The first goal of this work is to demonstrate the Organizational Life Style Assessment tool and methodology to uncover the organization’s Life Style, or its self-defining, guiding action that shows the line of movement or direction for the organization. The overarching Life Style of the organization in this study is derived from information gathered via interview, survey, corporate data and documentation, as well as observation, which then is analyzed based on an organizational version of the four Life Style constructs: self-concept (organizational concept), self-ideal (organizational ideal), weltbilt (environmental views) and ethical convictions.

The second goal of this study is to utilize the Life Style data to define further the underlying cultural aspects of the Life Style, providing new insight into strengths and issues, either existing or potential, within the organization. These insights are intended to assist in
guiding strategic improvement efforts. This portion of analysis includes the examination of two types of alignment regarding the previously defined Life Style constructs; the alignment and misalignment within the themes in each particular construct, as well as between constructs. Alignment issues, in the individual Life Style analyses, are believed to indicate maladaptive or unhealthy issues within the individual thus are predicted also to uncover issues within an organization.

The third goal of the study is to use the data collected for the Life Style Analysis to explore cultural and behavioral patterns that may affect the effectiveness of the organization, discussed as “organizational health” to correspond with healthy use of convictions found within the Life Style.
I. Introduction

The study of organizational culture has gained popularity in the last decade, as it has become evident that the culture of the organization is a defining factor of not only how it operates, but whether it succeeds in its particular sector, various economic conditions and other circumstances. A holistic method needs to be used in order to uncover the conscious as well as the less conscious organizational culture, incorporate the environmental factors in that analysis, and make that data valuable to the organization by recognizing underlying issues and inconsistencies that can present opportunities for improvement.

The study of personality and human motivation, when initially introduced into medicine and therapeutic practices faced the same challenge. The questions of “What makes a person live the way he does?” and “What motivates an individual’s behavior patterns?” have spurred various theories and practical methodologies that have been tested over the past decades.

The characteristics of an organization’s culture and the potential for improvement can be defined by the manner in which an organization carries out its everyday operations, working toward a goal and relevance in a certain industry. This concept mirrors closely an individual’s potential for improvement in his “way of being” in the world, working towards personal goals for significance, security and belonging in his life and the world around him.

The creation and practical utilization of personality theories with the goal of improving individual, socio-psychological health has been proven useful in modern society (Diamond, 1993). Similarly, though more recent and with less depth of study to date, the construct development, research and utilization of organizational culture theories are embarked upon with a clear purpose of notably improving organizational functioning and performance.
Introduction to the Organizational Life Style

With these similarities in mind, this study is introducing the application of an adapted version of a well-researched and much utilized individual psychotherapy methodology, the Adlerian Style of Life or Life Style Analysis, (Sperry & Carlson, 1995) to assess the culture of an organization and to correlate those characteristics with the reported effectiveness of an organization. The Organizational Life Style Analysis, a framework originally designed by Dr. William Premo (2008), may be utilized to uncover the underlying behavior and interpretation patterns of the organization the same way that the traditional Adlerian Life Style Analysis uncovers the framework in which we as individuals interpret experience, control experience through goal oriented private and social behavior, and predict experience, based on previously created convictions.

The Organizational Life Style unites the organization, and indicates how the organization makes creative use of resources and subjective understandings to behave in the world.

The first goal of this work is to demonstrate the Organizational Life Style Assessment tool and methodology. The purpose of the tool is to uncover the organization’s Life Style, or its self-defining, guiding action that shows the line of movement or direction for the organization. This analysis tool consists of four primary processes: (1) collection of data pertaining to the Organizational Life Style constructs, explained below, (2) organization of data into the Life Style Grid, shown in Figure 2, to determine primary themes within each construct, (3) summarizing each set of themes into convictions as well as a “Defining Statement” for each construct that serves as a summarized conviction for comparative analysis and (4) use the statements to provide the basis of overarching themes recognized within the organization as representative of its Life Style, or culture.
The analysis is based on the four Life Style constructs, self-concept, self-ideal, weltbält (world view) and ethical convictions. These are translated to Organizational terms: Organizational Concept, Organizational Ideal, Environmental Views, and Ethical Convictions. These Adlerian terms and their organizational counterparts are detailed in Section II and in Table 1. These four constructs are organized into the Organizational Life Style Grid for analysis, per Figure 1.

**Figure 1.** Organizational Life Style Grid incorporating the four Life Style constructs for analysis, to document and compare the underlying themes influencing the organization.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organizational Concept</th>
<th>Environmental Views</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Who are we?”</td>
<td>“Industry, market and impacts around us”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Ideal</td>
<td>Ethical Convictions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Who/How should we be?”</td>
<td>“Values we strive to uphold, ethics we personify”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Various methods are used to collect the data to incorporate into the Organizational Life Style Grid for analysis, including formal interviews, surveys, and a review of corporate communications and materials. The questions, tools, and focus of data collection are centered on the Organizational Life Style constructs, through organizational history gathering from individuals, such as narrative truths and critical moments, as well as observation of materials and the physical work environment, such as physical space and corporate artifacts (Diamond, 1993). When these results are collected and organized, the grid becomes a set of data elements, per the summary example in Figure 2.
Figure 2. Example of a Populated Organizational Life Style Grid as an example of how collected organizational data may apply to each construct.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organizational Concept</th>
<th>Environmental Views</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quickly growing company</td>
<td>Industry is...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leader in its industry</td>
<td>Competitive for customers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highly competitive</td>
<td>- quickly changing dynamic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characterized by high technology</td>
<td>- expect full solution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quickly changing organization</td>
<td>Competitive for human resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- qualified people in high demand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- recruiting, interviewing, hiring very costly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Long, competitive sales cycle</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organizational Ideal</th>
<th>Ethical Convictions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Industry Leader</td>
<td>Trust among colleagues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profitability high</td>
<td>Openness, honesty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High client satisfaction</td>
<td>Integrity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovation: creativity, risk-taking, pride, collaboration</td>
<td>Mutual Respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Direct Communications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Employees and customers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>listened to and valued</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Once the constructs are populated with collected data elements, the primary Organizational Life Style conviction summaries and Defining Statements are created from patterns within the data set. Shown in Figure 3, the convictions are the primary themes that have resulted from the mass collection of data, as the most pronounced and repeated themes to consider during analysis. The Defining Statements are summary statements that describe the underlying situation, belief and/or uncovered needs interpreted from the set of Convictions.

Figure 3. Sample of Organizational Life Style Convictions and Defining Statements Worksheet used to organize summary statements, to define further major themes underlying the organization’s culture or Life Style.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constructs</th>
<th>Organizational Concept</th>
<th>Organizational Ideal</th>
<th>Environmental Views</th>
<th>Ethical Convictions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Convictions</td>
<td>We are structurally aligned with our goals</td>
<td>People shouldn’t be leaving our organization</td>
<td>We must be highly competitive</td>
<td>Employees should be treated well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Autocratic and working from the top-down</td>
<td>We should have clear goals</td>
<td>We are currently below industry standards</td>
<td>Employees should be trusted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>We are the leader in the process-control industry</td>
<td>Decision-making should be more collaborative</td>
<td>We have a long sales-cycle and need back-log to survive</td>
<td>We should follow through on commitments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>We are resistant to change</td>
<td>We should meet our goals</td>
<td>Customers deserve to have their needs met</td>
<td>Employees should be happy at our organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defining Statements</td>
<td>Our leadership is more focused on market opportunities than employees and customers</td>
<td>We should have an organizational culture that allows us to stay ahead of our sales goals, and keep good employees</td>
<td>To stay alive and remain #1 in the industry, we need to attract and retain the best people.</td>
<td>Employees and customers are our most critical assets.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From these summaries the organization’s Life Style is determined. The organization then has the opportunity to recognize as well as validate or change the unconscious set of dynamic, goal-oriented behavior patterns and guidelines that have been established in order to strive towards its goals.

The second goal of this study is to utilize the Life Style data to uncover new insight into strengths and organizational effectiveness issues within the organization by analyzing two types of alignment regarding these Life Style constructs. The Defining Statements noted above not only uncover inconsistencies within a certain construct, but also may be utilized for cross-construct analysis. First, the alignment within each construct is analyzed to consider inconsistent messages regarding the same topics or constructs. Some inconsistency between responses is expected, as each individual has his or her own unique perspective and often
these differences are predictably varied, however the more pronounced perspective
differences between individuals and teams may shed additional light on cultural aspects
within the organization as well.

Second, the intra-organization alignment represents the alignment between the
constructs as consistent with actual behavior and direction throughout the organization, per
Figure 4. This alignment is often indicative of the consistency between communication and
behavior, as may be expressed as “walking their talk.”

Figure 4. Intra-organizational alignment areas, which compare the results of the
specified constructs in order to uncover inconsistencies, represent potential issues within the
organization’s culture.

The primary purpose of the Adlerian Life Style is to uncover perception and behavior
motivation issues that affect the individual’s ability to function in a healthy, socially
responsible way throughout life. The periods in life during which one’s Life Style is most
pronounced are when an individual is under stress. Likewise with an organization, the periods
of time when an organization is under strain is when the organization’s core values and
convictions are most visible. The organization’s ability to adapt while also relying on well-
defined and understood goals and values is imperative for the organization’s success.
The third goal of this study is to utilize the Life Style and alignment data to analyze overall health and effectiveness of the organization. Though organizational health is not a standard descriptor used, the term health is used in this study to correlate with healthy use of Life Style convictions and other indicators of well-being for an organization.

Of course, the findings for constructs in an Organization’s Life Style are affected by personal beliefs, values and lifestyles. These individual perceptions play a heavy part in the collective assessment. These factors are considered and noted in the results, but not measured in particular for individual-organizational alignment.

Assumptions and Limitations

It is assumed that the 14 interviewees and 77 survey participants across the organization were honest and straightforward with their responses. Confidentiality documentation and counseling interview methods were used for the interviews, and the surveys were completed anonymously.

The limitations of this study include the fact that only one organization is represented, so future studies of varying organizations in different industry sectors, of varying sizes need to be done to examine more deeply this methodology. Also important to note is that this organization has a dynamically changing executive leadership team within which over half of the members are less than two years at the company, including the Chief Executive Officer.

The actual financial and sales performance data for this organization were not made available for purposes of analysis and therefore not taken into consideration, though general references to this information within the various data collection tools, such as interview and survey responses, were considered as perceptions of performance.

Lastly, this researcher is a long-term employee at this organization, and is aware
of the potential for bias and concern regarding openness of responses from participants. The researcher created various ways in which subjective answers were documented and classified with minimal interpretation of actual responses and oversight of the reading professor. Also, confidentiality documentation was utilized to assure the respondents that their responses would be held in strict confidence.
II. A Review of Organizational Culture, Life Style and Health Constructs

Organizational Culture

An assessment of an organization’s culture is an important tool to discover underlying characteristics that may promote, inhibit or otherwise affect a particular organization’s health and performance (Wilkins, 1983; Langan-Fox & Tan, 1995; Schein, 1993). As the culture of an organization is more of an undercurrent of the organization’s members’ way-of-being and is influenced by each individual’s unique perception and interpretation of events in that atmosphere, it is a difficult concept to measure and, subsequently, prove its usefulness to the organization and its members (Rentsch, 1990). Organizational culture needs to be explored in the context of characteristics that affect an organization’s results for its measurement to be a quality use of time and energy by an applicable organization.

The variance of definitions between experts in organizational culture is at least somewhat due to the broad nature of culture, and its role in the social environment. Considering the various definitions of culture in three layers provides a simplified framework in which to peel back the complexities of what culture is. The layers are (1) the phenomenon of culture, (2) the underlying components or constructs of culture, and (3) the manifestation of culture in more visible, conscious form by its leaders, members and related entities.
Layer 1, Culture as Phenomenon

First, culture is often defined as a phenomenon, in terms of how it is developed, perpetuated and how it differs from less adhering, transactional characteristics in a societal group or organization. The mode of cultural development and existence is unique in that it is psychologically constructed by a group’s members due to their natural search for cognitive order, and is very resistant to change (Hofstede et al., 1990; Langan-Fox & Tan, 1997; Wiener, 1988). Also, culture may be explained in terms of its distinctive purpose within society, which is to provide a shared perspective and meaning for better societal organization (Wiener, 1988).

Grounded with a clear understanding of the phenomenon of culture, the components of culture represent the next layer of definition.

Layer 2, Organizational Identity, Underlying Culture

The components of culture that have served as unique identifiers for a particular group’s cultural characteristics, as well as key measures of a culture’s strength or pervasiveness, may be categorized in the following four interrelated components, (a) shared assumptions or understandings, (b) common beliefs, (c) shared values, and (d) resulting attitude and behavioral standards (Rentsch, 1990; Schein, 1993; Wiener, 1988). See Figure 5 for pictorial diagram.
These components describe organizational identity, which is explained by Diamond as the “unconscious foundation of organizational culture” (1993, p.77). The organizational identity incorporates repetitive patterns of behavior of individuals within the organization as well as interpersonal behavior that unconsciously determine the organization’s unique meaning of organizational life. Though conscious behavior and thought impact the organizational identity, the identity itself is mainly comprised of and motivated by unconscious thoughts, emotions, and beliefs.

Collective identity (Lorda & Brown, 2001) describing the formation of an individual’s social identity in relation to an organization due to values underlying the group as well as the individual is one aspect of culture that would be observed within this layer.

Examples of how these sometimes conscious and sometimes less conscious aspects of the organization’s culture display themselves include style of humor in the organization, (Diamond, 1993) informally developed modes of addressing members at differing hierarchical levels and expression of or avoidance of conflict considered acceptable (Schein, 1993).

Layer 3, Conscious and Physical Cultural Manifestations

Third, the conscious and potentially deliberate manifestations of culture must not be ignored as leaders and physical environments, both obvious and less apparent, are major determinants of a group’s unique cultural dynamic (Lorda & Brown, 2001). Artifacts, publicly defined standards, and purposeful communication styles are some cultural facets that enable the demonstration and, possibly, the articulation of those less conscious cultural descriptors for a unique group or organization (Schein, 1993; Diamond, 1993).

More deliberate displays of culture in an organization are often intended to drive behavior or at least perceived acceptance of actions, but can easily be overridden by the less conscious, second layer of culture referenced as organizational identity. This inconsistency
may be evident with comments such as “The Company seems to say one thing but do another”.

While measuring culture with the goal of providing value to its members and interacting entities, a notable consideration of organizational culture is that there is not a single culture that represents the “right” culture for all organizations, rather it depends completely on the goals, purpose and industry area of the organization (Hofstede, et al., 1990, Langan-Fox & Tan, 1997).

**Life Style Assessment**

The organizational assessment tool in this study is derived from a number of primary constructs of Life Style, a term used in the theoretical framework of Individual Psychology, developed by Alfred Adler (1870-1937). In the term Individual Psychology, representing Adlerian psychoanalytic approaches, individual does not represent the opposite of group, but is rather derived from its Latin root, meaning indivisible (Sperry & Carlson, 1995). The primary concept encompasses unity and wholeness, and the individuality of a person (Manaster & Corsini, 1993). This theoretical framework is used in various areas of counseling, including individual, family, and group settings. The translation to organizational use is not stretching far out of its theoretical boundaries. Individual Psychology is centered on the belief that an individual, though guided by internally derived perceptions and beliefs, is dramatically influenced by and cannot exist completely separately from the environment, systems and circumstances around him (Lemonides, 2007).

Life Style has been defined as “the subjective, unarticulated set of guidelines individuals develop and use to move them through life and toward their goals” (Mosak and Maniaci, 1999, p. 47). The definition from Strauch, 2003, integrates additional detail to articulate the elements of life style. “A lifestyle, then, is a dynamic, goal-oriented pattern that
remains constant during a person’s life, unites all aspects of a person, and reflects how a person makes creative use of the subjective understanding of his or her surroundings” (p. 455). Similar to individuals, organizations are also guided by a constant striving toward particular goals, shared subjective understandings, and dynamic surroundings that affect their ability to survive in a challenging and changing environment. These characteristics likewise determine an Organization’s Life Style.

The primary goal of a Life Style assessment in Individual Psychology is not merely to uncover this unique and dynamic pattern of living in general, but more purposefully to recognize and define underlying issues, such as mistaken convictions and feelings of inferiority. These issues may result in maladaptive behavior, influencing the individual’s ability to live their life in a healthy way (Shulman & Mosak, 1995; Manaster & Corsini, 1993). This insight then supports the process of redefining or reorienting recognized mistakes in the individual’s life to enable the formation of more healthy patterns of thought and behavior. In families, this similar process has been used to support the formation of improved inter-personal relationships and a well-adjusted, encouraging environment (Oberst & Stewart, 2003; Manaster & Corsini). The utilization of the Life Style tools in families provides additional evidence that the organizational life style has the potential to provide insight and ideas for improvement.

A list of various constructs and terms used in Individual Psychology, especially associated with the use of Life Style in this study in particular, are defined in Table 1. The full Life Style assessment techniques and tools are broad, and are not intended to be detailed or used in this study. The particular components that are adapted for organizational assessment purposes, however, are defined here.
In Individual Psychology, one key term especially associated with the Life Style is conviction, which represents a fundamental belief that has much impact on an individual’s perceptions, interpretations and behaviors in life (Oberst & Stewart, 2003; Mosak & Maniacci, 1999). The four primary convictions or belief sets defined by Mosak which make up the Life Style are (a) self-concept, (b) self-ideal, (c) weltbilt (German for “picture of the world”) and (d) ethical convictions (Mosak & Maniacci; Shulman & Mosak, 1995).

For the purposes of this study, these and other Adlerian terms are translated from individual to organizational in reference to the entity being assessed. Table 1 refers to the corresponding organizationally applied terms, as well as similar terms historically used in organizational development and related industries.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adlerian Term</th>
<th>Brief Definitions (Mosak &amp; Maniacci, 1999; Oberst &amp; Stewart, 2003)</th>
<th>Organizational Term</th>
<th>Correlative Business/ Industry Terms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Life Style</td>
<td>Patterns of thinking, acting and perceiving that guide an individual’s operations throughout life</td>
<td>Organizational Life Style</td>
<td>Organizational/Corporate Culture, Organizational Identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convictions</td>
<td>Psychological constructs, belief sets, which guide an individual’s perceptions, attitudes and behaviors, and form the Life Style</td>
<td>Organizational Convictions</td>
<td>Organizational Values, Standards, Norms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-concept</td>
<td>The individual’s set of convictions regarding how he perceives himself, including value sets</td>
<td>Organizational concept</td>
<td>Organizational Values, “Strengths and Weaknesses” of SWOT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Ideal</td>
<td>The individual’s set of convictions regarding her desired self, or how she should be</td>
<td>Organizational ideal</td>
<td>Mission, Rules of Conduct, Market-facing portrayal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fictional Goal</td>
<td>The unconsciously defined goal that gives direction and meaning to an individual’s life (Mosak &amp; Maniacci, 1999, equate to self-ideal)</td>
<td>Underlying goal</td>
<td>Vision, Interest (alignment), Organizational Goals</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>driving the organization’s beliefs and behaviors</td>
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Table 1

*List of Adlerian or Individual Psychology Terms and Organizational Equivalents*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weltbilt/Worldview</th>
<th>The individual’s set of convictions about things outside of the self, as in world, other people, etc.</th>
<th>Environmental Views</th>
<th>Competitive Landscape, Industry “Opportunities/Threats” components of SWOT Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethical Convictions</td>
<td>The convictions which represent an individual’s moral and ethical “right-or-wrong” beliefs</td>
<td>Ethics Ethical Standards, Rules of Conduct</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Interest</td>
<td>Innate ability within an individual to belong to, engage with and feel connected with others, the environment and the world</td>
<td>Social Interest - (components) Perceived Organizational Support, Commitment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mistaken Convictions, Overcompensation, Inferiority, Complex</td>
<td>These terms represent various issues within the Life Style and resulting attitudes and behaviors that impede the individual’s adaptability, encouragement, and socially interested functioning.</td>
<td>Misaligned Vision or goal</td>
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</table>
Self-concept as organizational concept

The organizational concept is derived from the Adlerian self-concept, which represents how an individual perceives one’s self. The self-concept not only represents a general idea of oneself, such as “I am a middle-aged American male” but also many other subsets including self-esteem ideas and self-as-object beliefs, or how things affect oneself, allowing individuals to see themselves from all angles and through various value lenses (Shulman & Mosak, 1995; Mosak & Maniacci, 1999; Oberst & Stewart, 2003).

This concept may appear at first to be simply about the self, but the social context of these perceptions and convictions about the self, since an individual does not exist without context, are also relevant. Not only are the convictions themselves formed, related and compared within the social context but also interrelationship influences abound in that most individuals unconsciously assume that others have the same convictions as well (Mosak & Maniacci).

An organizational concept, then, represents the collective view of the organization, its members and its place in the world, held by members themselves. This view largely determines their expectations and norms within the organization, as well as, potentially, expectations of other entities outside the organization.

In literature pertaining to organizational culture, the corresponding constructs most closely resembling this organizational concept include certain aspects of the Organizational Value System (Wiener, 1988). Two aspects of these value systems, according to Wiener, are the focus and the source of values. The focus may be functional (based on conduct, operational dynamics and behavioral standards) or elitist (status and importance of the organization, especially relative to other organizations and in society in general.)
Self-ideal as organizational ideal

The self-ideal refers to the expectations or standards an individual has set for one self. This ideal is formed out of learned values as well as feelings of inferiority, and motivates a person to move toward those self-ideal goals (Mosak & Maniaci, 1999). These self-ideal beliefs may be described in statements such as “In order for others to see me as significant, I should/should not…” or “If I am to belong in this group, I should/should not (be)…”.

These goals reflect another very core concept in Individual Psychology, which is Teleology, or goal-oriented striving. The self-ideal presents various levels of an individual’s fictional goals or subjective achievements perceived as required for the individual to belong or have a place in the world. These goals drive the individual’s actions, perceptions and beliefs throughout life (Mosak & Maniaci, 1999; Oberst & Stewart, 2003). The deep-seated fictional goals may be largely unconscious. For example, it would be uncommon to hear someone describe their goal as “In order for me to have a significant place in this world, I must be the best in everything I do,” but one may hear goals such as “I should not let people see me fail” or “If I can’t win this, I may as well just give up.”

To translate this construct to an organization, it is clear that organizations typically have openly stated and universally understood goals of performance and success in their industry. Also, the marketing efforts may encompass their comparative image goals such as “the experts in the industry” or “the most cost-effective producers” to establish a perception internally and externally regarding their ideal way of being and presenting themselves.

What may be less obvious are the fundamental organizational ideals that represent an undercurrent of member expectations of the members within and between teams. Examples of these beliefs may be “We [each member] should win every single court case to be the best” or “We should never have a customer mad at us for making avoidable mistakes.” Though they
may not be stated deliberately, these ideal convictions drive behavior and decisions as well as treatment of others within and outside of the organization.

**Weltbilt or environmental views**

Individual Psychology is heavily focused on the social aspect of life, in that an individual exists in a social context - a world, a community, a family - and is required to adapt to survive in that social context. Some, though not all, of the key Adlerian references to a person’s functioning in that social context include Social-Field Theory, how an individual sees or situates himself in the world (Mosak & Maniacci, 1999); Holism, the fact that the individual is creator and actor in a larger picture in relation to others; and Social Interest, which refers to every human’s capacity and psychological need to belong to, participate in and contribute to the greater social spectrum in some useful, positive way (Oberst & Stewart, 2003).

In an organizational sense, then, an organization does not exist merely in and of itself, but rather is heavily influenced by external factors, must recognize the need for adaptability and would likely benefit from the recognition of its place and belonging in the larger social context. In other words, if external or social factors actually affecting the organization, such as the environment, industry and present circumstances, are not constantly taken into consideration, even an extremely strong and aligned culture may become a liability under certain circumstances or when the environment changes (Hofstede, et al., 1990).

Thus, the environmental component influencing culture, in addition to the internal characteristics of what has traditionally been considered “culture,” must be included to ensure the assessment is useful to each particular organization in its unique time, place and circumstance. The environment and the organization are mutually interdependent (Lemonides, 2007).
Ethical convictions

In an in-depth study of organizational value systems, Wiener, 1988, asserted that the organizational value system has the same effect on an organization as an individual’s values with regard to resulting intentions or goals, strategies and behaviors. This organizational value system is viewed as a set of key values with regard to the norms and standards around socially acceptable behaviors within the organization (Wiener, 1988; Lorda & Brown, 2001). In addition to the particular socially shared values themselves, the extent to which members of the organization share those values and are guided by them in their daily business activities is a telling characteristic of an organization’s culture (Wiener, 1988). Vandenberghe and Peiro, (1999), on the other hand, asserted that the actual correlation between a member’s individual values and the organizational values had marginal effects on the member’s attitude toward the organization, but the member’s perception of the organization’s values in terms of justice, support and commitment, were significant in terms of value preferences and attitudinal ratings. The latter set of beliefs could be seen more as ethically driven preferences versus standards and norms in general.

Differing from the traditionally examined organizational values constructs, and more closely resembling the true individual value constructs, the Ethical Convictions construct in the Organizational Life Style is more appropriately explained as the moral and “right-or-wrong” value system held by the organization. Also like the individual ethical conviction, this does not necessarily mean that actual conduct, attitudes and decision-making standards of an organization operate in alignment with the convictions (Mosak & Maniaci, 1999).

Engelbrecht, et al. (2005) discussed ethical climate of an organization, described as “the moral atmosphere of a social system characterized by shared perceptions of right and wrong” (p. 20). It expands beyond perceptions to also develop assumptions about how the
organization addresses moral issues, such as accountability, regulation, and the welfare of stakeholders. Claiming that the creation of the ethical climate starts with the leaders of the organization, the key ethical convictions used to analyze leadership characteristics included altruism, or genuine concern for others before oneself, and integrity, the consistency between ethical principals of honesty and sincerity and behavior. Though it is out of scope for this study to analyze leadership characteristics in particular, these two concepts, altruism and integrity, are considered within the analysis overall as key descriptors of perceived ethical beliefs and behaviors.

Therefore, though many may equate ethical convictions to organizational values, and alignment of these to person-organization value fit, this is not entirely the case. References to organizational values are more appropriately spread between organizational concept, organizational ideal and, only to a limited extent, ethical convictions. Organizational Ethical Convictions refer very specifically to the value sets regarding specifically moral right-or-wrong qualifying characteristics.

Alignment

Member-organization alignment

Individual alignment with an organization’s goals, values and interests has been the topic of various studies, primarily focused on individual-team or individual-organizational alignment in one of these areas. Interest alignment, the degree of alignment between an individual’s interests with the goals of an organization, was the focus of study by Gottschalg and Zollo (2007) to determine impacts on competitive performance. The concept of Goal Setting Theory (Locke & Latham, 1990) is focused on performance enhancements related to the setting, agreement and commitment of individuals, groups and organizations to specific task-oriented goals.
Alignment of individual and organizational values is another factor often studied. In the previously mentioned study by Vandenbergh and Peiro (1999) the actual concurrence of individuals’ values with those of the organization, referred to as person-organization value fit, was less indicative of employees’ commitment to the organization than how they perceived organizational values and their relative importance to the individual. Alignment, then, may be interpreted as *consistency* or *concurrence*, in which an individual’s goals or values match those of the organization or team; or alignment may be considered as an individual’s *understanding* and *acceptance* of perceived organizational values as important and appropriate for the organization.

The latter form of alignment, understanding and accepting the organization’s values, interests and beliefs, is the interpretation of member-organization alignment that is considered in this study. Though each individual’s alignment with organizational values will not be studied directly, the alignment between various members in terms of their response to the same questions will be examined when determining the defining characteristics in the Organizational Life Style. The subjective opinions relating to certain consistent ideas, but concluded as positive or negative depending on the individual, will be discussed as well.

*Intra-organization alignment*

The concept of alignment that has been less explored in organizations is the alignment between the various constructs, such as goals, values, interest and behavior as well their appropriateness within an organization’s current context and environment (Lemonides, 2007). This form of intra-organization alignment may be viewed as an organization’s consistency between message or commitment, and behavior (Locke & Latham, 1990), or, by some when it comes to values in particular, as a measure of integrity itself (Engelbrecht, et al., 2005). The question “Does the organization practice what it preaches?” may be the most obvious question
of intra-organization alignment. This study intends to explore whether there are less conscious intra-organizational alignment issues that may uncover performance and organizational “health” issues that may cause dysfunction (Lemonides).

This intra-organization alignment is a key component of the Organizational Life Style assessment itself. To understand this concept in the framework of the Organizational Life Style assessment, it is helpful to recognize the underlying concept on the individual level used widely by Adlerian psychotherapists.

The main purpose of the individual life style assessment is to gain a demonstrable understanding of how an individual’s personal experiences, unique convictions and perceptions based on those convictions affect the way the individual approaches life and its challenges. Typically, the goal of the exercise is to identify mistaken convictions, potentially resulting in an inferiority complex, overcompensation, and other maladaptive patterns of belief and behavior that are negatively influencing an individual’s life and relationships. Also useful is an examination of incongruence between convictions that are causing stress and dysfunction in the individual’s life. An example of this is an individual that has a self-concept of himself as a very giving person, yet with a conflicting conviction that it is most important to take care of his own needs first in order to make sure nobody takes advantage of him. Odds are the incongruence of those convictions are causing stress and, potentially, disruptive psychological or behavioral manifestations.

Likewise, then, a goal of this study is to examine whether an Organizational Life Style assessment may uncover intra-organization alignment issues between the four core convictions and, if found, whether they also provide insight into organizational functioning and performance issues.
Individual psychological or mental health has become better defined as has the distinctiveness of particular disorders. The criteria for referring to a mental health condition as a disorder is clearly defined in the most current version of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, or DSM-IV®-TR, (American Psychiatric Association, 2000) and each specific behavior or other presentation is analyzed according to criteria outlined in that manual.

Individual Psychology presents an alternative or, many would consider, a complementary viewpoint of psychological health issues to other forms of clinical practices. A disorder represents some level of dysfunction or psychopathology which, if inflexible, may inhibit, at varying degrees, effective functioning in life (Sperry & Carlson, 1996). Psychological health centers on the individual’s ability to overcome challenges and meet life’s responsibilities in a useful manner.

An individual who faces life’s challenges in a defensive, discouraged and non-socially interested way is deemed dysfunctional (Sperry & Carlson), where the individual’s actions and beliefs, though maladaptive, serve a particular purpose in life. For example, dysfunction is evident when an individual’s striving for significance is expressed in a pattern of self-defeating and relationship-damaging behaviors despite the fact that a strong desire to have successful relationships is outwardly expressed. There may be a theme in that individual’s convictions, likely unconscious, which centers around relationships inherently being negative experiences or others being untrustworthy. It would actually be against the individual’s convictions to have a healthy relationship, even though the person consciously and sincerely would like to have one.
Organizational Life Style

Taken in this context, then, the opposite of organizational health would be organizational dysfunction, characterized by inflexibility and allowing the drive toward the organizational ideal to present a disruptive versus a healthy, socially interested pattern of beliefs and behavior. This maladaptive drive could be due to interfering convictions within the organization that need to be replaced with more appropriate beliefs and attitudes to support the goals of the organization.

The premise of Open Systems Theory explained by Katz & Kahn (as cited in Lemonides, 2007) mirrors the Adlerian goal-oriented and social alignment construct for organizations and can serve as one comparative view of organizational health. Healthy organizations are considered open systems as the continual and open interaction between the organization (or system) and the environment is essential for its health and survival. The health of the organization is defined in terms of its appropriateness and fit within the dynamic environment, its flexibility to change and adapt to new circumstances, and the effectiveness and congruence of the internal subsystems to perform as expected in light of current conditions.

Levinson, as cited by Lemonides (2007), advocated a view of an organization’s health in a very similar way to the traditional Life Style used in Individual Psychology, focusing heavily on the holism of the organization as a “being” with a unique history, characteristic behaviors, requirements of adaptability and interaction with its environment and the development of a specific pattern of growth with the interest of striving for competitive survival.

As social interest is, per the theories used in Individual Psychology, a key determinant in an individual’s psychological health (Sperry & Carlson, 1996), it is worth exploring in terms of the organizational health as well. Social Interest in an Organization could be viewed
as the tendency to engage in actions and decisions that incorporate the organization’s concern and interest in the well-being of its stakeholders, including employees, as well as customers, financial contributors, and the surrounding community.

Organizational commitment and perceived organizational support are constructs that have been shown to have strong correlations with employee motivation, commitment and altruistic behaviors for the good of the organization (Fuller, et al., 2003). Perceived organizational support is referred to as members’ general perception of the level at which the organization appreciates and values them and their contribution to the organization (Eisenberger et al., 1990). Whether the behaviors of individuals were the result of organizational social interest, in the form of perceived organizational support, or if the support comes from the culture itself is not clear, but both positive characteristics are evidence of organizational health. Considering organizational dynamics from a dysfunction point of view, studies regarding organizational cynicism (Dean, Brandes & Dharwadkar, 1998) have been a sign that such issues are of concern in organizations.

Components of Organizational Health

Organizational Health, for the purpose of this study, pertains to four core characteristics as perceived by team members. These characteristics are (a) flexibility and adaptability to changing circumstances, both internal and environmental (Lemonides, 2003; Sperry & Carlson, 1996); (b) reported patterns of behavior and beliefs with regard to striving for superiority or significance (Mosak & Maniacci, 1999) as an organization; (c) perceived organizational support and interest in the greater good expressed by members at various levels (Eisenberger et al., 1990) and; (d) member commitment, motivation (Locke & Latham, 1990) and desire to provide service to the organization (Dean, et al., 1998; Fuller, et al., 2003).
II. Methodology

This study is focused on a single organization, with approximately 100 employees. One-on-one interviews, questionnaires, surveys and an analysis of organization documentation, marketing and environment were used to complete the Organizational Life Style analysis of this organization.

Sample

The organization serving as the sample in this study is a 5-year-old high-tech product development and sales organization located in Midwestern United States. There are approximately 100 employees across two Midwestern offices and various contractors in these offices as well as in Eastern Europe. Only regular employees, versus contracted individuals, were considered for input to this study.

The individuals that took part in this study include 77-85 total participating employees out of approximately 100 total employees. Surveys were offered to all employees at the organization by the Human Resources department and executive team, and results were collected from 77 employees. Interview candidates were derived by a request sent out to a large subset of employees, and resulting willingness to participate. A total of 14 employees completed in-depth interviews. Some of the 14 interview participants likely also answered the survey, but as the survey responses were anonymous, the exact number of which participants did both is unknown.

The participating groups for both surveys and interviews were comprised of a cross-section of employees representing various hierarchical levels, including executives, managers, specialists and other team members. The various functional areas represented include Sales and Marketing, Technology Operations, Product Design and Development, Internal Administration and Client Services.
Each interview and questionnaire participant was presented and signed a confidentiality document, explaining how the data would be used for this study, as well as assuring them that all individual answers would be held in confidence.

*Instruments*

To analyze the organization per the four primary convictions of the Life Style assessment, each analysis instrument was created and/or utilized to provide insight under some or all of the following categories: (1) Organizational Concept Convictions, (2) Organizational Ideal Convictions, (3) Environmental Views and (4) Ethical Convictions. The Life Style Grid and Worksheets used are shown as Figures 1-4.

In addition to the Life Style Analysis tools, organizational health topics were also studied utilizing results of the various data collection tools. Organizational health ideas in this study are derived from research of various organizational experts as well as Individual Psychology mental health concepts. These ideas of organizational health include the expressed perceptions of (a) the organization’s flexibility and adaptability to changing circumstances, (Lemonides, 2003; Sperry & Carlson, 1996); (b) reported patterns of behavior and beliefs with regard to striving for superiority or significance, (Mosak & Maniaci, 1999); (c) perceived organizational support and interest in the greater good (Eisenberger et al., 1990) and (d) member commitment, motivation (Locke & Latham, 1990) and desire to provide service to the organization (Dean, et al., 1998; Fuller, et al., 2003).

*Employer of Choice Survey*

The survey, internally named the Employer of Choice Survey, offered to all employees for completion was created by a group of employees at the organization utilizing various sources collected by those project team members. This survey was comprised of 34 questions within 4 sections: personal job satisfaction, work team, functional area and company-upper
management questions. The tool used a 5-point Likert scale to measure responses to 30 questions, and there were 4 additional open questions. Also, each of the four Likert-scale sections requested general comments, which resulted in additional narrative input for analysis.

The survey was presented online for completion, and was completed by 77 employees of the organization. Employees completed surveys anonymously, to ensure honesty and integrity of responses. The complete list of Employer of Choice Survey Questions is attached as Appendix A.

*One-on-one Life Style Interviews*

Fourteen employees across various areas and levels of the organization participated in a one-on-one interview with the researcher, which was recorded and documented in detail for analysis. The interviews took place at the company offices, in private meeting rooms with only the interviewer and interviewee present, and a confidentiality agreement was signed by each participant.

This author completed the interviews, and has had counseling experience and is trained in the individual Life Style assessment process, and used similar counseling techniques, such as obtaining vivid moments of early recollections and emotional presence and acceptance, during the interview process to attempt to enhance the integrity and depth of the data collection process.

Organizational Life Style Interview Questions are listed in Appendix B

*Corporate Documentation*

Corporate documents that were analyzed as part of this study included the following:

1. Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) Analysis. This document was created by the corporate executive team in the fall of 2009 as part of the strategic planning process for 2010. This document provided insight into the
perception of all areas of the lifestyle, especially the organizational concept and environmental views.

2. Long Term Product Strategy Goals: 2009 Objectives and Goals. Goal documentation was also created by the corporate executive team in the fall of 2008 as part of the strategic planning process for 2009. Many insights into the organizational ideal and environmental factors as perceived by the executive team were gained from this document. The determination of which documents to share with the organization versus keep within the executive team circle also provided cultural context for this organization.

3. Vision, Mission and Values presentation (spring, 2009). The organization formed a cross-functional and cross-hierarchical level team to create Vision and Values statements for the organization, to be finalized and approved by the executive team. The executive team then also produced a Mission statement in light of these prior items. These new statements were shared at an all-employee meeting, and small cards were distributed to remind all employees of these messages throughout the day.

4. Corporate Strategy Communication/Marketing Materials (external, spring 2009). The organization completed an overhaul of external branding and messaging, as well as internal messaging, as mentioned in #3 above. New communication and marketing materials carried this messaging through to external facing audiences, including customers, potential customers and the general public. These materials were examined as part of this study to determine the Life Style constructs that have been deliberately formed with the expectation of internalization by the organization and its team members.

The instrument that was used for the Survey portion of this study resulted in organization-wide initiatives for improvement in areas that were determined less than ideal. The human resources and executive teams studied the results to determine the areas deserving the most focus for improvement. The selected areas as well as the resulting action plan provided much insight into the values of this organization, and less conscious Life Style characteristics were displayed.

*Organizational Life Style Analysis Tools*

Once the data was gathered, the collected narrative, data and themes were categorized into the four Organizational Life Style convictions, populating the Life Style Grid as shown in Figure 1 and Figure 2.

From the detailed categorization of responses, the Organizational Life Style Convictions and Defining Statements Worksheet, shown in Figure 3, is used to document and organize response patterns by conviction, for comparison within as well as between convictions.

This process organizes and interprets the data into simplified statements representing the organization’s Life Style constructs of (1) Organizational Concept, representing the collective view of the organization, its members and its place in the world held by members themselves, (2) Organizational Ideal, the set of expressed as well as underlying ideas of how the organization should be, (3) Environmental Views, the recognition of external factors that have an impact on it, and (4) Ethics, representing the “right versus wrong” ideas held by members of the organization, including perception of justice, support, and commitment.
The goal of the summaries and defining statements are to not only simplify and communicate the overall Life Style results, but to uncover inconsistencies within and between convictions that would indicate underlying issues in the health of the organization. Notable inconsistencies within the convictions are incorporated into the Defining Statements, whereas intra-organizational alignment is analyzed by placing those Defining Statements back into the Life-Style Grid, to analyze consistencies between them, as shown in Figure 4.

Organizational Health Analysis

All observations, documents and responses to surveys and interviews were also categorized into four organizational health categories, to establish a measure of health of the organization according to:

1. Flexibility and adaptability to changing circumstances
2. Reported patterns of behavior and beliefs with regard to striving for superiority/significance
3. Perceived organizational support and interest in the greater good
4. (Employee’s) desire to provide service to the organization
IV. Results

The results of the interviews, survey responses and documentation review provided a large set of data that was broken down into categories for analysis and categorization then into basic themes to present as the final Organizational Life Style as well as comparison measures in terms of alignment and organizational health.

Organizational Life Style

Organizational Life Style Response Categorization

The answers, results and documentation were first broken down into specific notes, comments and elements to populate the four Life Style Conviction categories. Within each of the categories were documented specific responses and quotes, as well as summaries and trends that were discovered during the data consolidation process. Figure 6 provides an example of this categorization.

Figure 6: Excerpt from Life Style Categorization Grid, Organizational Concept section, as an example of the collection and organization of applicable responses for this particular conviction.
Organizational Concept Findings: Who are we?

The Organizational Concept category contained by far the greatest amount of content, as the highest level of data collection provided insight into the team members’ perceptions of the organization as it is today. Grouping and generalizing the responses into basic themes required some consideration of when to utilize or disregard the rare “one-off” responses that seemed to be especially different from the general data, and examination of some of the more detailed descriptions to recognize the underlying point.

Some of the actual quotes were noted as representative of underlying perceptions of the organization, such as reference to “islands of knowledge” displaying a tendency for the company to have issues spreading knowledge and information beyond individuals and teams. The theme of compartmentalization, or “silos” as it was termed by two respondents, was very prevalent throughout responses across the participants expressing a recognized issue of communication and information sharing between groups or departments in the organization.

Other quotes such as, “[The company is always] trying to catch its breath” was indicative of the fast-paced, aggressively changing, often stressful, nature of this new business; and “Intelligence is like an umbrella over the whole company” was a perfect visual representation of not only the prevalence but the expectation that employees were highly skilled, knowledgeable and naturally intelligent in this business.

One phrase that was quoted by at least three separate respondents was “sink or swim” as well as another creative version: “We row people out to the middle of the lake and expect them to make it to shore.” What was equally as significant as the repeated use of this imagery, however, was the variation in sentiment behind how different people presented it. To one individual this feeling was one of an exciting challenge, an opportunity to prove her skills and abilities. To another it was pure fear and frustration in the beginning that there was
not a smooth, ease-into-your-job process at this company. To yet another, he was concerned that he was failing as a manager because he didn’t have time to help new hires get acclimated to their job in a supportive enough way. Underlying both positive and critical versions was the clear perception that the company is comprised mainly of very independently motivated individuals and teams, with the expectation of high personal performance to survive long term at the organization.

Organizational Ideal Findings: Who/How should we be?

The Organizational Ideal was comprised of many interview and survey responses, especially those referring to how the organization ‘should’ be. Unlike other categories, the Organizational Ideal contains much more packaged content, such as marketing and messaging materials, both internally and externally intended.

The vision and mission of the organization are perfect initial indicators of an organization’s ideal view of itself. This organization’s vision statement included the following terms: *industry leader*, *revolutionary*, *solutions*, *empower and simplify* (*end customer*) *experience*. The mission likewise focuses on innovation, leadership, and (*end customer*) *experience*, and is additionally focused on the collaboration with an ‘*ecosystem*’ of *industry partners* to deliver this solution to *millions of* (*end customers*). These two very key statements have at their core the ideal values of industry leadership, innovation guiding large-scale change, collaboration with other entities and extreme growth in the market.

Additional responses and resources indicated key organizational ideals of integrity in the industry, among peers and customers. An example of the integrity ideal is the heavily used messaging of “It’s not just a product; it’s a promise.” The sales and customer retention are based on that promise of partnership and integrity-driven practices for the common good.
An interviewee similarly attributed recent sales and marketing successes to the purposefully sought and newly-achieved reputation of integrity in the marketplace.

Other ‘should’ themes that came out of interviews, documents and surveys included displaying and proving out adaptability in an ever-changing market: “We should know more about what our competitors are doing” and “We have to be on top of legislative happenings at all levels.”

Also the expectation as well as actual demonstration of team members, individually and as teams, being success-driven, customer-focused and highly talented was a strong underlying theme that permeated almost every aspect of the responses. The organization is represented by its team members, and is heavily focused in marketing and communications internally as well as externally on the high level of innovation, talent and dedication of its individuals and teams.

*Environmental Convictions Findings: Industry, market and impacts around us.*

The most pronounced Environmental Convictions were around the intense competitive environment and the volatile legislative impacts on the particular industry served by the products offered by this organization, as well as its core customer base.

The competitive landscape is seen as one area in which this organization displays high confidence, as represented by many responses regarding its offering of “best product” in the market. However, it was also expressed that the organization is always on guard as the competitive landscape is quite unpredictable with mergers and acquisitions keeping everyone unsure of the next surprise. This has made some team members nervous about their ability to foresee these changes and to prevent suddenly being ‘behind the eight ball.’

Legislation as another volatile environmental impact brought mixed reactions as well, where many team members saw the organization as very connected and ready for any
legislative changes that may affect their industry, and others felt that the organization is not
doing enough to be truly prepared or to keep all employees at all levels knowledgeable
enough about these happenings.

The feeling that the organization is doing something that is important to the greater
good came out in a number of interviews and surveys, which some could articulate well
versus others who did not quite understand the organization’s role in this way. Worth noting is
that this variation in awareness of the ‘bigger picture’ did not correlate with particular levels
within the organization.

The other environmental aspect that must be examined is the organization’s view of
the available pool of industry-related professional talent and resources, which is also
extremely competitive. High technology, design and professional solution delivery talent to
meet the aggressive goals of this organization requires the company to attract and retain very
highly sought-after individuals to meet its goals.

*Ethical Convictions Findings: Values we strive to uphold, ethics we personify.*

To discover the underlying moral perception of “right or wrong” at the organization,
the Ethical Convictions communicated represent ideas of justice, support, accountability and
integrity. Examination of conflict management and decision-making themes, as well as
intrinsic versus extrinsic motivation tendencies, uncovered many ethically grounded attitudes
and behaviors at the organization.

During the interviews, themes related to conflict management and justice were
uncovered with very detailed descriptions of specific conflict situations. Though the specific
situations varied greatly, the resulting feelings of resolution and the desired outcomes were
remarkably consistent. Of 12 responses, seven of the resolution notes were focused on the
desire for understanding and trust between team members with six of those stories resulting in
“everyone wins” when the conflict was resolved and provided a learning, growing experience. The other most common resolution theme noted was that of quality of team performance and client satisfaction as the main determinants of “who won”. These two common themes were evidence of a cross-functional and multi-level interest in the good of many, whether other team members, customers or the company as a whole.

In terms of other justice-driven perceptions, such as fair treatment of employees, general employee satisfaction was displayed by responses to additional questions regarding the organization’s support of work-life balance and diversity of team members (69% and 92% respectively) which were also rated very high on the survey.

Decision-making themes that stood out in the response data included the answer to an interview question, “Do you feel as though the key values of the organization enable you to make choices/decisions that are in alignment with your values?” All executive respondents made a point to explain their thoughts around how other respondents may answer; one focusing on the fact that even though some team members may answer negatively, the truth is that “Nobody is ever put in a box, no matter what they tell you.” Another executive respondent explained how the leadership is very focused on engaging team members in decisions as much possible, so there is no “ivory tower” making decisions for everyone else. The fact was that all respondents answered either “yes” or “yes, mostly” with no mention of anyone, at any level, feeling put under duress to act against their personal values. The only mention of stretching ones values was expressed as a personal growth area, versus company pressure to act unethically.

On themes of the source of employee motivation, there were very pointed examples of how intrinsic motivation is a key force in the company. Comments such as “It’s good to feel needed” and “I have never really heard ‘I just work here’” were common. High ratings on the
survey included “I am proud to work at [this company]” (86% agree or strongly agree). Many (29%) of team members found the benefits at the organization lacking compared to other organizations, but other motivators, such as opportunities for growth (>71% positive response) and intention to stay at the organization (>65%), were highly rated, showing that those intrinsic motivation mechanisms are in place are favoring retention in this competitive environment.

Accountability at the organization seems to vary for different divisions of the organization, following the Organizational Concept theme mentioned above that the organization seems to operate in “silos” or seems segregated. For most team members, day-to-day accountability lies within the team, where work expectations, performance and fulfillment of one’s obligations are determined informally yet strongly by peers, customers and self. Comments such as “We hold each other accountable…” and “If I screw up, it’s tracked…everyone knows where to go [to place blame]” create a sense of obligation not to let team members down. Other quotes such as “It is the confidence level of the customers that is the ultimate judge” were commonly driven toward the customer-focused nature of the organization.

This dependence on customer satisfaction as a judge of performance success or failure as well as not letting team members down often creates a strain on work-life balance, as individuals will go above and beyond to satisfy someone else’s expectations.

However, in terms of formal accountability measured by supervisors, there was a clear lack of clarity or consistency. The survey question “I understand how my performance is measured” resulted in 58% agreeing or strongly agreeing, with 27% rating this question “neutral”. However, in survey comments and interviews, some team members pointed out that accountability is often based on the person versus the job, indicating favoritism or special
treatment, while others pointed out “arbitrary” measures that made no sense to them or “reactive” accountability where there was no measure, but only reaction when something went wrong.

The prior organizational concept theme of “sink-or-swim” mentality was mentioned in terms of accountability as well, where employees are not closely managed, but are expected to independently find effective solutions or they are “let go if they can’t handle it” as quoted by one respondent. This perceived survival mentality, potentially exciting or harsh depending on the individual’s own convictions, may be the reason behind perceived favoritism for either higher or lagging performers, or rather may be the reason for the lack of consistency in general.

Regarding perceived organizational integrity, interview answers relating to perceived integrity involved a high number of interviewees feeling as though the members of the organization generally are very respectful and want the best for all stakeholders. Survey questions regarding the perception of whether the organization treats team members, business partners and customers with integrity received very high agreement ratings (84%) in general, although there were over 40 added notes concerning frustrations around “overpromising and under-delivering” or neglecting quality to try to go faster or do more with less time and resources, negatively affecting clients, as a major source of frustration.

Finally, on the topic of ethics, there were a couple of comments relating to the history of the organization, indicating that the integrity of the organization has improved in the past two years in both reputation and specific business activities. The reported industry reputation of this company until approximately a year ago was that of less-than-honest professionals trying to make a lot of money by making promises and not delivering on them. This reputation was attributable to various issues, both internal and external, but regardless of the
facts behind the accusations, the negative reputation was pronounced and hindered the potential for organizational success at that time. Legal issues that were pending previously due to certain contractual and employee issues (about which details are not known) have since been managed, settled and made irrelevant to the current company. Per interviewees, these overarching ethical issues have been effectively removed from the culture of the current organization, though they are worth mentioning as an underlying piece of the Organizational Life Style today as an area that the organization has overcome challenge and compensated for historical bruises.

*Organizational Life Style Convictions*

The review of all responses and notes resulted in a subset of Life Style Conviction summary themes, as shown in Figure 7.
Figure 7: Organizational Life Style Conviction summaries for each conviction organized for simplified review of general themes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONCEPT</th>
<th>IDEAL</th>
<th>ENVIRONMENT</th>
<th>ETHICAL CONVICTIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Young, fast-paced, high-tech, focused, ambitious, innovative company</td>
<td>Best, most innovative product in the market</td>
<td>Extremely competitive (product/sales) – Innovation needed to survive</td>
<td>Justice: best interest of company and customer is key for team members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best product in a very specific segment of the market</td>
<td>Lead, influence the market – be ‘ahead of the game’</td>
<td>Dynamically changing market</td>
<td>Justice: employees perceive fair treatment, e.g. diversity, respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intelligent, competitive individuals at company</td>
<td>Recognized as high in integrity and interest in social welfare in industry</td>
<td>Recognition of importance in ‘greater society’ or in the industry in general</td>
<td>Accountability: peer and client judgment and personal performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Segregated – Teams tight, but tend to be in ‘silos’ in terms of communication and cross-team collaboration efforts</td>
<td>Extremely intelligent, talented team</td>
<td>Competition for talent (technical, industry expertise) very high.</td>
<td>Accountability: leadership accountability inconsistent – perceived favoritism or generally inconsistent/not understood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sink-or-swim environment</td>
<td>Collaborative, in the best interest of partners and consumers</td>
<td></td>
<td>Motivation: Intrinsic motivation. Listened to, respected and impactful to team, organization and clients. (vs. compensation, benefits)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reactive (quickly) to environmental (industry, market, etc.) change</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ethics: alignment with personal values – no pressure to act unethically</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good, caring, genuinely respectful and trusting people</td>
<td></td>
<td>Work-life balance is respected but long hours to make client/team happy are normal and expected</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No time or perceived support of learning opportunities, especially outside of company</td>
<td></td>
<td>Integrity: Concern that the company does not fulfill obligations (overpromises and under-delivers)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work-life balance: varying opinions… fairly flexible, but long hours are part of the deal for some.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Client expectations are main determinant of employee value, satisfaction and performance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trouble focusing on client needs versus competitive image – hurts/disappoints clients</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Defining Statements for each Life Style conviction summarized the overarching points to provide another source of comparison between the constructs, and uncover any inconsistencies that may be indicative of underlying issues at the organization.

Figure 8: Organizational Life Style Defining Statements in Life Style Grid

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organizational Concept:</th>
<th>Environmental View:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The organization is young, fast-paced, innovative and competitive, offering the best product in the market but often reactive to market change. The organization struggles with competing demands of competitive image, client satisfaction and innovation – promising but often failing to meet in one or all areas. The organization promotes knowledge and intelligence, but does not encourage knowledge and skill development that may take time away from job responsibilities.</td>
<td>The relevant industries – technology and healthcare - are extremely competitive and ever-changing, requiring constant innovation, and aggressive talent recruitment and development to ensure the best quality output to survive, as well as rapid, proactive adaptation to changes. The product is the best in the market now, but always at risk of falling behind if the company doesn’t constantly keep up.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teams: Most teams collaborate well within themselves, but are very compartmentalized between teams.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team members: Highly intelligent, individually motivated, hardworking employees who are passionate about client satisfaction, success and learning opportunity.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organizational Ideal:</th>
<th>Ethical Convictions:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The company intends to be a best-in-class, integrating agent, providing the highest level of expertise, strategic direction and innovation with partnering entities to deliver the best solution and greatly influence the industry.</td>
<td>Members within this organization individually hold each other to very high standards of integrity, respect for individuality and performance, expected by others and themselves to do whatever it takes to meet the customer’s expectations within ethical boundaries. Recognition of performance is inconsistent across the organization. Satisfaction and motivation is intrinsic.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Organizational Life Style Defined

The organization’s Life Style is defined as the self-defining, guiding action that shows the line of movement or direction for the organization. There are two main components to the Life Style. First the movement toward a “fictional, final goal,” giving direction and meaning to the organization’s existence, (Mosak & Maniacci, 1999), appears for this organization to be the drive to lead and influence the market. The theme of leadership encompasses the desired to be ahead of the others, through superior innovation, product and service excellence, intelligence, creativity, collaboration and influence. The goal to influence the market indicates the organization’s desire to inspire and have an impact on the direction of change in that market.

Second, the Organizational Life Style proposes to describe how the organization makes creative use of its resources and subjective understandings to behave in the world in the direction of that defined, final goal. This description is also referred to as its self-defining action(s) or patterns of behavior. This organization’s manifestation of these behavior patterns is represented in the following themes:

1. The organization exemplifies the fast-paced, constantly changing market environment by promising and expecting extremely rapid delivery of innovative, quickly adapting, high quality results from individuals and teams across the organization.

2. The organization attracts and hires individuals they perceive as highly (or “the most”) intelligent, talented, adaptable, competitive and intrinsically motivated, requiring little or no guidance or assistance to be effective quickly and consistently.

3. Managers at the team level create highly collaborative, innovative and success-driven teams.
4. Accountability is highly visible, though informal, based on self, peer/team and customer standards with limited direct feedback or formal standards set by higher levels of leadership.

5. The organization confidently represents itself both internally and externally as the best, most innovative and impactful organization in the market in terms of talent superiority, technology, partnering relationships and expertise.

Alignment Analysis

Alignment within Each Construct

There were a number of consistent themes between the various conviction summaries, as well as some noted inconsistencies to consider in the end results. Members’ consistently recognized the impressive talent as well as the individual drive among the team members at the organization. The view of compartmentalization and individual drive for success, rather than inter-departmental collaboration as the means to reaching goals was heard across almost all respondents in some way as well.

Another consistent perception is that the company wants to maintain integrity and high performance through its communications and service efforts, yet the characterization of the company as a fast-paced organization and industry indicated the general appreciation that the company must remain agile to keep up with the demands of the market. The conviction that ethics and agility are difficult, or for some almost impossible, to maintain simultaneously was observed in many responses.

An aspect of misalignment found within constructs was the seemingly conflicting themes that presented opportunity for issues. For instance, within the organizational concept, both the individually driven, competitive nature of team members and the compartmentalization seemed to introduce opportunity for discord between members and
teams. At the same time, team level collaboration and passion for delivery to customers also indicated a very high socially interested motivation. Each of these characteristics exists, and their inconsistency uncovers a few potential, unique characteristics within the organization.

One dynamic seen due to this inconsistency is that the individuals within certain teams may have tight collaboration for the best customer-facing results, but the competitive nature and compartmentalization creates friction between teams especially when customers are dissatisfied. Therefore it may be that between these tightly knit teams, blame and criticism for failure to satisfy the customer is pointed. An example of this resulting distrust and blame was noted in responses from a couple of sales and technology team members regarding new customers that are dissatisfied. This may be explained as due to inappropriate expectations set by the sales team (one technology team member mentioned the sales team “lying” to prospective customers, setting them up for failure), or as a result of the technology team not meeting the delivery promises that the sales team had to bring to the market, (as noted by a sales team member, “It is disappointing when we are told we can sell something, but then they just decide it is not going to be delivered after all”). Both teams may have the best interest of the customer in mind, but are not collaborating and communicating effectively, which results in unhappy customers and distrusting, defensive team members.

The intensely driven and often highly collaborative intra-team dynamics increases the effect of the friction, as they may be prone to “band together” against the other teams in this situation versus presenting genuinely collaborative solutions. Even those attempts at bridging the gap between certain teams were expressed as working out a relationship between “us and them” versus routinely collaborating for solutions.

Another potential issue within one construct was seen in the Ethical Convictions, regarding accountability and recognition. Accountability in one sense is perceived as highly
visible and taken very seriously, mainly based on customer and team member opinion and feedback, which then is relative to expectations set by each. However, there do not appear to be clear, consistent expectations or accountabilities set organizationally, set or guided by the leadership, and recognition is inconsistent as well. Recognition was either noted as relationship versus performance based, or simply not presented by leadership at all.

Some team members prefer this general arrangement, as they are not “micro-managed” and appreciate the team-level accountability versus by hierarchical management. The inconsistency of accountability and feedback, however, can create areas of confusion and discouragement as team members are measured by potentially biased and unpredictable expectations, and can also cause undue discouragement or distrust if individuals perceive that others are getting preferential treatment. Also, another factor to consider is what may be influencing performance expectations, whether outside influences such as competitors or other teams within the organization, which adds new unpredictability and discouragement to employees whose success is based on this measured performance.

Other alignment observations within constructs that presented potential conflict include the following: (a) support and recognition of work-life balance needs as an intrinsic motivator, yet the high expectation of pleasing one’s peers and customers “no matter what it takes” is often the primary driver for long hours and overwhelming workload; (b) teams and individuals have high expectations of integrity among themselves, yet there were many comments regarding the perception that the company makes promises without a clear intention of following through; and (c) individuals at the company are expected to be the most talented, knowledgeable and innovative yet there was much feedback regarding the organization’s lack of enablement (due to workload or financial support, responses varied) for ongoing learning initiatives.
Similar Perceptions, Conflicting Interpretations

As shown in many of the conviction summaries above, the tendency for the very same themes to be presented in both positive and critical ways, even by the same individual, was prevalent across all categories and actually revealed perception consistence in a unique manner.

For example, one could observe three different responses to the same topic, resulting in a consistent overall perception in the end: (1) “This organization is really good at constantly and quickly adapting to changes in the market,” (2) “We tend to respond to the wave instead of trying to cut through it and figure out what makes sense in terms of how our ship sails,” (3) “The company should be more on top of what competitors are doing and what is happening in the market so we can be ahead of it.”

Though these viewpoints are certainly different considering the respondents’ positive or negative description of this quality for the company, the “good or bad” is stripped from them to reveal a striking consistence where employees at various levels not only recognize that the organization is in a very volatile industry, but also have a genuine concern that they are well prepared and each member is equipped to face challenges in a responsible way.

This difference in messaging also indicated the value of understanding the organization’s culture or Life Style in order to direct hiring decisions, so the potential employee is aware of the style of working environment and can determine ahead of time whether they would be comfortable or not at the organization.

Intra-Organization Alignment

As in individual psychology, the Life Style Constructs are defined not only in order to describe but to compare and contrast convictions in order to uncover potential mistaken ideas or inconsistencies.
For this organization, the following alignment observations were made:

**Organizational Concept – Environmental Views (OC-EV).** Between the Organizational Concept and Environmental Views, there is a high level of alignment between the aggressive, innovative and competitive nature of the company and its appropriateness for the industry. The most obvious inconsistency was seen in the organizations’ tendency to be very reactive in an industry where being proactive and prepared for change is extremely important.

Also, the requirement in this business environment of keeping up with ‘cutting edge’ innovation conflicted with both the reported reliance on client expectations to measure employee value and performance (versus innovation and creativity), and lack of either financial or time allotment support of knowledge and skill development outside of the company.

Lastly, the competitive nature of talent recruitment is not in line with the perception by team members that the learning opportunities, benefits and, to a lesser extent, compensation are not as competitive as they would expect, yet other aspects of the perception of opportunity for advancement and room for growth seem to further support the ability to recruit and retain talented resources based on a high level of intrinsic motivation.
**Organizational Concept – Ethical Convictions (OC-EC).** The alignment between Organizational Concept and Ethical Convictions tends to be one of the most important indicators of organizational health. The fact that team members perceive the organization to be highly skilled, and have high expectations for success as well as integrity, is consistent with ethical convictions in this area, as measures of performance and accountability are really held by team members and clients’ feedback.

There appears to be a consistency issue, however, considering the high standards that individuals are held to versus the concern among many team members and, per their feedback, clients that the overall expectations of product quality, integrity and service standards are often not met due to promises being made without consideration of other competing demands or with high expectations that simply cannot be achieved. When these expectations are competing with other priorities or commitments, or not achievable, yet team members are expected to do anything to make the customer happy as well as to live up to their team members’ expectations, there is a predictable result of dissatisfaction for every party involved.

The compartmentalization between departments inflates the issue, as expectations tend to be set by one team with expected results from another team, but the necessary planning, communication and trust between departments is often not there to carry out successfully the commitments.

**Organizational Ideal– Environmental Views (OI-EV).** The alignment between Organizational Ideal and Environmental Views is typically an indicator of aligned strategic goals within the organization to meet perceived market demands. One point to consider, however, is that the Environmental View is specifically the perspective that the organization has regarding the industry and other outside influences. It does not always represent the true state of the market, but rather the organization’s interpretation of it.
For this organization, the Organizational Ideal and Environmental Views are generally aligned considering their ideal of being the best, most innovative, impactful solution provider, which is appropriate for their perception of a competitive, ever-changing environment.

An aspect of this comparison to consider, however, is the fact that this organization’s Environmental View is clearly focused on its very competitive, aggressive market regarding not only talent recruitment but market demands. On the other hand, the Organizational Ideal is focused heavily on collaboration and integration with partnering entities to deliver the required high end results to survive in the marketplace.

It seems that it would be very important for this company to recognize which entities in the environment warrant fierce competition, and which warrant cooperation. Not only may it be a challenge to recognize the differences when necessary, the ever-changing aspect of the environment may even change that dynamic, i.e. “Even though we competed last year, things have changed. Should we collaborate or compete with that company now?” Therefore the company may be competing with organizations due to its perception of the volatile environment, when they would be better off cooperating with those entities.

Also, there is an additional consideration that brings up an Organizational Concept point. From a cultural perspective, although collaboration can be utilized to be the most competitive advantage for a company, the findings in the Organizational Concept show that collaboration currently is strong only within teams, but not across teams. As noted, the between-team relationship and communication, if there was any noted, was typically seen in terms of trying to get along or working on better coordination with “them”, versus viewing the relating groups as a single, truly integrated team with cohesive goals and objectives. The existing collaborative strength of the organization with other partners is not specifically known from this study, but their apparent issues regarding collaboration between internal
teams may indicate a potentially broader challenge if expectations are set to have strong collaborative strength with other organizations.

**Organizational Ideal– Ethical Convictions (OI-EC).** The Organizational Ideal and Ethical Convictions were aligned where the ideal performance and partnership-driven solutions were backed up by the ethical views of team-level accountability and integrity with each other as well as clients as business partners.

However, the extreme innovation expected for the results of the organization must be backed by recognition and leadership backing of a certain level of creative risk, as well as a certain devotion to creativity. If customers and team members, likewise highly driven to satisfy customers, are the ultimate judge of performance standards, innovation is often hampered by fear of failure.

Cotterman, et al., (2009) studied highly innovative technology companies, and determined that direct leadership support of and direct involvement in the innovation process, along with allowing for creative employees to spend a certain amount of time (e.g. 10-20 percent) toward personal projects were key components in the breakthrough success of these innovative technology organizations. Organization-wide focus and dependence on customer satisfaction, though well-intentioned, is likely to distract from the lofty innovation and creativity goals of the organization, as is the potential lack of direct leadership involvement in or recognition for achievements in the innovation process as teams are reportedly guided and measured very independently and very dependent on client feedback.

In summary, the study of alignment within and between constructs brought various potential alignment issues to light for further examination by the organization, to offer insight into not only the issues themselves, but also the forces behind those issues for deeper, more lasting change effort.
Organizational Concept – Organizational Ideal (OC-OI). The analysis of alignment between Organizational Concept and Organizational Ideal shows mainly the awareness of how the organization perceives itself as it exists today compared with how members believe the organization “should be”. The organization strives to be highly innovative, collaborative and influential in the market, and the current state of the organization is sensitive to these ideals. The awareness of team members of the aspects of the organizational ideal that they are not yet achieving is easily noted, in their concerns such as being too reactive versus proactive with industry change, not focused enough on team members development and not collaborative enough between teams. Versus seeing these concerns as misalignment, however, they could be seen as the very practical and healthy areas of striving for the organization.

Environmental Views – Ethical Convictions (EV-EC). The comparison between the organization’s Environmental Views and their Ethical Convictions brings to light again the necessity for the leaders of this organization to consider carefully the competitive, volatile and aggressive nature of the industry as well as the high expectations of team members to meet each others’ and their customers’ expectations every day. The concern is that the organization’s as well as the members’ expectation of consistently high performance in a volatile environment may overshadow the need for work-life balance expressed by many respondents, as well as taking time for creative and skill-development related activities to contribute to their job satisfaction, especially important when talent recruitment is another source of competition.

Organizational Health Indicators

Organizational Health was analyzed per responses to surveys and interview questions in four key organizational health areas.
Flexibility and adaptability to changing circumstances

The organization is self-reported to be surviving well in a rapidly changing, somewhat unpredictable environment, so this health indicator appears to be put to the test on a daily basis. Some feedback may indicate that the organization actually creates and embraces changing circumstances, to stir up momentum within the organization as well as with partnering companies to stay competitive and lead the industry in innovation.

One notable survey question, “[The Company] focuses on fixing problems rather than assigning blame” received high ratings of 74% as agree or strongly agree, which shows adaptability to issues that arise.

The organization does have strengths as an open system, defined by Katz & Kahn (as cited in Lemonides, 2007) as the continual and open interaction between the organization (or system) and the environment as well as effectiveness and congruence of the internal subsystems to perform as expected in light of current conditions. The organization’s leadership is reported to be highly involved in interactions in the industry as well as government to contribute to discussions influencing change, which displays a high level of open interaction. Some communication has been shared to bring internal subsystems into alignment with these activities as well, though some feedback indicated the need for more transparency and education in this area.

One potential concern in this area is the perception held by many interviewees that the company does not proactively prepare for changes but rather reacts in a panic to issues that were actually predictable according to some team members.

In the area of flexibility and adaptability, then, this company receives fairly high ratings of health and performance with areas of improvement being more transparency of the
outside activities to better align internal teams with these initiatives, and take proactive action to approach upcoming changes more effectively.

Reported patterns of behavior and beliefs with regard to striving for superiority/significance

The striving for superiority and significance for this organization could be broken into three subsections, based mainly on the defined Life Style goal of leading and influencing the market as well as the components of the Organizational Ideal including, (1) providing the best solution/product and service excellence (2) being an integration agent of change in the market with partners and (3) offering the highest level of expertise, strategic direction and innovation to greatly influence the market.

1. Best Solution/Product and Service Excellence. Reported patterns of behavior and beliefs in the first subsection, providing the best solution in the market, is heavily affected by individuals and teams striving for superiority and significance, as these are major influences on the culture of the organization. For example, technology team members seem to place greater weight on the excellence of the platform versus the customer service quality in terms of what makes the solution the best in the market, whereas the sales and marketing team focus more on driving competitive features that will differentiate them from the competition, and enable them to sell the product.

According to much feedback, the organization has achieved “best in the market” status already, as this opinion was expressed in the survey as well as interview responses. This view was defined by some according to industry recognition of the product among its competitors as well as the belief that it can really affect the market. This viewpoint was also a component in various interview responses as one of the reasons the individual was proud of being a part of this organization.
Different definitions of the “best” also emerged, for example many survey comments defined the product quality according to *current customers* as what determined whether the product is the best in the market. This opinion can be represented by one in particular, referring to improving the stability and quality of the existing technology versus building more, new functionality as “proving to our partners that we really do care and want to make this the best solution for them.”

These differences in the view of what makes the product the best in the market represent a conflict that has been noted throughout this study, typical for technology firms (Armour, 2009), that must be weighed constantly between aggressive innovation and customer-focused needs. It is a key job for leadership within the organization to find an appropriate balance to succeed in this competitive marketplace, and to define priorities clearly and proactively for the organization to follow confidently versus trying to make determinations on their own.

In terms of healthy patterns of beliefs and behavior in striving for significance or superiority specifically as the best solution, three patterns that emerge are (a) sincere concern in the delivery of a great product, regardless of their interpretation of what is “best”, with hard work within teams to achieve excellence; (b) cross-team communication barriers, mistrust and blame if the perception of the product, especially to customers, is not the best; and (3) portraying an image to the marketplace that the solution is superior to all other solutions, at times making commitments to be competitive that are not truly available and expecting other individuals or teams to meet those expectations.

2. *Integration agent of change in the market with partners.* The pattern of striving within the organization to be an effective integration agent with partners is seen in documentation regarding proactive efforts to assist customers with their sales, operational and
product delivery goals to enhance their success and further their reach in the marketplace. It was expressed that these efforts have been put into action organizationally. Also regular involvement in industry events along with customers and partners display an effort towards this goal.

The importance of “non-customer” partnerships, such as with other technology firms and vendors, was expressed in the organization’s documentation, but was not a major topic discussed in survey or questionnaire responses. The members’ views of these partnerships may be an area to explore as potential difficulties may exist due to expressed concern about already existing internal cross-department or between-team challenges.

3. Expertise, strategic direction and innovation to influence the market. The staffing standards at this organization, where it is evident that expectations of immediate performance, quick independent learning and quality delivery is very high, meet the expertise and innovation needs to achieve this goal. Frequent mention within the survey responses especially, of the lack of time or funds to support learning initiatives for personal skill development conflicts with this standard ongoing.

The same conflict between focus on current client issues and concerns versus innovation also comes into play again here, where focusing on strategic leadership and innovation to influence the broad market often presents a challenge in prioritization within an organization that wants to be the best according to both standards.

Perceived organizational support and interest in the greater good

Survey questions represented here include the perception, per survey answers, that the company treats their customers and partners with integrity (91% agree or strongly agree) and that the company treats team members with integrity (84% agree or strongly agree). This is a strong indicator of organizational support and interest in the greater good.
Also indicative of a view of perceived interest in the greater good was the view held by some that the organization is doing good things to further an important cause, and getting involved in the government as well as industry causes to make a difference. Though some activities are self-promoting for the organization, the perception by team members is that the organization leadership is also socially motivated to make industry changes.

Three main feedback items that may demonstrate issues in this area include the repeated concern that the organization communicates or commits to promises to customers or internally to team members that it either does not have a plan to fulfill or cuts corners on quality, whether willfully or unintentionally. Secondly, the lack of consistency in accountability places team members at the whim of relationships, team dynamics and customer feedback to judge their performance, versus consistently defined and measurable goal-oriented accountability, which provides better support mechanisms from the organization. Third, the lack of support, either financially or with time allotment, for learning and personal professional growth initiatives is another area where the perceived organizational support was lacking.

Employee desire to provide service to the organization

The employee’s level of commitment, broadly across the organization, is high. Enjoyment of working at the company, received a high rating of 88% of employees indicating agreement or strong agreement with the related statement in the survey. All interview respondents but one answered that they have a level of interest in the organization’s success of 8-10 on a scale of 10, even disregarding their own job security.

Most explanations of this high rating included themes of pride in the teams that work at this company, the amazing progress that has been achieved at this new organization, as well
as belief that the company is doing something good for the industry, even for society in general.

Summary Results

Life Style Analysis Results

The breakdown of the four convictions of the Organizational Life Style drove the conclusion that the overarching “fictional, final goal,” giving direction and meaning to the organization’s existence, (Mosak & Maniaci, 1999), appears for this organization to be the drive to lead and influence their industry. To lead the market, they desire to be superior to competing entities, innovate before others, provide overall product and service excellence and influence others through innovation, creativity and relationships. Influence pertains to the desire to initiate movement and persuade others to make a marked change in the broader environment.

Life Style convictions also led to the Life Style patterns of movement toward that goal which include the following characteristics:

1. The organization exemplifies the fast-paced, constantly changing market environment by promising and expecting extremely rapid delivery of innovative, quickly adapting, high quality results from individuals and teams across the organization.

2. The organization attracts and hires individuals they perceive as highly (or “the most”) intelligent, talented, adaptable, competitive and intrinsically motivated, requiring little or no guidance or assistance to be effective quickly and consistently.

3. Managers at the team level create highly collaborative, innovative and success-driven teams.
4. Accountability is highly visible, based on self, peer/team and customer standards with limited direct feedback or standards set by higher levels of leadership.

5. The organization confidently represents itself both internally and externally as the best, most innovative and impactful organization in the market in terms of talent superiority, technology, partnering relationships and expertise.

Alignment Results: Uncovered [potential] Cultural Challenges to Consider

There were a variety of areas of observed misalignment that could be further explored with the organization to determine whether there are actual issues presenting themselves that are worth considering intervention or whether potential issues may be avoided by understanding the underlying misalignment issues that may manifest themselves at another time.

Below is listed some of the main areas of misalignment uncovered during the analysis process.

1. The individualistic competitive nature of the organization’s operations along with the tendency for the organization to be compartmentalized between departments may contribute to strain when considering the intense desire to satisfy customers’ needs. When customer or organizational expectations are not met, that failure may often be due to cross-departmental/team collaboration and communication issues, which lead to blame and mistrust between teams or individuals.

2. Innovation and client satisfaction are often perceived as opposing forces. Innovation prevails in the Life Style as the major driving force for the Organizational Ideal and Environmental View, yet the Organizational Concept and Ethical Convictions are centered heavily on client satisfaction as a recognized determinant of individual and team value, quality and performance at the organization.
3. Despite the overarching goal of the organization to lead and influence a highly innovative, dynamic market, innovation does not appear to be a specific area of accountability, recognition, leadership guidance or focused creative empowerment at this organization.

4. Talent, expertise and knowledge are among the key expectations of the organization’s team members, yet knowledge development opportunities, especially outside of the organization, are reportedly not promoted.

5. Accountability being highly visible and mainly judged by customers and peers versus organizational leadership standards creates issues when individuals and teams are passionately success and performance driven. Expectations are not consistently communicated and accountability and reward structures are inconsistent causing members to make fairness assumptions, and expectations are prone to be externally driven.

6. Accountability being disproportionately driven by client expectations also takes the work-balance management out of the team member’s hands, as they are at the whim of customers’ or other team members’ inconsistent and often unpredictable needs.

7. The organization desires to be a leader of innovation and impact within a market that is extremely volatile and competitive, yet reaction to change is reportedly “after-the fact” and internal teams report lacking knowledge of the environment in general.

8. The intensity of competition with external entities, yet the need for collaboration to reach the primary goals of the organization, may present challenges in a changing market when “competitors” and “collaborators” may be difficult to discern.
9. The focus on partnership and collaboration as the means to organizational success, yet the heavily reported challenge regarding between-team collaboration within the organization is a potential weakness to examine.

**Organizational Health Dynamics**

The organizational health determinants, in summary, indicated that the overall health measurements varied greatly. A consistent theme emerged, however, of an organization that is young and quickly growing yet has some very basic health indicators – such as respect for diversity, expectations of integrity and a very high level of team member commitment – that with the right strategic tools in place, team members, teams and the organization could continue to grow and thrive.

Flexibility and adaptability to changing circumstances, as proven by the young organization’s survival in a rapidly changing market, represents strength in the organization. Improvement may be made in the organization’s communication of external influences throughout the organization for more internal awareness, and in the nature of adaptation where the increase in proactive planning and communication may improve the “chicken with its head cut off” (per survey response) reaction to change.

Patterns of behavior and beliefs in striving for superiority and significance were examined with certain aspects of the organization’s goals in mind, including the Life Style goal and the Organizational Ideal. Generally, the trend among the three goal areas – providing the best solution in the market, being an integrating agent of change in the market with partners and providing expertise, strategic direction and innovation to influence the market – seem to be well documented, communicated and understood at this organization. However, the follow-through required to commit to these strategic goals does not appear to be consistent. Examples include the tendency to present superiority image but not have a
collaborative, well-defined plan to back it up, issues with integration and collaboration between teams which indicates risk in the primary focus on collaboration as a means to their goals, and the reported failure to effectively provide internal team members with appropriate resources to increase their expertise and innovate in this seemingly reactionary environment.

The perceived organizational support and interest in the greater good is represented by the perception among team members that integrity and respect for individuals’ contributions as well as diversity was very high, and there is a good level of pride among team members in being part of the organization. Feedback regarding the unmet desire to prioritize quality over quick fixes or market-driven needs indicated the perception of lacking interest in the greater good and the inconsistent accountability standards presented a challenge in creating an ongoing perception of organizational support, where some team members expressed confusion, frustration or a feeling of unfairness where accountability and recognition were concerned.

Lastly, the employee’s desire to provide service to the organization, as previously mentioned, was a very high health measurement for this organization, as the employees broadly expressed their belief in, pride in being a part of and commitment to this organization beyond just their “job”.

V. Conclusion

*Utilization of the Life Style Analysis Tool*

The first goal of this study was to demonstrate the Organizational Life Style analysis tool to present the organization’s motivating dynamics, resulting activity and behavior patterns and overall cultural structure. The Life Style Analysis Tool proved to be a straightforward framework to organize and analyze a large amount of data to get to a small subset of straightforward trends describing the company’s cultural dynamics presented as
behavior patterns striving toward a simple, direct goal. The tool provided many insights into
the organization’s primary motivations, on a day-to-day and a long term basis, for deep
examination of underlying driving forces across the organization.

*Uncover Underlying Cultural Themes through Alignment Analysis*

The second goal of this study was to provide an analysis of alignment within and
between the Life Style constructs to uncover potential issues within the organization that may
or may not be evident to the organization at this time. The analysis brought forth some fairly
obvious and typical issues, such as the tendency for technology organizations to struggle
between client needs and competitive innovation driven requirements. The analysis also
uncovered some trends that may be less apparent or not yet realized, for example, inter-
departmental communication and collaboration issues may indicate a potential challenge with
collaboration with external entities to deliver successful products or services to the market.

Even as this particular dynamic may not be an issue for this organization, the
realization of potential cultural challenges in this or other areas may provide insight into other
related challenges that the leadership has been trying to figure out, giving insight into an
answer to the question “Why is this always so hard for us?”

*Utilization of Data for Health Indicators*

The third goal of this study is to utilize the Life Style and alignment data to analyze
overall health and effectiveness of the organization. The broad realization of current or
potential misalignment issues, as well as resulting maladaptive behaviors that may be
resulting from those issues would be expected to provide new insights for further examination
and, at the very least, prompt new discussion among organizational leaders and members to
focus on efforts to become more aligned to meet organizational goals.
This organization in particular has recently defined, broadly communicated, and created strategic plans around a new set of vision, mission and value statements which has created more consistency that may be seen in other organizations. It is possible that some organizations that have not recently gone through a similar process would have more pronounced misalignment, inconsistency between team and individual responses and even conflicting goals with an outdated market perception. Similar examination in other organizations will provide a greater amount of awareness of the usefulness and potential impact of this tool in general.

*Thoughts for Future Use of the Tools*

Not only is application of the tools to other organization types, sizes and industries imperative to have a better understanding of the tool’s capabilities, expanding the areas and content of analysis to include additional input and measures would be very valuable. Examples of input and measures that would round out this research more completely include employee satisfaction measurements; actual financial performance data; and customer and external partner feedback.

Also to consider for future study in coordination with the Life Style analysis would be the study of individual organizational alignment in these various areas, as well as team Life Styles within an organization to analyze varying dynamics between teams that operate and are motivated differently.

The ability to translate the Individual Psychology-based Life Style analysis tool into organizational, team, family and other settings in various ways provides new opportunity. Further expanding the use of this practical theoretical framework to simplify the complexity of personal, group and organizational dynamics may provide new insights into increasing the level of personal, work and relationship potential in various aspects of life.
References


Premo, W. J. (2008) Organizational LifeStyle [Class Handouts]. Adler Graduate School, Bloomington, MN.


Appendix A

Employer of Choice Survey Questions/Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal Questions</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>I understand how my performance is measured [response average=3.51]</td>
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<td># Responses out of 77=</td>
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<tr>
<td>I enjoy working at [company] [4.22]</td>
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<td>My company provides room for growth/advancement [3.66]</td>
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<td>My company provides ample training for me to do my job [3.30]</td>
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<td>My workload is reasonable [3.45]</td>
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<td>I am proud to work at [company] [4.18]</td>
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<td>I make a difference at [company] [4.13]</td>
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<td>23</td>
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<td>I understand how my goals contribute to my team goals [4.14]</td>
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<td>I have to work extra hours to complete my work [3.83]</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work Team Questions</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My manager respects my opinion [4.18]</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>My team works well together [4.31]</td>
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<td>30</td>
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Diversity is respected in my team [4.19]  
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My teammates respect my opinion [4.30]  
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<td>0</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>46</td>
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I understand how my goals affect the company goals [4.00]  
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<tr>
<th>1</th>
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<th>3</th>
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My team continually improves the way we work together [3.88]  
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<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>13</td>
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</table>

My manager helps resolve team issues when they arise [3.91]  
<table>
<thead>
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<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>17</td>
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**Functional Area Questions**

I understand how my functional area’s goals affect the company’s goals [4.05]  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<td>11</td>
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My functional area works well together [3.95]  
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<td>0</td>
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My functional area continually improves the way we work together [3.73]  
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<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>40</td>
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The teams within my functional area communicate effectively [3.68]  
<table>
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<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>7</td>
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</table>

**Company-Upper Management Questions**

[company] communicates effectively [3.17]  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>3</td>
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[company] respects the diversity of its team members [4.21]  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
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<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>22</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

[company] values work/life balance for its team members [3.75]  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>13</td>
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</table>

[company] focuses on fixing problems rather than assigning blame [3.79]  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>4</th>
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<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>10</td>
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</table>

[company] treats our partners with integrity  
<p>| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
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<th>14</th>
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<td>[company] treats its team members with integrity [3.97]</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[company] team members’ benefits are competitive [3.09]</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[company] provides me with the necessary tools to do my job [3.66]</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe [company] will provide room for [professional/personal] growth [3.71]</td>
<td></td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I see myself working here 3 years from now [3.77]</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>4</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Open Questions**

What one thing would make working at [company] more rewarding?

What one thing could [company] do to have the greatest positive impact on our [business] partners and customers?

What one innovative thing could [company] do to improve your productivity the most?
Appendix B

Organizational Life Style Interview Questions

Interview Questions

1. What are 5 key words that describe the organization?

2. What was your first impression of the organization when you first started working here?

3. What is your earliest memory as a member of this organization? (vivid)

4. If you have experienced conflict, explain a specific situation (with supervisor/subordinate or peer) and how it resolved (or didn’t resolve) itself.
   a. Explain who you thought “won” and whether it was justified… (vivid moment)

5. How is your position vital for the organization’s missions and goals?

6. Do you feel as though the key values of the organization enable you to make choices/decisions that are in alignment with your values?

7. How are you and/or others held accountable for the work that you do?

8. What makes you proud of being a part of this organization?

9. What do you see as the main values that are displayed by employees at the company?

10. How does the organization react to environmental (e.g. industry, technology, political, competitors, etc.) changes that may influence it?

11. Rate from 1-10 your level of care/interest about the organization’s success. If you disregard the impact on your job security does that change?