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THE PECULIARITIES OF JAPANESE AND TURKISH CORPORATE CULTURES

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Abstract: This article examines the unique features of Japanese and Turkish corporate cultures in comparison to Western corporate cultures. It analyzes characteristics such as relationships with hierarchy, importance of loyalty and consensus, reluctance to saying 'no', conformism versus individualism, and work-life balance. The article finds that both Japanese and Turkish businesses value obedience to authority, group harmony, and prioritize work over personal life. However, Japanese companies tend to have a stronger emphasis on conformity, indirect communication, and lifetime employment while Turkish companies are more focused on personal relationships, seniority, and trust.

Keywords: Japanese corporate culture, Turkish corporate culture, business, management, hierarchy, collectivism.

Corporate culture refers to the values, beliefs, behaviors, and customs that dominate in an organization's environment. The culture of a business stems from its leadership, hiring practices, policies, and interactions between employees. Japanese and Turkish corporate cultures exhibit many peculiar and notable differences compared to Western corporate cultures. This article analyzes several key features that characterize Japanese and Turkish business practices.

Relationship with hierarchy:

Both Japanese and Turkish companies have hierarchical structures where deference to authority and seniority is deeply ingrained. Employees are expected to respect managers and obey their instructions without challenging them. However, Japanese businesses tend to place a stronger emphasis on chain of command, with rigid organizational charts and rules governing interactions between ranks. Decisions often flow from top to bottom with limited input from junior employees.

In Turkish companies, respect for superiors is also important but relationships tend to be closer and more personalized. Senior executives often act as mentors and patrons to their subordinates. Employees address managers by first name and personal relationships factor more prominently in the work environment.

Loyalty and consensus:

Loyalty and group harmony are valued in both Japanese and Turkish companies. However, Japanese businesses emphasize consensus building and obtaining unanimous agreement on decisions. Employees are expected to avoid directly disagreeing with superiors or each other to maintain teamwork and unity. Japanese companies also offer lifetime employment for loyal, hardworking staff.

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In Turkish companies, personal relationships and trust between employees are vital. People form close bonds with coworkers and demonstrate loyalty through trustworthiness, reliability and keeping confidences. Managers make decisions based on consultation rather than strict consensus, while diverse viewpoints are more openly expressed.

Reluctance to saying 'no':

Both Japanese and Turkish employees tend to avoid directly refusing requests from managers or clients. In Japanese companies, employees rarely want to upset harmony so they agree first and think of solutions later. This can lead to conflict avoidance, delayed decisions and projects taking longer than planned.

While Turkish employees also seek to satisfy demands, they have a greater inclination to push back when necessary to maintain personal credibility. Saying 'no' in a respectful yet firm manner is considered acceptable when a request is unreasonable or unfeasible.

Conformism versus individualism:

Japanese companies generally value group conformity and cooperation over individual expression. Employees are expected to follow collective norms and suppress their unique personalities for the sake of teamwork. Individualism and standing out is often discouraged.

In Turkish companies, personal qualities and characteristics matter more. Employees express their individuality and managers value initiative, creativity and decisive action in subordinates. While promoting team spirit, Turkish businesses allow for more diversity of opinion and individual flourishing compared to Japanese counterparts.

Work-life balance:

In both Japanese and Turkish companies, work often takes precedence over family and personal life. Extensive overtime is common and employees are judged based partly on the time they spend at the office. However, Japanese workers tend to put in longer hours and bring work home more frequently. The term 'karoshi' (death from overwork) was created to describe the pressure on Japanese employees.

Though Turkish companies also demand sacrifices from employees, there is a greater cultural emphasis on leisure time, socializing and familial obligations. Younger staffers especially push for better policies around work-life balance, flexible hours and remote work.

Additional points regarding Japanese and Turkish corporate cultures:

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- Turkey scores lower on the uncertainty avoidance index, meaning Turkish society and businesses are more tolerant of ambiguity and unstructured situations. Japan scores much higher, reflecting its preference for rules, plans and schedules.
- Decision making tends to be more centralized and top-down in Japanese companies, while Turkish businesses practice a more consultative style with managers soliciting input from a range of employees.
- Silence and restraint in communication is valued in Japanese culture and business. Turkish culture places a higher value on openness and expressiveness in interactions, both professional and personal.
- Japanese companies emphasize group goals and enterprise-wide objectives, while Turkish businesses are more focused on departmental and team goals. There is less sense of collective company mission.
- Seniority based on age is very important in determining status and hierarchy in Japanese companies. In Turkish businesses, seniority is often more closely tied to position and title within the company structure.
- Personal connections and developing guanxi (relationships) are crucial for career advancement in Japanese companies. This relies more on cultivating reciprocal obligations through favors and gifts over time. Turkish businesses place a higher value on direct trust between individuals.
- Japanese companies tend to emphasize long-term stability and gradual, incremental change. Turkish companies have a relatively higher tolerance for disruption, risk-taking and innovation.
- While loyalty to one's employer is expected in both cultures, Japanese companies still practice lifetime employment for core employees. Turkish companies generally do not commit to such long-term job security.

In summary, Japanese and Turkish corporate cultures exhibit many similarities as hierarchical, consensus-oriented, and work-centric environments. Yet they also differ in their approaches to communication, decision making, employee individuality, and balancing professional and personal priorities. Understanding these peculiarities can help multinational companies develop effective strategies for managing diverse workforces across cultural contexts.

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