

# IMPACTS OF ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE ON THE BUSINESS PERFORMANCE OF HCMC-BASED COMPANIES

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## Abstract

This research is to ponder the relationship between the organizational culture and the business performance. Around 300 respondents are randomly chosen from HCMC-based companies. The authors have found out four cultural factors affecting the business performance of HCMC-based companies and accordingly raise some solutions to the improvement in their performance.

## 1. Problem

Under the circumstance of economic globalization, Vietnam's companies must forcibly self-improve and grasp any opportunity to develop sustainably. Besides capital, human resource, business strategy and so on, the organizational culture also takes a crucial role in creation of competitive edge. The concept of "organizational culture" was born along with the emergence of business activities; and nowadays becomes an indispensable requirement for the development of a business and its distinctive feature among companies. Therefore, without the organizational culture, the sustainable development of a business may be posed to threat, especially in such the present-day harsh economic competition.

In order to well compete with foreign companies and maximize the business performance, each Vietnamese company must define their own identities, i.e. the organizational culture. They must realize that the effective weapon to surmount other rivals is the organizational culture, i.e. building up an organizational and managerial model based on traditional identities and culture.

It is possible to state that the organizational culture adheres to the success of a company. Thus, this paper is to explore cultural factors affecting the business performance of Vietnamese companies, thereby raising some solution to establishment and development of organizational culture in the hope of boosting the business performance.

## 2. Theoretical fundamentals

### *a. Concept of culture as a whole:*

Culture is the term that has various meaning. For example, in 1952, Alfred Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn compiled a list of 164 definitions of "culture"; and this list has been more supplemented.

Culture is defined as the spiritual values, points of view and proprieties that have become ordinary and existed stably within an organization (William, 1993).

Kotter and Heskett (1992) argue that culture signifies an independent system of values and norms which stipulates the proprieties wholly accepted by a community and lasts in such a long time. In other words, culture is the behavioral conventions accepted in an organization (Deal & Kennedy, 1982, 2000).

Schein (1992) defines organizational culture as "a pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way you perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems".

In one word, culture is the embodiment of behavior, perception and emotion rooted in mind or affected by learning and is the specific feature of a group but not an individual. To some extent, culture has a connection with traditional norms and etiquette of a community formed over time.

### ***b. Concepts of organizational culture:***

The organizational culture is the product of all members of a company at service of sustainable development. It is the collection of ideas, beliefs, values and norms accepted, shared and undertaken by a particular organization. The organizational culture creates distinctive features and is deemed as the identity of a company.

Many researchers in the world have introduced various definitions of organizational culture. For example:

As Jacques (1952) put it, the organizational culture is the daily propriety and perception that its members must observe so as to be accepted into. The organizational culture, as construed in this term, will comprise a series of etiquette, production methods, skills and expertise, discipline, management habits, the goals of members involved, business method, mode of salary payment, task views and conventions.

Organizational culture refers to a unique pattern of standards, values, beliefs and proprieties that are performed by mutual relation in work (El-dridge & Crombie, 1974).

The organizational culture is also "a pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way you perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems" (Schein, 1985).

With the above-stated approach, the organizational culture may be construed as the total of values, beliefs and habits formed over the existence and development of a company; and by the way prescribing appropriate kinds of behavior in particular situations and controlling the behavior of members towards one another.

### ***c. Organizational culture as the identities of a company:***

The organizational culture is deemed as the characteristics of a company because it is shaped

by various areas of organizational styles, i.e.:

**Creativity and risk-taking:** It is expressed by the extent to which members are encouraged to develop their creativity and risk-taking. For those adopting this style, employees are always encouraged to willingly accept risks and be ceaselessly creative. They are extremely flexible to cope with economic fluctuations.

**Thoroughness:** Members are encouraged to present or analyze an issue thoroughly and critically. For those adopting this style, the each minute detail will be weighed up.

**Goal orientation:** It is defined by the extent to which the manager attends to the goal instead of the method or process to achieve such the goal.

**Humanistic orientation:** Managerial decisions must be based on interests of each member in an organization. Human resources are the most invaluable asset and the creativity of each is the key to success.

**Collective orientation:** Activities must be designed and organized by small teams but not each individual. Each member must improve the team spirit and establish the team identity. Thus, those adopting this attribute always highly value the team spirit.

**Involvement:** It is expressed in that each member of an organization will be eager to fairly compete with one another instead of compromise or cooperation.

**Stability:** This attribute is explained by whether organizational activities are to maintain or change the current situation. An organization always aims at stability and development.

### ***d. Indices of organizational culture:***

Silverzweig & Allan (1976) might be deemed as pioneers in researching impacts of culture on the business performance. By researching eight companies, they realized that the alternations in culture often entailed the fluctuation in the business performance. Taking the research by Denison (1990) into contemplation, it lasted for six years and was conducted in 34 American companies that had bases in 24 various industrial countries. He collected 43,747 opinions from employees with a view to studying the impacts of culture on business performance. Since then, the behavioral theory was born in organizations and closely adhered to the cultural strengths and business performance.

**Table 1: Some typical researches on impacts of culture on business performance**

Authors	Indices	Components of business performance	Scope of researching
Denison (1990)	1. Involvement trait	1. Revenue	Conducted within six years in 34 US-based companies of 24 various industries
	2. Consistency trait	2. Income/revenue	
	3. Adaptability trait	3. Income/capital	
	4. Mission trait		
Gordon & Ditomasso (1992)	1. Cultural strengths	1. Growth of assets	Conducted within six years in 11 US-based insurers
	2. Adaptability	2. Growth of profit	
	3. Stability		
Kotter & Heskett (1992)	1. Cultural strengths	1. Net income per annum	Conducted within 11 years in 207 US-based companies of 22 various industries
	2. Compatibility between strategy and culture	2. Investing profit	
	3. Adaptability	3. Stock value per annum	

*Source:* Empirical Studies on the Organizational Culture Performance Link

Ashkanasy, Neal M., C. Wilderom & M. F. Peterson (eds.), *Handbook of Organizational Culture & Climate*

Denison has divided organizational culture into four traits:

- Consistency: The consistency trait usually aims at the internal issues of an organization and creating a leverage in the system. Emulation is often encouraged to maintain the tradition. The collective strength is generated from internal integration and effectiveness. The consistency trait includes core values, coordination and integration, and policies on remuneration and commendation.

- Involvement: Its focus is to make members attached to the organization in response to changes in the external environment. The employee's interests are attended to as a way to achieve higher level of business performance. If the employee involvement is enhanced, their sense of responsibility and self-esteem shall be improved, thereby working consciously and responsibly. The involvement trait consists of empowerment, team orientation and capacity for development.

- Adaptability: An organization with a strong external focus often focuses on adapting and changing in response to changes in external environment. It emphasizes norms and beliefs that

may translate external data into internal corresponding behaviors of an organization. The adaptability trait comprises creativity, customer focus and organizational learning.

- Mission: An organization just caring for meeting the demands of external environment without needing any quick change is corresponding to the mission trait. It highly values the harmony of the organization's mission. The employees need to understand thoroughly and have a clear vision of their role and mission in the organization. The mission trait includes strategic direction and intent, goals and objectives, and vision.

### ***e. Research model and hypotheses:***

Many researches on organizational culture have been conducted around the world. In this paper, the scale introduced by Denison (1990) shall be employed for the research in HCMC of Vietnam due to its reliability and validity. However, for cultural differences between the US and Vietnam, some indices of the original scale shall be adjusted to fit in Vietnam.

In order to adjust and modify the scale, the qualitative research was conducted by means of

discussions in two groups of 10. The participants are employees working for HCMC-based companies, aging from 25 to 35. Compared with twelve indices set forth in Denison model (1990), this research just employs seven indices namely empowerment, team orientation, coordination and integration, policy on salary and bonus, creativity, organizational learning, and working environment.

(1) Empowerment: The leader must be decisive, responsible and self-confident, and make timely decision to deal with a hardship. The leader also facilitates the subordinates' work; encourages them to promote their competence and latent talent for the development of the organization; enhance the employee involvement; and promulgate motivational policies in order for employees to work more productively.

(2) Team orientation: Team is group of people who will work together to deal with an assignment. The team orientation may improve the cooperation, coordination and mutual acquaintance, thereby working out new solution to each problem. The greatest benefit of team orientation is that it exploits the individual talent and responsibility to fulfill a task to the best.

(3) Coordination and integration: If the employee relation, i.e. the ways in which managers exchange information and ideas with their employees, involve them in decision-making process and encourage them to want to work well, is improved, employees will feel concerned and respected and will attach to the organization.

(4) Policy on salary and bonus: An appropriate policy on salary and bonus is a good weapon to improve the business performance. The commendation and reward must be in compliance with the organizational culture. The policy on remuneration and commendation shall just be effective once core values of the organization is defined clear-cut.

(5) Creativity: Organizations always anticipate the critical autonomous thinking from employees who dare to propose innovative ideas and will not be exhausted by the deluge of work. The creativity may be exemplified as the alteration of work procedures and methods.

(6) Organizational learning: The organizational learning and training must be taken seriously and systematically with a view to enabling employees to develop their occupational skills by means of

designated courses, internal exchange programs, and external academic programs.

(7) Working environment: The employees will be encouraged to work in the event that they are respected and nurture a good colleagueship. In a facilitative working environment, they may be stimulated to promote their talent to the max, thereby performing better.

The business performance is the relationship between the input cost and output price. In other words, the organization invests an amount of capital to gain a higher profit or added value. In order to enhance the productivity, the organization may innovate the management procedure with a view to utilizing the human resources effectively. If an organization likes to perform better, it had better invest in hi-tech, human resources and management method, thereby increasing the added value and improving the competitiveness.

The business performance reflects the competence of utilizing available resources to gain the highest profit with the lowest cost. Accordingly, it is not merely the relationship between the input cost and the output price, yet primarily the fulfillment of business goals (Price, 1972). If the objectives are out of reach, the business performance is null. Yuchtman and Seashore (1967) assume that the business performance will be attainable if the organization may make the best use of available resources and even rare ones so as to minimize unnecessary costs in fulfillment of business goals and thereby maintaining the market share.

The business performance is identified by several of criteria such as: the revenue keeps growing annually; the business scope is expanded; the employees are retained; the performance of management board is improved; and the salary is adjusted up year by year.

Via what has been presented so far, we may produce the following hypotheses regarding the relationship between cultural indices and the business performance (See Figure 1).

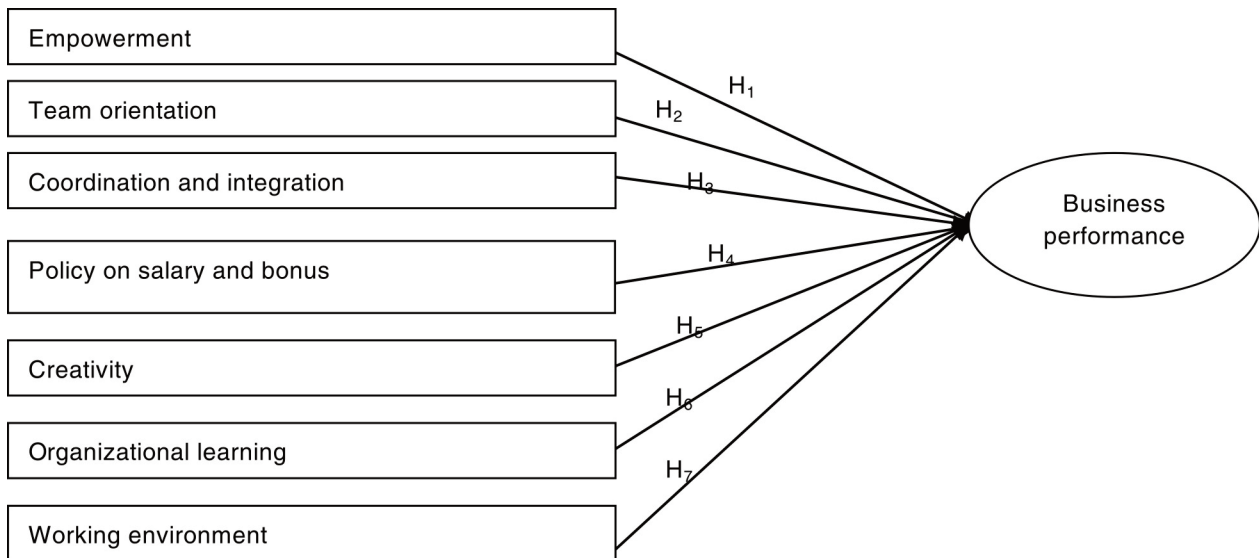
### **3. Research methodology**

#### ***a. The scale of cultural factors and the business performance:***

The scale of cultural traits consists of seven indices measured with 29 observed variables, i.e. four for the empowerment, four for the team orientation, four for coordination and integration,



**Figure 1: The research model proposing cultural factors**



H<sub>1</sub>: the positive relationship between empowerment and the business performance

H<sub>2</sub>: the positive relationship between team orientation and the business performance

H<sub>3</sub>: the positive relationship between regular coordination and integration with the business performance

H<sub>4</sub>: the positive relationship between the policy on remuneration and commendation with the business performance

H<sub>5</sub>: the positive relationship between the creativity and the business performance

H<sub>6</sub>: the positive relationship between the organizational learning and the business performance

H<sub>7</sub>: the positive relationship between the working environment and the business performance

four for the policy on salary and bonus, three for the creativity, five for the organizational learning, and five for the working environment. All scales employed in the model are multi-dimensional ones.

The business performance is evaluated by following criteria: the revenue keeps growing annually; the business scope is expanded; the employees are retained; the performance of management board is improved; and the salary is adjusted up year by year. Accordingly, the scale for business performance includes five observed variables. The paper is to research the impact of cultural factors on the business performance.

The five-point Likert scale employed varies from 1 for absolute disagreement to 5 for absolute agreement.

## ***b. Sampling:***

Samples shall be gathered according to the convenience sampling practice. The primary tests conducted within this research are Cronbach

Alpha analysis, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and regression analysis. According to Hair et al. (1998), in order to run the EFA, it is necessary to have at least 5 samples for an observed variable. This research is based on 42 questions, and thus the sample population should be at least 210 ( $N = 42 \times 5$ ). However, in order to attain this sample population, some 300 questionnaires are distributed among HCMC-based companies and just 272 ones (90.66%) are proper in return. The remainder are improper due to the fact that there are many unanswered questions left.

- For the place of working: The survey is conducted in 12 HCMC-based companies. Of all interviewees, there are 71 respondents from joint-stock companies, accounting for 26.1%; 57 respondents from foreign-owned companies, making up 21%; 56 respondents from limited liability companies, representing 20.6%; 47 respondents from state-owned companies, accounting for 17.3%; 32 respondents from joint-venture companies, making up 11.8%; and 9 respondents from private compa-

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nies, representing 3.3%.

- For the educational level: There are 171 respondents with university degree; 66 persons with postgraduate degrees and 35 respondents with vocational or college qualification, respectively representing 62.9%, 24.3% and 12.9%.

- For the position: Some 156 respondents are office employees (52.4%); 100 respondents are managers (36.8%); and 16 respondents are directors (5.9%).

- For the work experience: There are 14 respondents with under one-year experience (5.1%); 41 respondents with one- to two-year experience (15.1%); 103 respondents with two- to five-year experience (37.9%); 87 respondents with five- to ten-year experience (32%) and 27 respondents with more than ten-year experience (9.9%).

For the monthly income: There are 11 respondents with the monthly income of under VND2m (4%); 86 respondents with VND2-5m; 88 respondents with VND5-8m (32.4%); 50 respondents with VND8-10m (18.45%); and 37 respondents with more than VND10m (13.6%).

### *c. Data analyses and results:*

The EFA shows that the third variable of the 'empowerment' (PCLD3) must be left out due to the fact that its factor loading is smaller than 0.342; and these seven indices have been established with the variance extracted as 67.62%, larger than 50%, including following observed variables: five for the working environment, four for the policy on salary and bonus, five for the organizational learning, four for coordination and integration, three for the creativity, four for the team orientation, and three for the empowerment.

The scale of business performance tested with the Cronbach Alpha has produced a satisfactory alpha of 0.827. Moreover, the item-total correlation of its variables is larger than 0.5; and thus they may be employed for the following EFA. By running EFA, the scale for performance extracts one item at the eigenvalue of 2.96 and the variance extracted is 59.21%, larger than 50%. Therefore, the observed variables of this scale shall be employed in next analyses. Results of the preliminary test show that the seven indices of the model still exist as established in initial hypotheses.

**Table 2: Summary of results of scale test**

Concepts	Indicators	Number of observed variables	Cronbach Alpha	Total variance extracted (%)	Evaluation
Organizational culture traits	Empowerment	3	0.783	67.62	Satisfactory
	Team orientation	4	0.784		
	Coordination and integration	4	0.783		
	Policy on salary and bonus	4	0.874		
	Creativity	3	0.887		
	Organizational learning	5	0.807		
	Working environment	5	0.85		
Business performance		5	0.827	59.21	

The preliminary test of the scale of cultural indices has proven that it satisfies the Cronbach Alpha, ranging between 0.78 and 0.87. Therefore, the 29 observed variables of seven indices may be employed for running EFA because the item-total correlation is larger than 0.4.

### *d. Regression analysis:*

On the basis of the two tested scales, the regression and correlation analyses shall be conducted next to clarify the relationship among indices.

Assumedly, the business performance depends

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on and has a linear relationship with organizational culture.

Let us label:

$X_1$  as empowerment (PCLD)

$X_2$  as team orientation (LVN)

$X_3$  as coordination and integration (TDHT)

$X_4$  as policy on salary and bonus (CSTL)

$X_5$  as creativity (ST)

$X_6$  as organizational learning (DTPT)

$X_7$  as working environment (MTLV)

Y: business performance (dependent variable)

We have the following regression equation:

$$Y = a + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + b_3X_3 + b_4X_4 + b_5X_5 + b_6X_6 + b_7X_7$$

Accordingly, the regression equation will consist of seven independent variables labeled from  $X_1$  to  $X_7$  and a dependent variable labeled as Y. The results of regression analysis are set forth in the Table 3.

$$Y = 3.91 + 0.239X_4 + 0.140X_5 + 0.168X_6 + 0.160X_7$$

$$\text{or } Y = 3.91 + 0.239\text{CS} + 0.140\text{st} + 0.168\text{DTPT} + 0.160\text{MTLV}$$

Due to the fact that the regression model comprises seven independent variables, the VIF shall be added to the Table 3. Apparently, the coefficients of these independent variables are smaller than 2.0, i.e. they do not expose any resonance. The 'policy on salary and bonus' takes the highest value and is respectively followed by the 'creativity', the 'organizational learning' and the 'working environment'. The remainder bear the significance larger than 0.05; i.e. they are not statistically significant and will not impinge on the business performance, either.

The test of model fitness proves that the adjusted  $R^2$  equals to 0.368, larger than 0.3, and thus the regression model is appropriate to the hypotheses and its components are statistically sig-

**Table 3: Coefficients of the regression equation <sup>a</sup>**

Indicators	Non-standardized coefficient		Standardized coefficient	t	Sig.	Multi-collinearity	
	B	Standard deviation	Beta			Variable acceptance level	VIF
(Constant)	3.91	1.208		3.237	0.001		
PCLD	0.092	0.078	0.064	1.179	0.24	0.805	1.242
LVN	0.127	0.074	0.098	1.726	0.085	0.731	1.369
TDHT	0.061	0.074	0.047	0.833	0.406	0.728	1.374
CS	0.252	0.061	0.239	4.143	<b>0</b>	0.701	1.426
ST	0.182	0.075	0.14	2.425	<b>0.016</b>	0.7	1.428
DTPT	0.165	0.063	0.168	2.628	<b>0.009</b>	0.57	1.755
MTLV	0.147	0.052	0.16	2.846	<b>0.005</b>	0.744	1.345

NB: 'a' represents the dependent variable.

According to the Table 3, only four out of seven indices of the organizational culture scale have impacts on the business performance and are statistically significant (Sig.<0.05). They are the policy on salary and bonus ( $X_4$ ), the creativity ( $X_5$ ), the organizational learning ( $X_6$ ) and the working environment ( $X_7$ ). And, the regression equation shall be:

nificant in terms of linear relationship (Sig. F=0.000).

Given the results of regression and correlation analyses, four primary organizational cultural traits affecting the business performance may be named as the 'policy on salary and bonus', the 'creativity', the 'organizational learning' and the

‘working environment’. The remainder, namely the ‘empowerment’, the ‘team orientation’, the ‘coordination and integration’ do not affect the business performance. This may be explained that most Vietnamese employees have not got used to team working and they are too timid and shy to share their ideas with colleagues and bosses. Accordingly, in order to enhance the business performance, each organization should take this weakness seriously.

Besides, hypotheses labeled from  $H_4$  to  $H_7$  are acceptable, whereas the remainder are not.

#### **4. Discussion and proposals**

The research has defined organizational cultural traits affecting the business performance, namely the ‘policy on salary and bonus’, the ‘creativity’, the ‘organizational learning’ and the ‘working environment’. Hence, in order to enhance the business performance, it is necessary to enhance these cultural traits by specific policies.

##### ***a. For the policy on salary and bonus:***

As far as the salary is concerned, the payment of salary must be made rationally with a view of the fact that the payees may support their family life fully. A good policy on salary and bonus is deemed as a good instrument to improve the business performance.

Along with the economic development, the income gap in society is getting more serious, especially in the public sector compared with the private and foreign ones. At present, Vietnam’s enterprises have different mode of payment. Yet, the state-owned organizations still comply with the provision on basic salary (as provided in the Decree 97/2009 and 98/2009/NĐ-CP, the basic salary for locally-run organizations is VND980,000.00; and VND1,340,000.00 for foreign-invested ones). Meanwhile, other type of enterprises can pay their employees based on realities of their sector and business performance. Since the salary is an instrument to measure the labor productivity, the policy on salary must be consistent, transparent and fair for the sake of employees. Psychologically speaking, an employee has a tendency to compare his/her remuneration with that of others. Thus, an unfair policy on

salary may deteriorate their involvement in work. To deal with this problem, the Deputy PM Nguyễn Sinh Hùng, on Sept. 10, 2009, gave a guideline on salary payment through bank account of employees to save them from comparison of their salaries. Besides, companies also need to evaluate and adjust its salary policy with a view to guaranteeing and improving the employee’s life.

In addition to the policy on remuneration, each company should have a reserve for commending and rewarding well-performed employees. This may be deemed as a good instrument to encourage employees to devote themselves to the development of the organization and therefore must be taken seriously.

Each company has their own strength, and thus it is impossible to integrate the policy on salary and bonus of another organization into its. Thus, in order to establish such a good policy, managers themselves must recognize the strengths of their organization. Although salary and bonus may be made in cash, its effectiveness is just for the time being. In the long run, each organization must create other modes of commendation and reward which may make employees feel respected and attached to the organization, such as tours, promotion, honoring in the intramural magazine and the like. Record of employee’s contributions and non-financial commendation and reward will attach an employee to the company, especially when the company must weather financial difficulties.

##### ***b. For organizational learning:***

One of the factors to boost the business performance is to remain the high-qualified human resources. It is possible to state that the employees decide the destiny of an organization. Thus, companies should enable employees to enhance their occupational competence and skills. Besides, the organizational learning and training is also to motivate employees and call for their cooperation in the organization for a long time.

A high-qualified human resource shall be a competitive advantage of companies when the organizational learning is attended by employees and meet their occupational requirements. An ef-



fective training course helps employees to visualize their work, upgrade new knowledge, and orient what they must do better, and above all, to foresee the opportunity of promotion. These things, as a whole, will stimulate employees to devote themselves to the business and accept demanding tasks, with the result that the organization may develop and improve.

Accordingly, in order to have an efficient organizational learning, managers should systematically consider the present and future demands of their organization in combination with analyzing and evaluating the competence and demand of each individual. By doing so, the managers may propose suitable training courses.

### **c. For the working environment:**

In accordance with several of experts and managers, the business performance depends much on the working environment. Results of this research also affirm its impact on the business performance. Thus, managers should set up a professional working environment in order for employees to develop and perform their latent talent; and renovate the facilities to facilitate their work as well.

An ideal working environment, in general, must be democratic, equal and hospitable among superiors and subordinates. The employee relation and participation must be improved. In essence, the managers must master the psychology of the employees and be able to put themselves in employees' shoes with a view to understanding their employees better and allocating work effectively. Managers should consider their subordinate as colleagues who need sharing information and know what to do. If so, the business performance will be enhanced and the company may avoid unexpected risks.

### **d. For the creativity:**

At present, many companies have a high requirement for the employee's creativity that may produce unexpected achievements in work and improve the competitive advantage. "Your creativity makes you a millionaire", as the saying goes; and companies must take it seriously, especially when launching new product lines.

The birth of new products and services is orig-

inated from systemizing ideas with a view to changing the current circumstance of a company. Thus, in order to attain the creativity, the company should never overvalue a product or service; neither underestimate its rivals nor boast up customer demands. Instead, it must consecutively inspire employees and enable them to work creatively.

## **5. Limitations and further researches**

This research just evaluates seven out of twelve cultural traits affecting the business performance by Denison (1990) and the data are mainly pooled within the HCMC only. Thus, the research findings may be better if the research employs wholly twelve factors by Denison and are conducted in various regions of Vietnam. This is also an orientation for further researches■

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