Doing Durable Organisational Identity Work in the Transforming World of Work: Meeting the Challenge of Different Workplace Strategies

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Abstract : Organisational Identity (OI) refers to who and what the organisation is, what it stands for and does, and what it aspires to become. OI explores the perspectives of how we see ourselves, are seen by others and aspire to be seen. It provides as rationale the 'why' for the organisation's continued existence. The most widely accepted differentiating features of OI are encapsulated in the organisation's core, distinctive, differentiating, and enduring attributes. OI finds its concrete expression in the organisation's Purpose, Vision, Strategy, Core Ideology, and Legacy. In the emerging new order infused by hyper-turbulence and hyper-fluidity, the VICCAS world, OI provides a secure anchor and steady reference point for the organisation, particularly the growing widespread focus on Purpose, which is indicative of the organisation's sense of social citizenship. However, the transforming world of work (TWOW) - particularly the potent mix of ongoing disruptive innovation, the 4th Industrial Revolution, and the gig economy with the totally unpredicted COVID19 pandemic - has resulted in the consequential adoption of different workplace strategies by organisations in terms of how, where, and when work takes place. Different employment relations (transient to permanent); work locations (on-site to remote); work time arrangements (full-time at work to flexible work schedules); and technology enablement (face-to-face to virtual) now form the basis of the employer/employee relationship. The different workplace strategies, fueled by the demands of TWOW, pose a substantive challenge to organisations of doing durable OI work, able to fulfill OI's critical attributes of core, distinctive, differentiating, and enduring. OI work is contained in the ongoing, reciprocally interdependent stages of sense-breaking, sense-giving, internalisation, enactment, and affirmation. The objective of our paper is to explore how to do durable OI work relative to different workplace strategies in the TWOW. Using a conceptual-theoretical approach from a practice-based orientation, the paper addresses the following topics: distinguishes different workplace strategies based upon a time/place continuum; explicates stage-wise the differential organisational content and process consequences of these strategies for durable OI work; indicates the critical success factors of durable OI work under these differential conditions; recommends guidelines for OI work relative to TWOW; and points out ethical implications of all of the above.

Keywords : organisational identity, workplace strategies, new world of work, durable organisational identity work
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