

National versus organizational culture

Saint Roastery - coffee shop&roastery - horeca

In this paper I will address the impact of the Romanian national culture on the working environment at the company Saint Roastery, small-medium company based in Bucharest, the capital of Romania. The organizational culture of the company will also be analyzed.

The workplace in Romania has been under a lot of change in the past half century. Romania is one of the former communist countries, that changes regime from communist to so-called democracy in 1989. During the communist period, the work was an obligation, people were assigned positions at the beginning of their 'careers' and they would have those positions almost their entire life. People were not encouraged to give the best of themselves, almost the entire work was focused on production, in terms of high quantities, not necessarily liked to quality. There was no career involved, no development path, either professional or personal. Employees were mainly executives and professional advance was mostly based on affiliation to the communist party. A high respect and obedience was demonstrated toward the Managers, the higher hierarchical roles. Employees were discouraged from expressing own opinions or ideas. No need for motivation, people just had to work to survive. There was a slogan 'they pretend to pay us, we pretend to work'.

After 1990, things have started to change, slowly changes in human capital mindset have started to appear. The most important aspect began that people started becoming aware of their own value, and the specialization, seriosity, determination became important values. Some former employees became entrepreneurs, others became managers, people started to think of work as means of professional development, or self development. Even people started thinking as profession in terms of passion. Work was not anymore something mandatory but it became also fulfilling.

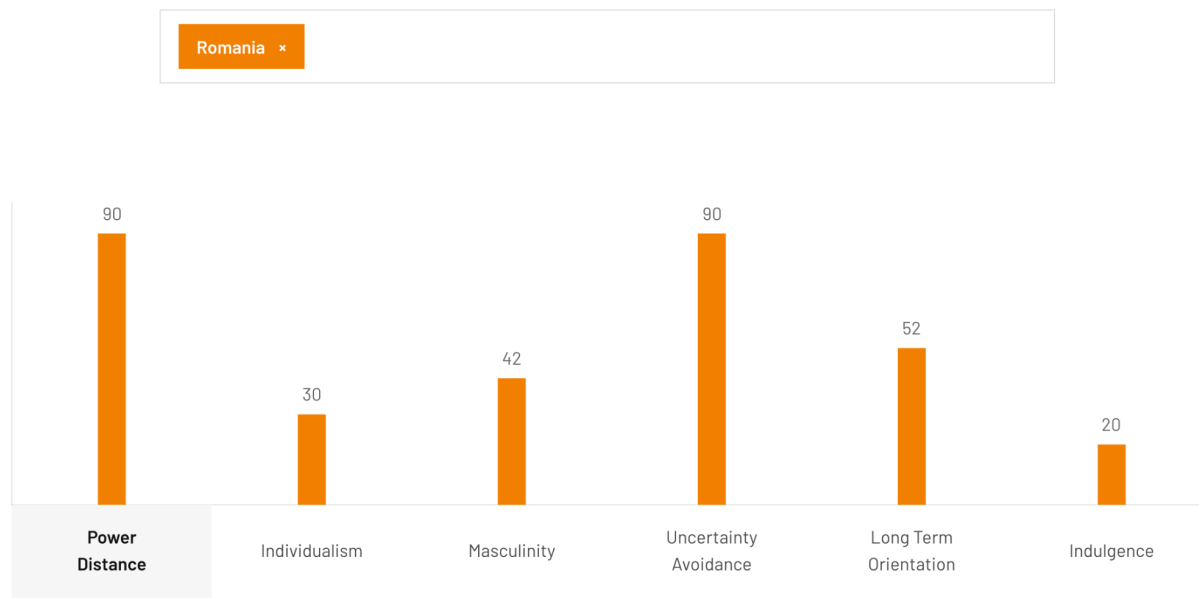
Career development path started to appear, dedicated human resources departments, talent acquisition, motivation and retention programs appeared. A long and tedious process, with many lessons learned and mistakes happening.

Nowadays, things in terms of national culture at the workplace are very diversified.

Whilst back in the days there was a lot of respect and people listened to the higher hierarchical roles, currently there is a big generation gap, the new employees want to make a difference, are reluctant in listening to higher roles and challenge the status quo, which can be both good or not so good (constant challenge can be a turn off in the collaboration).

Also that gen-z employees need a lot of motivation, are seeking constantly for new challenges, that they get bored with easily (social media has a big impact on low attention span) and lack the resilience and grit to carry on tasks that take longer to achieve.

According to Hofstede Institute, the dimensions of the romanian national culture are as follows and they have great influences at the workplace:



- Power distance: there is still inequality between different individual from different social classes, quite a strict obedience to higher hierarchical positions;
- Individualism vs. collectivism: the romanian people are more oriented towards the collective society, mainly in the small cities or rural areas. In the big cities, there is a tendency towards individualism .
- Masculinity vs. femininity: There are still remaining of the patriarchal romanian culture, it is still work in progress to become an equal society in terms of gender equality.
- Uncertainty avoidance: The romanians need certainty at the workplace and are high avoider of uncertainty. There is quite a long way for romanians to learn to deal with uncertainty, no school education in this regard, just personal development and involvement of liberal professions (e.g. therapists), mostly in the big cities.
- Long-term vs. short-term orientation: Being a developing country, with high degrees of poverty and big differences between urban and rural areas, the romanians have quite a low long term orientation. Most of the romanians have the survival mechanism in place, the concern for tomorrow.
- Indulgence: the romanians tend to be very criticizing and low tolerant to mistakes, due to education and need for validation, and perhaps fear of losing money.

There are different working domains which are regarded differently by the romanians. For example, working in the horeca industry is regarded as a temporary job for most of the employees, either as a means of earning a living at the beginning of the career, or as a

temporary until something better comes along. Especially young people are attracted to this domain, gen-z.

Saint Roastery is a fairly young company, a family business startup, opened in 2019, in the horeca industry: coffee roastery and coffee shop, currently with a team of 16 people, owners included.

Employee turnover is a challenge of the company, given also the industry specifics, mostly gen-z workers, with commitment issues, that have 'nothing' to loose and are in constant chase of better workplaces (sometimes for 'easy money').

Also the Covid pandemic has lead to a big change of professional careers for most of the horeca employees, many people lost their jobs during the pandemic and had to reorient themselves, without coming back after the pandemic ended.

The company culture is mostly communicated verbally and enforced via trainings, meetings and power of example. The values are well known by the older employees (within the company) and are passed by to new employees via onboarding trainings and regular followups.

In terms of cultural dimensions at the workplace:

- Power distance: is quite low, there is a degree of egalitarianism between employees and higher hierarchical roles, that encourages communication and innovation, but sometimes leads to lack of respect towards higher roles and rules bending;
- Individualism vs. collectivism: the company is promoting a collectivism approach, where the team members should take care of each other and together of the customers; yet individuals are encouraged to outperform themselves. The search for rising stars is continuous and encouraged. Management is looking to identify strengths and career paths for
- Masculinity vs. femininity: most of the times there is equalitarianism behaviour, gender differences or biases are discouraged. Yet, due to the national culture, there are situations when masculinity inclination is present and disobedience might happen form male employees to female managers.
- Uncertainty avoidance: There is still orientation toward uncertainty avoidance, though the general mindset has changed especially during the pandemic, when uncertainty was the biggest certainty.
- Long-term vs. short-term orientation: The owners have mainly a short term orientation, the long term orientation is work in progress.
- Indulgence: there is quite high indulgence for mistakes from the owner, but things are starting to change due to the team increase and strict rules in place.

The national culture has a big impact on the working environment, especially since there are employees from different generations (gen z, millenials) with different mindsets and different attitudes toward work. The organizational culture works towards aligning employees to the same standards of work and behavior. The customer experience is one of

the biggest focuses, next to product quality and service. The owners have created a culture based on their own experience, national and international, and the talent acquisition is mainly focused on the values promoted by the organizational culture: honesty, integrity, loyalty, professionalism, team work.

Many resources are allocated to onboarding new employees and recurring training happen to remind the team about the values and the organizational culture.

The firing of underperforming members, which are not aligned to the values is also a constant happening.