

Indian Institute of Management Indore

Post Graduate Programme in Management for Working Executives

**Working in the ‘lala’ land – Draft 2**

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**Introduction:**

Organisational culture plays a crucial role in shaping the work environment and employee experience. Aryan Sharma's journey from a multinational corporation (MNC) to a 'lala' company provides a compelling case study of the challenges and transformations that can occur during a significant cultural shift. This case study delves into Aryan's experiences, highlighting the cultural differences, professional growth, challenges faced during the COVID-19 pandemic, and ultimately, his decision to resign due to cultural misalignment and job dissatisfaction.

**Background:**

Aryan, a young and highly motivated individual, was diligently working in an MNC in Mumbai to achieve his life goals. However, his life took an unexpected turn when he received a call from his father and due to health reasons, he had to relocate to a small town where Aryan had never lived before.

Putting his career aspirations aside, Aryan decided to leave the bustling city life behind and move to this unfamiliar town. This transition not only changed his living environment but also transformed his work life. Instead of the organised structure of the MNC, Aryan found himself working in a small, unorganised private company.

**Transition to the 'Lala' Company:**

Aryan's transition to the 'lala' company was initially marked by a sense of optimism and excitement. He appreciated the company's agile approach, which allowed for more flexibility.

The camaraderie among colleagues at the 'lala' company was a notable difference for Aryan. This informal, collaborative environment promoted open communication and teamwork, making it easier to build professional relationships and work towards common goals. This supportive and flexible work culture was a significant factor in Aryan's initial positive outlook during his transition.

Soon, Aryan was assigned several company accounts to manage, and he dedicated himself to mastering the tasks. Given that this was a different industry and sector, Aryan had to put in considerable effort to excel. Despite initial glitches and difficulties, he soon acquired the necessary skills and began his work journey positively.

A couple of months later, Aryan was entrusted with the company's major revenue-generating account at the client's request. This positioned him as a valued employee. For the new accounts, Aryan decided to hold his first official meeting with the heads of different departments. He scheduled the meeting to last an hour and sent an email invitation to all the relevant HODs.

However, at the time of the meeting, a few HODs were absent, and Aryan had to call them multiple times to join. The meeting eventually started half an hour late and extended for three hours, not due to detailed discussions but because the HODs were busy on their phones throughout the meeting. This lack of basic meeting etiquette was unexpected for Aryan and came as an eye opener.

Aryan started noticing a different culture, particularly the late working hours. Most employees stayed late, and Aryan felt it was more about appearances than actual productivity. This practice seemed unsustainable and indicative of a culture that valued optics over outcomes. While Aryan enjoyed his job for the creative experience it offered, he struggled to align with the culture of late working hours and working seven days a week without a clear reason.

Eventually, Aryan realised that this culture was not just due to the employees' willingness but also the owner's expectation that employees work seven days a week since they were being paid for it. This realisation was quite disheartening for Aryan.

Almost a year had passed since Aryan started working at the “lala” company. Within that time, he received praise for his work from both his clients and the company's owner, Mr. Shyam. Impressed by Aryan’s performance, Mr. Shyam promised him a significant raise and a bonus. Aryan was pleased to be recognised by both his boss and clients and was motivated to continue working efficiently.

Despite his significant contributions and achievements, Aryan received a 5% annual increment, which was fixed as per the new company policy. The absence of a formal structure or consistent process for increments and promotions, coupled with the policy's frequent changes, made it challenging to ascertain the goals and path needed for promotion or increment. Throughout his tenure at the "lala" company, Aryan's annual increment remained at 5%. While this may have been acceptable to some, Aryan felt undervalued and unappreciated. This lack of recognition and appreciation from management significantly impacted Aryan's job satisfaction and motivation.

As Aryan became more deeply involved in his work, he began to notice differences in the organisation’s culture. He observed that Mr. Shyam's approach was more client-centric, which became evident when a client objected to a project's design despite prior approval.

In this particular situation, Aryan had diligently followed the necessary procedures and obtained all required approvals for the project's design. However, when the client raised an objection, Mr. Shyam sided with the client and attributed the oversight to Aryan. This response from Mr. Shyam appeared to undermine Aryan's efforts and professionalism, creating a sense of injustice and mistrust in the company's decision-making process. Aryan observed several similar scenarios, leading to a lack of job involvement.

**Impact of COVID-19**

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many people, including Aryan, took the opportunity to reflect on their lives. Aryan reconnected with some of his friends from the MNC days, which reminded him of his experiences there.

During his tenure at the MNC, Aryan experienced a clear and consistent set of company policies, a stark contrast to the fluctuating and unpredictable policies at the "Lala" company. At the MNC, increments and promotions were tied to specific milestones, providing a clear roadmap for employees to strive towards. This structured approach served as a motivational tool, encouraging employees to work diligently to achieve these milestones.

The promotion and increment policies at the MNC were well-defined and explained to employees from the day of their orientation. This clarity ensured that employees understood the expectations and requirements for career advancement, fostering a sense of direction and purpose in their work. Additionally, the transparent nature of these policies instilled a sense of fairness among employees, as they knew that their hard work and achievements would be recognised and rewarded accordingly.

At the MNC, the workflow was characterized by a high degree of formality and organization. Meetings were held punctually and followed a structured agenda, ensuring that discussions were efficient and productive. This level of organization extended beyond meetings; daily tasks and projects were also managed in a systematic manner, with clear timelines and expectations.

The company's dedication to organization and structure also reflected in its approach to work-life balance. Employees were expected to adhere to dedicated working hours and days, which allowed for better planning and time management. This structured approach not only enhanced productivity but also contributed to a healthier work-life balance for employees.

Aryan's realization that his personal life was also more structured and organized during his time at the MNC speaks to the overall impact of the company's culture. The emphasis on organization and structure permeated all aspects of employees' lives, creating a sense of stability and predictability that contributed to their overall well-being.

**Resignation:**

Aryan's choice to leave the 'lala' company was a significant one, marked by a series of events that left him feeling disheartened and disconnected from the company's culture and leadership. Despite being presented with a promotion and the chance to oversee operations in London, Aryan declined these opportunities. They weren't enough to counterbalance his increasing dissatisfaction with his current role.

His resignation primarily stemmed from a decline in job satisfaction and engagement, influenced by the company's lack of structured policies, inadequate response to the pandemic, and failure to prioritize employee safety. Additionally, the absence of recognition added to his growing discontent.

Aryan's decision to resign highlights the importance of a cultural fit and the need for professional acknowledgment in the workplace. Despite the allure of career advancement, Aryan's resignation underscores the crucial role of job satisfaction and a supportive work environment. His experience serves as a poignant reminder of how company culture and leadership can significantly impact employee morale and retention.

**Conclusion:**

Aryan's journey from the MNC to the 'lala' company reflects the profound impact of organizational culture on employee experience and satisfaction. His experiences highlight the importance of a structured and supportive work environment in fostering employee engagement and professional growth. The contrast between the two companies underscores the significance of cultural alignment in determining job satisfaction and overall well-being. Aryan's decision to resign, despite being offered career advancements, emphasizes the critical role of job satisfaction and recognition in employee retention.