

Creating and Implementing a Sustainable Organizational Culture: *The Case of YKK Corporation of America*

Dr. May Hongmei Gao

SAUPO Chair

Professor of Communication & Asian Studies

Kennesaw State University

Atlanta, Georgia, USA

mgao@kennesaw.edu

July 3-5, 2024

*24th International Conference on Diversity in
Organizations, Communities & Nations*

Lusiada University, Lisbon, Portugal

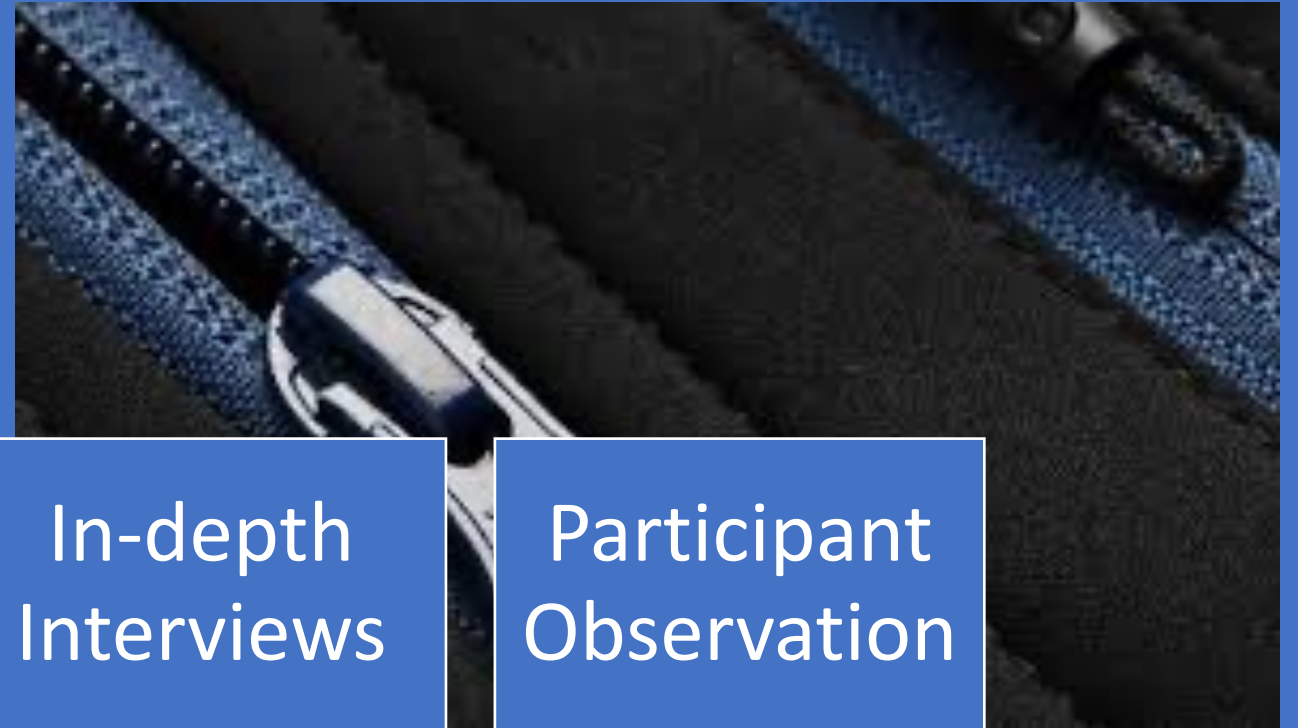




Case Study

In-depth
Interviews

Participant
Observation



YKK

YKK ap[®]

Affiliated Companies Worldwide

106 in 72 countries/regions

Japan: 18 companies

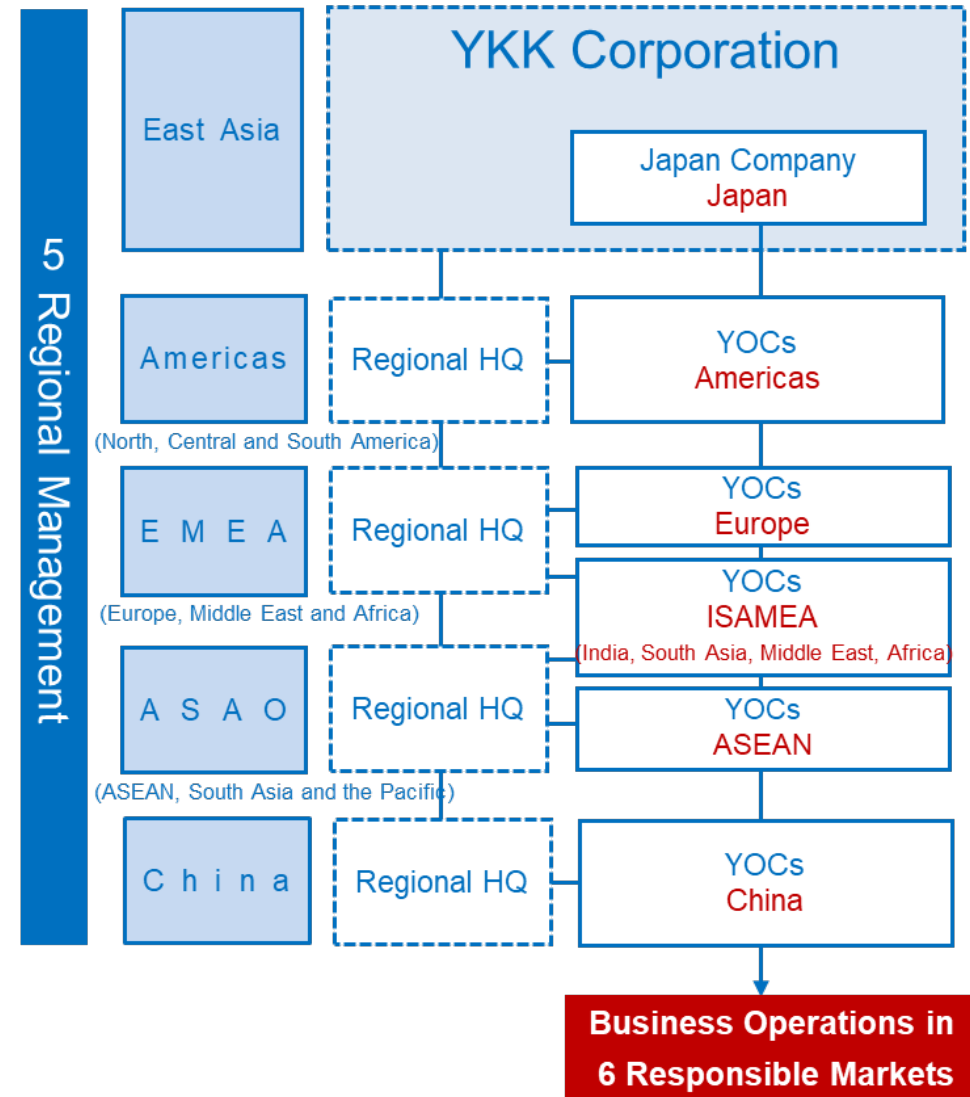
Overseas: 91 companies

Employees 44,410

Consolidated Sales 797 billion yen

Fastening products: 348 billion yen

Architectural products: 446 billion yen



HISTORY OF YKK IN GEORGIA

1960

- Yoshida International Inc. established in Long Island City, NY

1970

- YKK sales office in Atlanta opened

1974

- Fastening manufacturing center opened (Macon) (54 acres)

1979

- Additional 250 acres purchased in Macon

1987

- YKK Corporation of America established

1991

- YKK AP America Inc. established

1992

- Architectural Products manufacturing center opened (Dublin)

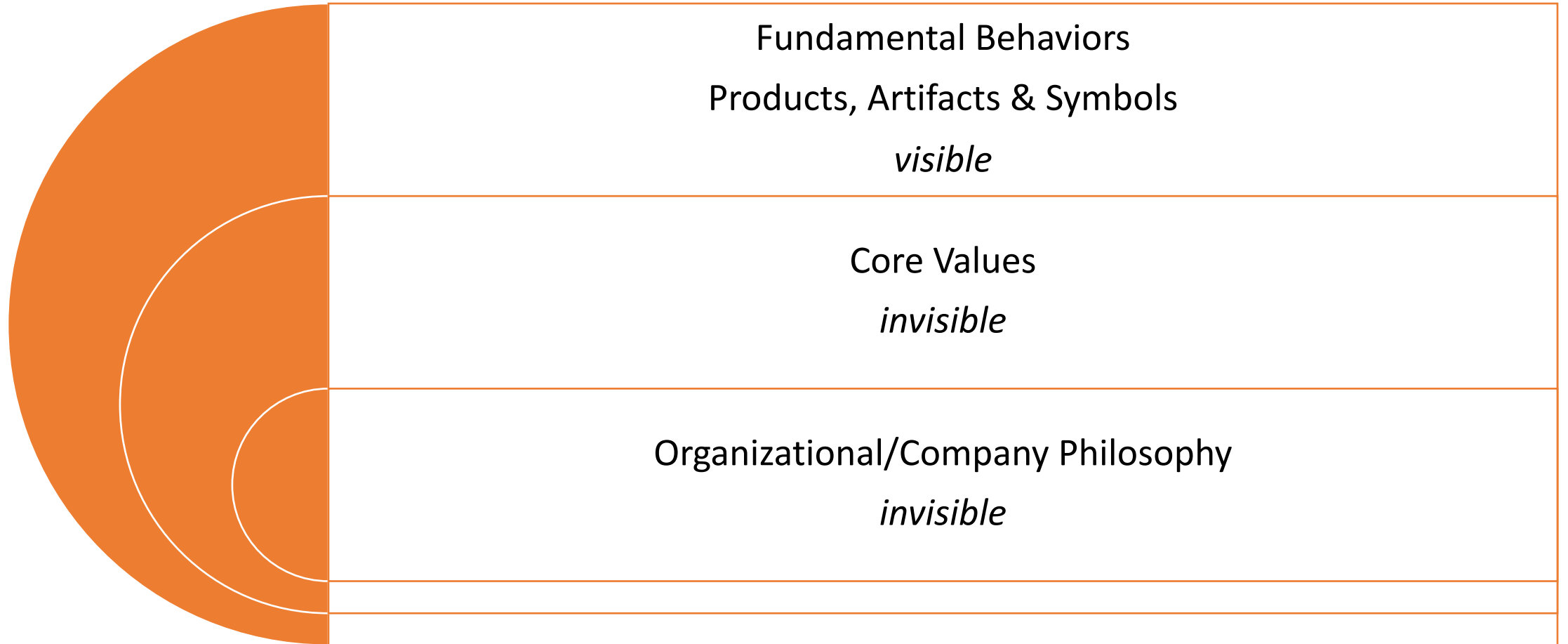
Research Questions

- RQ¹: What are the steps for an organization to create an effective organizational culture”
- RQ²: What strategies can an organization adopt to implement its organizational culture?
- RQ³: What new metaphor for organizational culture can be learned from the YKK case?



Organizational Culture Components

Figure 2: Created by Dr. May H. Gao by revising Edgar Schein (1992) model





“I don’t think that a business will prosper unless it is both profitable and also contributes to the world and is useful to human society.”

Tadao Yoshida, Founder of YKK

July 1965



YKK Philosophy



CYCLE OF GOODNESS™

“No one prospers without rendering benefit to others.”



Management Principle



Seeking corporate value of higher significance, YKK will pursue innovative quality in the seven key areas shown above.

Core Values

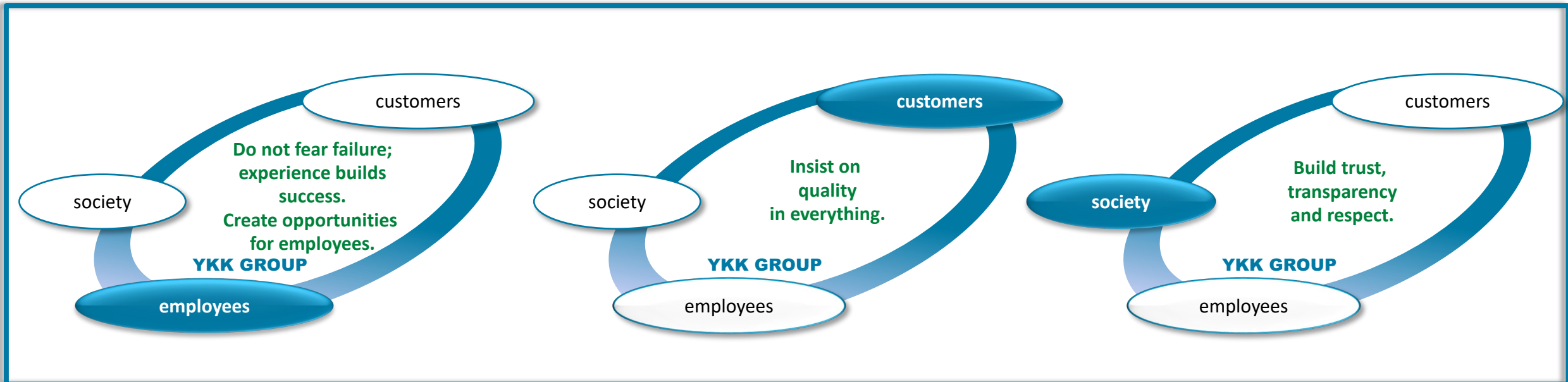
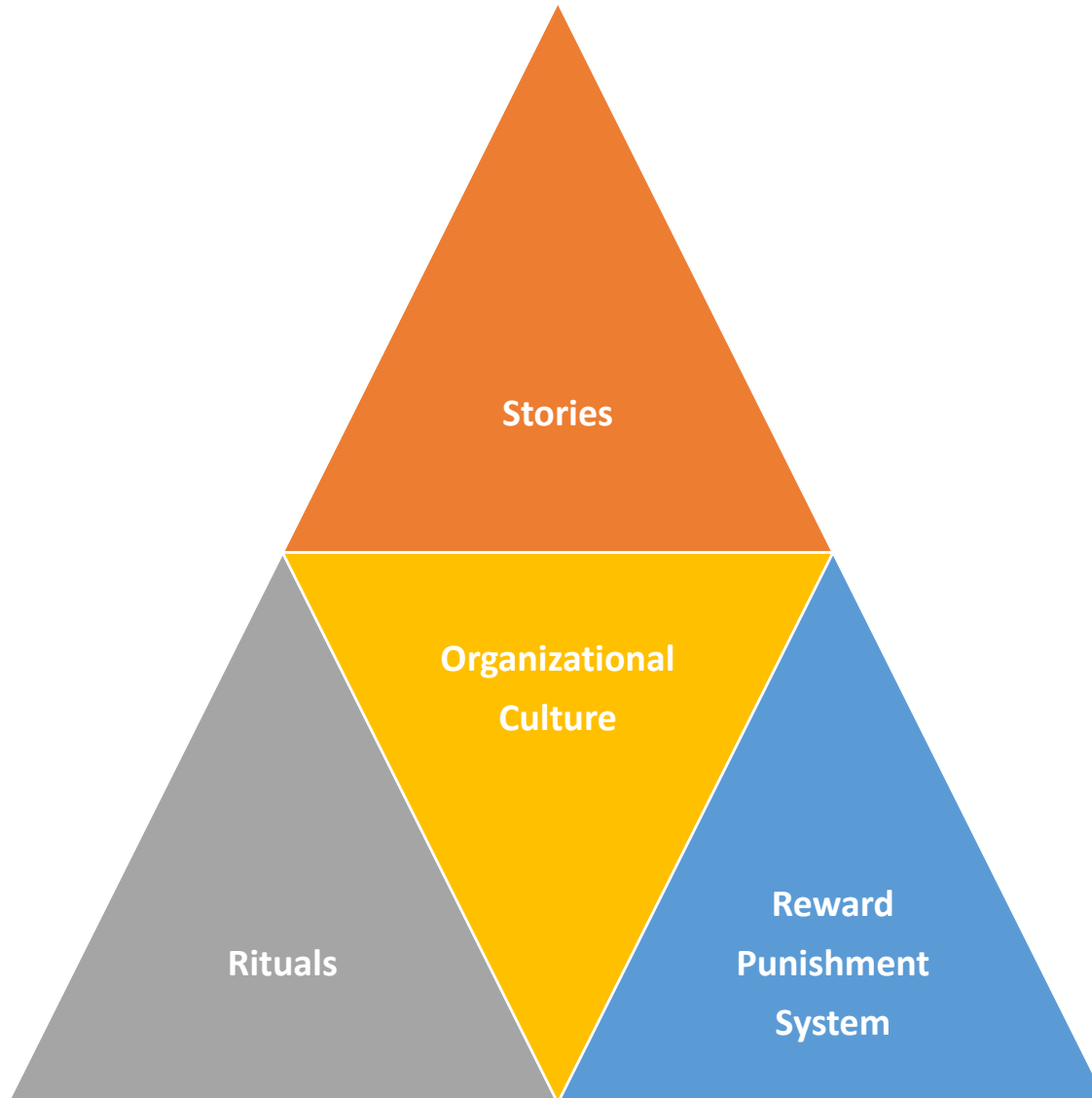


Figure 1: YKK Philosophy, Management Principle, and Core Values (Source: Interview with YKK leadership team, 2020)

Table 1: YKK 25 Fundamental Behaviors

1. Do the right thing, always	2. Be vigilant about safety
3. Protect the environment	4. Make quality personal
5. Embrace diversity	6. Lead by example
7. Clarify expectations, then respond quickly	8. Make customers a priority
9. Honor commitments	10. Be process-driven
11. Innovate	12. Seek improvement in everything
13. Be a team player	14. Investment in relationships
15. Listen to understand	16. Provide meaningful appreciation
17. Practice blameless problem-solving	18. Take ownership
19. Be proactive	20. Pay attention to the details
21. Be a lifelong learner	22. Take pride in our appearance
23. Give back	24. Be an ambassador
25. Be positive	

Organizational Culture Implementation Pyramid



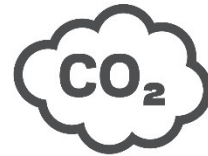
YKK GROUP ENVIRONMENTAL PLEDGE

It is recognized today as being a most important duty for all humankind that we preserve the abundantly endowed global environment and that we transfer it to the next generation in a sound condition. The YKK Group proclaims that it will address and promote “harmony with the environment” as the highest priority of its business activities.

September 20, 1994

YKK Sustainability Vision 2050

Achieve climate neutrality by 2050



climate change
carbon neutral by 2050



material resources
100% sustainable textile
materials by 2030



water resources
reduce water use & increase
wastewater recycling



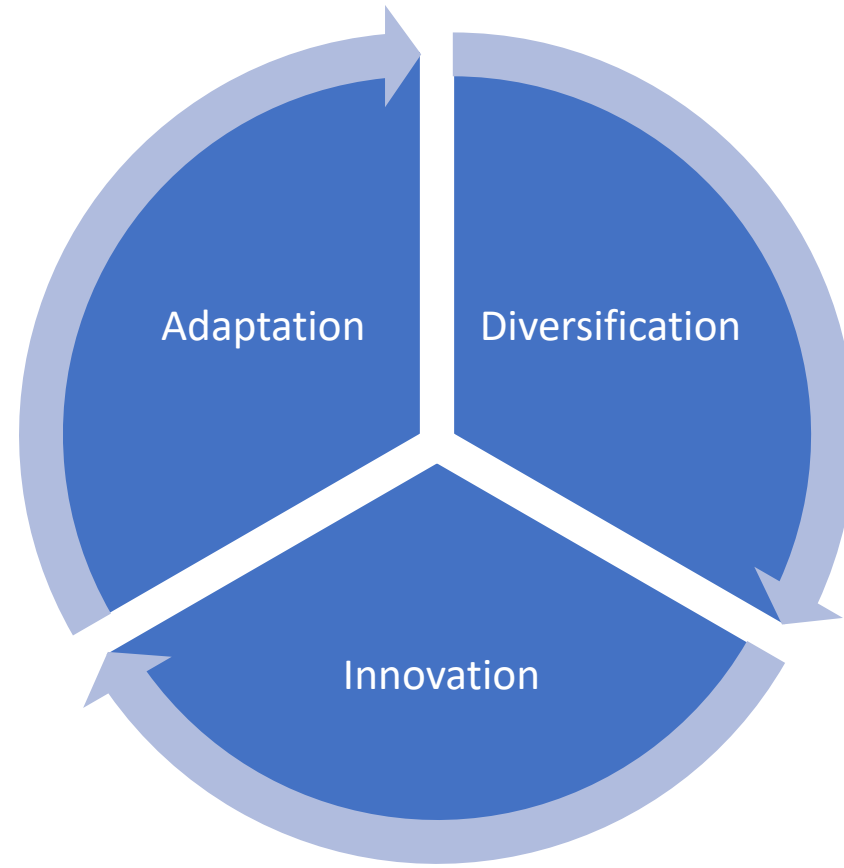
chemical management
reduce chemical usage by
new production methods



respect people
ensure safe fair workplaces
throughout our supply chain

“ADI Strategy”

Embracing Change for Sustainability at YKK



GROWTH THROUGH INNOVATION & DIVERSIFICATION

VALUE-ADDED PRODUCTS WITH INDUSTRY SPECIFIC APPLICATIONS

Jeans/Pants



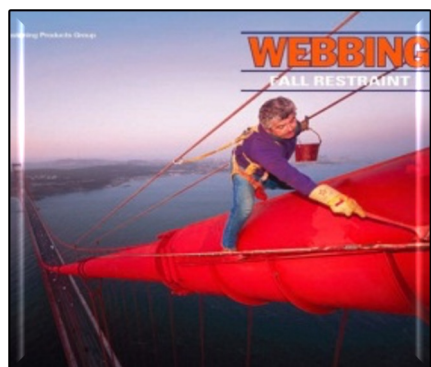
Outdoor



Government



Safety



Automotive



Medical



Metaphors for Organizational Cultures in existing literature



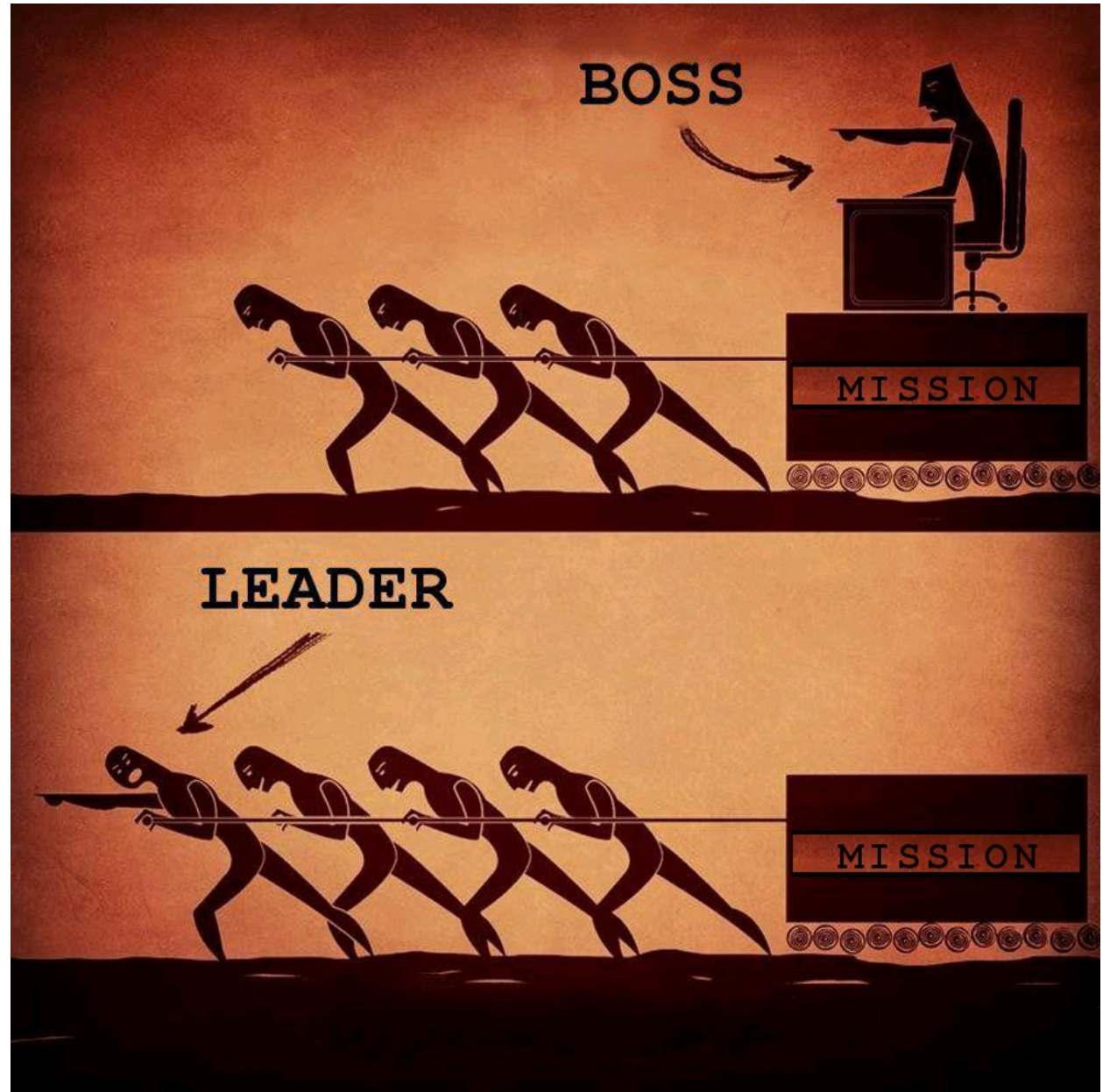
“Software of the mind” (Hofstede, 1991)

“Spider Web” (Geertz, 1973)

“Performance” (Pacanowsky & O’Donnell-Trujillo, 1983)

“Soft power” (Nye, 1991)

Be a Servant Leader Gao (2023)





Heart
(Leadership:
Founder, President,
CEO, team)

- Engine of energy
- Central control for blood flow
- Where the soul dwells
- Gateway to brain activities

Soul
(Organizational
Culture)

- “god given” potential
- Kindness
- Consciousness
- The spirit flowing in body/organization

The heart is the commanding organ of the body, the heart is where the soul dwells (Yellow Emperor’s Inner Canon, 550 BCE). 心为君主之官，神明出焉。《黄帝内经》
“The Heart” can be compared to “the Leader”

The Metaphor Comparing “Leader” to “Heart”