

The Stone Carver

Description:

Nicholas is an architectural sculptor or stone carver. He has worked on many cathedrals in Europe as well as buildings in the United States. Apprenticed at a young age in the English cathedral town where he grew up, Nicholas is member of an ancient profession rooted in medieval church architecture. He describes the enduring traditions of this profession, its values, and his personal motives. The unique nature of the work itself offers insights into employment relationships where traditional supervisory functions play less of a role than professional socialization and the intimate relationship between people and their work.

Key Words:

- "... house of God ..."
- "... working for the building ..."
- "... primitive ..."
- "... put back into the profession ..."
- "... having a signature ..."

Suggested Uses:

This video can be used in a number of ways. It can be used to illustrate work motivation, employing the discussion format described for "The Waitress," another video in this series. It also provides a distinctive illustration of the workings of occupational culture.

Occupational Culture:

Use the video to illustrate different dimensions of occupational culture.

Before viewing the video:

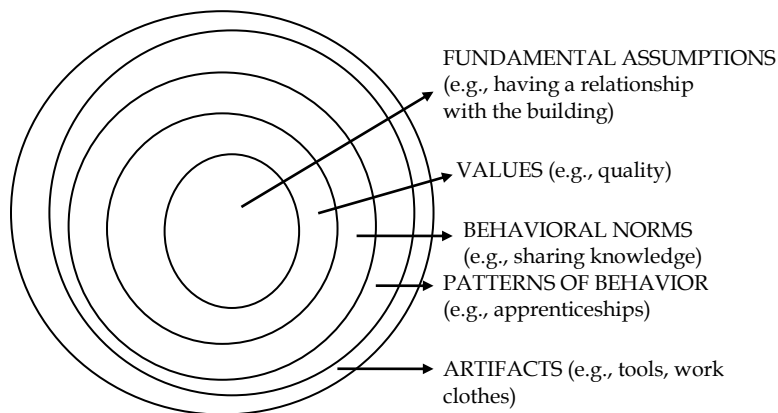
As you prepare students to view the video, you may want to instruct them to record any terms or descriptions of his work Nicholas uses that seem distinctive or particularly interesting. Nicholas has a particularly descriptive way of talking about his work and profession, which can give insights into the implicit beliefs or values of architectural sculptors.

After viewing the video:

On the board, list distinctive terms the class heard Nicholas use. What major themes do these terms convey? Terms like "primitive" or "enduring" describe his view of the actual work, while "working for the building" and "having a signature" indicate a distinct underlying perspective on the values of his profession.

Organizational researchers often describe culture in terms of layers of core assumptions, values, and behaviors and norms (see model). Use the video to build a model of the occupational culture of architectural stone carvers. It is often easiest to start at the level of values (which are more readily identifiable than assumptions).

Layers of Culture



Discussion Questions:

1. What values does Nicholas share with other architectural sculptors? How were these communicated or conveyed to him? Values can include craftsmanship ("taking care"), respect for history and the integrity of a particular architectural style, and giving back to the profession (e.g., a commitment to train others). Socialization mechanisms in this profession include going to school or being apprenticed, working side-by-side in a shop with other craftsman, and being mentored by senior members of the profession.
2. Norms are beliefs that group members share about appropriate and inappropriate behaviors. What are the norms for architectural sculptors? What behaviors are acceptable? What behaviors are unacceptable?
3. What patterns of behavior would you expect from Nicholas? How would those patterns differ for an apprentice carver?
4. Assumptions are taken-for-granted, unconscious beliefs that operate without members of a culture being fully aware of their existence. Probing for assumptions can help to explore an often tacit feature of occupational culture: the employment relationship or "psychological contract." What are the characteristics of Nicholas's employment relationship? For what or whom does he work? Where are his loyalties? (To his employer? To the profession? Elsewhere?) What performance requirements is he subject to? His focus on the building as his employer (while acknowledging that a boss does sign

his paycheck) is a distinct feature of his profession, a core assumption of this occupation. Are there other assumptions that occur to the class?

5. How are modern occupations similar to the Stone Carver? Software engineers and architects speak of "leaving their signature." Many stakeholders can claim the loyalties of a worker including customers, clients, community or general public in addition to the firm itself.
6. How does training occur in this environment? How is the decision to become a stone carver similar to or different from the decision to go into other occupations?

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