 Alberto-Culver 公司以 VOS 品牌護理產品聞名，也在全球各地生產銷售許多其他個人護理用品、特殊用品零貨和家庭用品。Carol Lavin Bernick 和她的丈夫接管由她的父母創立的公司時，公司正處於困境，業績下滑，利潤下滑。而且由於新進強大的零售商（如沃爾瑪）進入市場，使得市場競爭越來越激烈。Bernick 認為改善公司績效的最好方式就是改變公司文化。

如同其他公司一樣，多數的員工並不了解公司如何運作或者他們的工作會如何影響業績和利潤。為改善此點，公司提名 70 位成長發展領導人 (growth development leaders, GDL) 並為改變文化的責任，每一位 GDL 的指導 12 個人。每個指導員，GDL 協助員工理解其工作如何與達成公司目標相關，參與績效考核，確認員工了解並應用公司給予的福利，GDL 每 2 星期左右與 CEO 會面一次，將員工的問題予以討論並和高階管理團隊開發解決方案。在 GDL 成立 4 年後，公司設立獎項表揚最有成就的 GDL。隔年，另外兩項提案開始實施：發佈公司正式的行為準則與新式員工績效考核方法，鼓舞成功。

為衡量改變是否有效，Bernick 總結業績和稅後盈餘的效果，公司也進行年度員工調查來評估改變公司文化的成效。Carol Lavin Bernick 說：「我非常相信我們必須要改變你在評估的事情。」她的分析說服了她自己，過去幾年來所做的一些改革對公司當時的業績的大量提升和稅後盈餘的增加有極大的貢獻。

請就人力資本的觀點來論述企業文化對組織學習與組織動態能力之間的關係 (50%)。
二.

Vindor is a Mexican glass manufacturer located in Mexico. Vindor’s product line emphasizes glassware; however, Vindor has also diversified into other types of products, including welding machines and environmental products. Vindor has a long history of successful joint ventures and is globally recognized.

Corning, Inc., is more famous for its innovative glassware; however, Corning has diversified into other types of products, including environmental products, and laboratory services. Like Vindor, Corning has a long history of successful joint ventures and global operations. Vindor and Corning share similar corporate culture and customer-oriented philosophies.

After realizing such similarities and looking to capitalize on NAFTA, by accessing the standard market, Corning, Inc., entered into a joint venture with Vindor in the fall of 1992. The similarities in history, philosophy, culture, and goals of both companies would lead to the strategic alliance that the two companies perceived as an ideal situation. However, from the beginning, the relationship was fraught with obstacles. Vindor’s CEO, who had just migrated with his family to New York, lamented, “It was a marriage made in hell.” As history repeated itself, Vindor and Corning dissolved the joint venture 25 months after the agreement. Both companies still have an interest in maintaining the relationship and continue to distribute each other’s products.

Vindor’s management believes that the joint venture between Corning and Vindor will lead to a better understanding of the Chinese market, which will help in creating and maintaining foreign markets. A more in-depth investigation also reveals the impact of culture on business transactions.

Vindor, a Mexican glass manufacturer, and Corning, Inc., have been in constant contact for over 75 years. One of the company’s key successes was an alliance with St. Gobain, a French glass manufacturer, to produce Pyrex cookware in Europe during the 1960s. Corning has formed approximately 20 ventures over the years. Only 9 have failed, which is a phenomenal number considering one recent study found that over one-half of foreign and national alliances do not succeed. Over the last 5 years, Corning’s sales from joint ventures were over $3 billion, which contributed more than $500 million to its net income.

Corning enters into joint ventures for two primary reasons, which are best explained through examples of its past ventures. The first is to gain access to markets that it cannot penetrate quickly enough to obtain a competitive advantage. Corning currently has multiple ventures that exemplify market penetration. Second, Corning is an alliance in which Corning provides the technology to the ventures. Theventure employs Corning technology, and Corning gets a share of the profits from the venture. The venture employs Corning technology, and Corning gets a share of the profits. The venture employs Corning technology, and Corning gets a share of the profits.

The company’s CEO, James R. Houghton, summarized the major criteria for deciding whether an equity venture is likely to succeed as follows:

1. You need a solid business opportunity.
2. There should be strong market potential.
3. The new enterprise should have a well-defined scope.
4. There should be sufficient management talent to implement the agreement.
5. An autonomous operating team should be formed.
6. Responsibility cannot be delegated.

Houghton also emphasizes that the most important dimension of a successful joint venture is trust between the parties.

Corning’s track record indicates that it has been able to establish and run a large number of joint ventures successfully. What went wrong with the recent Vindor venture? Vindor and Corning seemed to have similar operating procedures, and Vindor’s product line complemented Corning’s consumer business. Therefore, how could a seemingly
perfect alliance fail to materialize. The problem arose when the
coming-Viro joint venture revealed the importance that each
culture may play in international alliances.

Background on the Coming-Viro
Joint Venture

The coming-Viro venture seemed to be ideal. However, a
strong Mexican bias, increased overhead costs, and
cultural differences posed challenges for the alliance.
The economic problems were understandable, but the cul-
tural differences should have been given more attention
before the alliance was entered.

Although both companies appeared to be similar on the
surface, they were quite different. Cultural clash
cropped up from the very beginning of the venture because of
differing approaches to work. One example was in the
marketing area. Viro's sales approach was less aggressive
than the Americans at coming-thought necessary; the
delayed, deliberate approach to sales in Mexico was the
result of the previously highly controlled economy. Coming's
sales approach, on the other hand, was quick, dynamic,
oriented and aggressive, which had developed over
decades of competition.

Once in the venture, the Mexicans thought the Ameri-
cans were too fast, and the Americans believed that
their Mexican partners were too slow, too political.
The Americans perceived the Mexican characteristics to
include, but not limit, to: aggressiveness, problems and
feuds. With respect to speed, the Mexicans thought Com-
ming moved too quickly, while the Americans thought Viro
moved too slowly.

Another obvious cultural difference was the treating
styles and the allocation for decision making. Viro is
bureaucratic and hierarchical, and loyalty is to family
members and patrons in the ranks of the company. Deci-
dions often are left either to a member of the executive
family or to top executives, with middle-level managers
seldom asked to contribute their opinions. In order to
make important decisions, Mr. Loose (Coming's chief
executive of the joint venture) observed, "If we were look-
ing at a distribution of a customer, we would have a group of
people in a room; they would do an assessment, figure alternatives and make a decision, and I
as chief executive would never know about it. My experi-
ce on the Mexican side is that sometimes the decision
would have a solution in mind, but then the decision
had to be kicked up a few levels."

These examples indicate that culture was an especially
sensitive issue between Coming and Viro, and the alliance
was not able to overcome these problems. Coming felt that
the cross-cultural differences were depriving both compa-
nies of the flexibility to take the fast management action
that is necessary in the dynamic economic climate of both
countries. Viro basically agreed. Coming gave Viro back
its $30 million investment, and the joint venture was
called off. Both companies still recognize the importance to
continue business with each other, but now they have
taken their relationship into a mutual distribution of
each other's products.

The Aftermath of the Disruption

Viro and Coming each responded publicly at the disrup-
tion of their alliance, and each indicated the wrong differ-
ences in culture. Coming wanted to discuss the problems
and learn from them, while Viro was reluctant to share
anything, especially a visible U.S. partner like Coming.

The Mexicans preferred to concentrate on continuation
of the marketing management between the companies.
Hough, the Coming CEO, openly spoke of the alliance as
one that stopped making sense. He stated that cross-
cultural differences inhibited the potential of the alliance.

Cerning's chief executive observed, Mr. Loose,
openly acknowledged the differences that existed between
the two cultures. Viro executives were defensive
and disappointed that Mr. Loose had expressed his views so
directly in public. "It is unfortunate that he spoke those
community," said an anonymous Viro executive.

Identified by Groome, Edward Martinez, rated that the
cultural differences were no greater than in other alliances.
In an interview with the Harvard Business Review, how-
ever, he admitted, "Balkiness in Mexico is due to a tempo-
rary basis, very good and sometimes, slow, by U.S.
standards."

Cerning feels they learned a lesson as the United Viro
alliances both foreign and domestic alliances may addi-
tional skills and remaining time. Groome says that alliances carry a lot of risk and are unpre-
dictable; but they can be significantly improved by the addition of a partner if they are done
thoughtfully. Coming continues to acknowledge the cultural differences with Viro were too strong to overcome.

1. Identify and discuss Corning's management approach toward a joint venture with Viro. (25%)
2. Cultural clashes arising between joint ventures are not a new issue. Discuss why an issue, and
specifically Corning, would be interested in fully understanding the culture of a potential partner
before deciding on an alliance. (25%)

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