

Understanding Organizational Dynamics: A Four Frames Analysis of Infosys Limited

VIRAJ VIDWANS
Edgewood University

Abstract – Organizations operating at scale often face challenges that cannot be understood through structure, culture, or leadership in isolation. This paper examines the organizational dynamics of Infosys Limited through Bolman and Deal's Four Frames model, Structural, Human Resource, Political, and Symbolic, to illustrate how multiple organizational dimensions interact within a large, globally distributed IT services firm. Adopting an applied, secondary-data-based case approach supplemented by practitioner observations, the study uses the Four Frames as an analytical lens rather than a prescriptive tool. The paper demonstrates how each frame highlights different organizational realities, including formal hierarchies and processes, people systems and capability development, power relationships and leadership transitions, and the role of symbols, rituals, and organizational identity. By examining Infosys across these frames, the analysis underscores how organizational effectiveness emerges from the alignment and occasional tension, between competing priorities. The paper positions the Four Frames model as a practical sense-making framework for managers and HR leaders seeking to interpret complexity, diagnose organizational challenges, and balance structural efficiency with human and cultural considerations. Rather than evaluating performance outcomes, the study focuses on illustrating how multi-frame analysis can support more nuanced organizational understanding and informed leadership judgment in large service-based organizations.

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Understanding organizational dynamics is critical for leaders operating in large, complex, and knowledge-intensive organizations. This paper applies Bolman and Deal's Four Frames model, Structural, Human Resource, Political, and Symbolic, to examine the organizational dynamics of Infosys Limited, a leading Indian multinational IT services organization. Using an illustrative case approach based on secondary sources and practitioner insights, the study analyses how Infosys balances operational efficiency, talent development, internal power

dynamics, and organizational culture. The findings indicate that while Infosys demonstrates strong structural discipline and symbolic coherence, tensions emerge within human resource practices and political transitions, particularly during leadership changes. The paper highlights the practical utility of the Four Frames model as a diagnostic tool for managers and HR leaders seeking to navigate organizational complexity in large service-based firms. The study contributes to applied management literature by offering a structured framework for organizational analysis in the Indian IT context.

The structural frame focuses on how an organization is modelled. SOPs, policies, organizational hierarchies, and organizational reporting structures are the main aspects of this frame. Usually, the agenda of structural frame is to try to bring in uniformity, control, and predictability. A good example of company operating through structural frame will be McDonald's. The company revolutionized the fast-food industry. It established strict control measures to ensure quality for their food products was optimum and implemented uniform SOPs across all of its locations pertaining to all aspects of food handling thereby ensuring the same standard of taste, food presentation, portion size and packaging is maintained across its outlets.

The Human Resources frame prioritizes employee needs, well-being, and development. This frame takes into account the developmental levels and skills levels of individuals and focuses on employee empowerment, autonomy, skill, and knowledge development resulting in a win-win situation for employees as well as the organization. Training and development, empowerment, reskilling, upgrading, career enhancement, positive culture are the key considerations in human resources frame. Google, now Alphabet is often cited as the example of

company operating with human resources frame. Google has numerous employee benefit programs that not only aids employee work life balance or focuses on overall comfort during work, but these programs also provide support for employees to enhance their skills and indulge in self-learning and personal growth. Company's office premises are also built with human resources frame in mind, often employing innovative designs ideas that aid productivity and provides room for recreation, fostering a sense of belonging.

The political frame shows organizations as political arenas where each player is vying for control and power. The political frame assumes that decisions and change are the result of key stakeholders and interest groups being involved in the decision-making process and contending for their self-interests. In the political frame, conflict is common as people jockey for position in the organization. Leaders can use the political frame to make strategic decisions that consider the interests of different stakeholders. They can also use the political frame to build power bases, build coalitions, and negotiate conflicts. A good example of organization with political frame will be Apple during Steve Jobs era. Steve Jobs was a technical outsider. It is no secret that Apple's immense technical expertise and success was mainly due to its other Founder, Steve Wozniak. Steve Jobs' contributions to early Apple products were mostly focused on UI, fonts, branding & marketing. Despite this Steve Jobs went down in history as a visionary that revolutionized personal computers and mobile industry. People close to Steve Jobs would often mention his leadership style as inspiring but strict and demanding. During his time with Apple, Key decisions of the company were mostly signed off by Steve Jobs and he was the sole accountable entity in public domain for company's success or failure.

The symbolic frame views an organization as a cultural system where meaning is created through shared stories, rituals, symbols, and ceremonies, focusing on inspiring employees by providing a sense of purpose and identity within the company, rather than just focusing on strict structures or processes. Notable events like company celebrations, awards ceremonies, and team-building activities are seen as

ways to reinforce shared values and strengthen organizational culture.

This frame emphasizes the importance of shared values, beliefs, and stories that contribute to an organization's unique identity. A prime example of company operating with symbolic frame is Red Bull. The energy drink company is famous for sponsoring various sport teams and extreme sport events. The energy drink itself is familiar across the globe. It has an acquired taste and it is not a drink that uninitiated people will take to kindly. It has a bitter, strong chemical taste that sets it apart from the regular fruity cold drinks in the market. The strategy that company came up with is to associate the drink with daring or extreme sports. The messaging was focused on 'What' people who partake in such sports drink to be able to do what they do rather than 'How' the drink tastes. Red Bull sponsored F1 racing team, Motorcycle racing, Snowboarding, Skateboarding, BMX, NASCAR, Rallycross, Hang gliding etc. In almost all of the extreme sport events we will see at least one Red Bull sponsored team. The success of this plan is evident to us all. Red Bull is the third most valuable soft drink (Not just energy drink) brand in the world behind Coca Cola and Pepsi. (Red Bull Website, n.d.)

During the course of this paper, we will look at the four frames model through one company and understand how this model can be used to analyse real life situations.

II. OBJECTIVE

This paper will review Infosys, a leading multinational technology company known for its innovative solutions and dynamic work culture. Founded in 1981 by seven engineers in Pune, India, Infosys has grown to become a global leader in next-generation digital services and consulting. The insights in this paper are based on publicly available sources and practitioner observations drawn from prior professional experience within the organization. The company has been known to employ numerous Indian IT aspirants and is one of the major visa exporters for US. The company has grown to three hundred thousand plus active headcount and works

with major players, fortune five hundred companies and pioneers across various sectors.

The company was recently in the news in India due to its founder, Narayan Murthy's controversial views on work life balance. In recent times the company has often received criticism for its low starting pay to freshers.

The analysis will focus understanding the strengths and areas of improvement if any through the four frames. The key players in the company, important for this paper are as below. We will understand the dynamic between these stakeholders in detail when looking at political frame.

Infosys CEO, Salil Parekh - A hardened IT professional and leader who joined Infosys in 2018 and has worked with Capgemini for 25+ years.

Infosys CHRO, Shaji Mathew- A seasoned IT professional and longtime Infosys employee. Shaji has been with the company for 30+ years. He has successfully transitioned into HR Leader role after having worked with the delivery for many years.

Tech Mahindra, CPO and ex-CHRO of Infosys, Richard Lobo – Richard worked as the CHRO of Infosys till 2023. He has been with Infosys for more than 20 years and is a seasoned HR professional. Shaji took over as the Infosys CHRO after Richard's departure.

III. FOUR FRAMES ANALYSIS

Structural Frame

Infosys has developed a tall organizational hierarchy. From the entry level job of a fresher to the Business Head, there are eight levels of jobs which are further divided into thirteen sub levels. This structure ensures clear definitions of roles and responsibilities, streamlined processes, and has proven to be efficient for each business unit's function. The structure plays on core competencies of the company which include a highly skilled workforce, strong financial position, global brand recognition, and robust project management methods. These competencies support the company's ability to maintain long-standing client

relationships and deliver high-quality solutions (Makwana & Dave, 2014). The company has continuously evolved its IT services, integrating technologies like AI, cloud computing, blockchain, and IoT. The company's strategic initiatives, such as Infosys Cobalt (a cloud-first approach) and Infosys Nia (an AI platform), demonstrate its commitment to digital transformation and innovation. (Aithal & A. S., 2024).

The company has built processes, guidelines, structure, and a vast knowledge bank dedicated to delivering the best IT solutions worldwide in uniform and quick manner. Salil and Shaji have worked immensely to institutionalize the idea of 'pod' working style. A pod represents a group of employees within a unit who are highly skilled and proficient in one or few aspects of product development/consulting. The Tech consulting team breaks down each requirement from the client in small tasks that can be managed by specific pods. The senior strategic consulting team gathers the inputs from these pods, pieces it together and presents it as a one, cohesive offering. The working of the pods is similar to assembly line where each worker will contribute only to a specific set of assembly and as the line progresses the final product emerges.

Infosys campuses are also tailored to reflect the hierarchy within the organization. Each business unit has a dedicated floor/building for their operations. Support functions such as HR, finance, facilities etc. are usually housed in a separate building. There are dedicated cabins for managers and employee above a certain grade. Individual contributors usually sit in an open area of cubicles. The senior-most leadership team such as directors, BU Heads, CXO team have a separate dedicated floor which is access controlled.

The company has detailed policies for every scenario of employee lifecycle. The policies also consider exceptions, problematic cases and provide guidance on how to manage situations out of 'Business as Usual' way of working. This provides a clear picture to all employees on their rights as an Infosys employee and helps foster transparency. Over the last few years Infosys has undertaken restructuring

processes to reduce the number of senior roles. This has enabled the company to ensure faster decision-making through organizational hierarchy and reduce the project operational costs. This involved trimming the workforce at senior levels, such as delivery managers, AVPs, VPs, and SVPs, by 10-15%. (Infosys to cut multiple senior roles, ensure faster decision-making, 2020). Similarly, the company had undertaken massive structural reforms back in 2007 to consolidate and realign company's operating matrix. The company formed six vertical industry business units (IBUs) and horizontal business units that cut across all vertical units. This reorganization aimed to create a more integrated and efficient structure, allowing Infosys to better serve its clients and adapt to market changes. (Infosys restructures organisational structure, 2007).

One of the key drawback of company's well-structured hierarchy is the lack of systemic autonomy to employees and the high turnaround time on key strategic decisions due to the stakeholders involved.

Human Resource Frame

Infosys's HR practices are focused on employee empowerment, continuous training, and development programs. These principles have been central to the HR team's strategy. It was also one of the primary areas of focus during company's initial expansion under its founder Narayana Murthy's leadership. Infosys focuses on hiring freshers from tier two or tier three universities and ensures that such students are provided a launchpad to corporate world through Infosys. The company has established its own campus dedicated to teaching and upskilling the freshers. Over a six-month period, new hires undergo rigorous classroom and hands-on training at this campus, with accommodation and food provided. Upon successful completion of the training, these graduates are deployed to various Infosys locations across India.

To fully appreciate this strategy, it is important to understand the mindset of many Indians, particularly those from lower income strata. For families earning less than USD 1 a day, the IT sector represents a pathway to a better life for their children. They see the booming IT industry as a means to break the

cycle of poverty and achieve prosperity. Consequently, many parents enrol their children in engineering colleges, hoping for a brighter future. As of 2023, India has over 2,000 engineering colleges, 4,500 postgraduate colleges, and 3,500 undergraduate colleges, with an annual intake of more than 1.5 million students (Modak & Bhalerao, 2023). Historically, major IT companies have focused their hiring efforts on the top 1% of universities, often forming exclusive partnerships with prestigious institutions for on-campus recruitment. Children from affluent families are typically aware of this dynamic and aim to attend these top universities, benefiting from their parents' financial support and a positive home environment. In contrast, families from lower-income backgrounds often have a more straightforward view: obtaining a degree leads to a job. They enrol their children in affordable universities, regardless of their ranking. Recognizing the potential of this large pool of graduates, Infosys developed a hiring and L&D strategy focused on tier two and tier three university graduates. Through its six-month training program, Infosys bridges any skill gaps these graduates may have compared to their top university counterparts, preparing them for deployment on projects. While Infosys offers lower starting salaries to these graduates compared to those from top universities, it provides a comprehensive opportunity and infrastructure for them to become industry-ready and compete effectively with their peers from more prestigious institutions.

Infosys also has a robust upskilling program for its existing employees. The company offers extensive training programs and certifications in emerging technologies like AI, cloud computing, and data analytics (Aithal & A. S., 2024). This focus on upskilling ensures that employees remain competitive and can drive technological innovations. Most of these trainings are designed and delivered in-house by Infosys's own team of technical experts without any added cost to the employees. For certain trainings which are hosted on external sites, Infosys reimburses the cost of trainings to employees on successful completion. The company has also built incentive programs focused on upskilling, thus encouraging more employees to partake in self-learning. By undergoing specific set of trainings and

working on specific projects, the employees can become eligible for quarterly incentives, higher percentage of annual bonuses and in some cases almost 50% salary increases.

The main drawback of the HR practice can be the perceived rigidity of the process. With almost all of the employee lifecycle events having specific guidelines and policies, HR work becomes mainly repetitive and mundane with strategic work mainly overseen at unit or corporate leadership level. The employees may also perceive the HR team as merely transactional rather than viewing them as true business partners.

Political Frame

Infosys's strong focus on the structural frame often leaves little room for political dynamics within the organization. However, one of the recent examples of political frame at work in Infosys came during the leadership transition. Salil Parekh had just joined Infosys as the new CEO, taking over during a turbulent period following the tenure of his predecessor, Vishal Sikka. Sikka's tenure ended abruptly after a public spat with Infosys founder Narayana Murthy, who criticized Sikka's leadership and questioned his decisions regarding certain acquisitions. This conflict led to Sikka's resignation and the appointment of U. B. Pravin Rao as interim CEO. (Vishal Sikka Quits Infosys On Bitter Note, Board Blames Founder Narayana Murthy, 2017). The fallout from this dispute eroded trust among stakeholders, clients, and employees, creating uncertainty about the company's future. Over the next two to three years, Salil Parekh focused on rebuilding trust with stakeholders and clients. He streamlined processes and invested heavily in automation, AI, and emerging technologies, eventually stabilizing the company and steering it towards new successes.

However, another issue arose within the leadership team when Richard Lobo, the then CHRO of Infosys, decided to leave the company. Infosys has a tradition of promoting from within for senior roles, with external appointments being rare exceptions. Leaders within the company often have strong territorial instincts, aspiring to advance in their respective fields while being wary of outsiders. Salil, still relatively

new to Infosys, was not fully aware of this dynamic and suggested Shaji Mathew as the next CHRO to replace Richard Lobo. Shaji, who had grown with Infosys and worked predominantly in the insurance business unit, was serving as the EVP and Global Head of Delivery for BFSI, Healthcare, and Life Sciences business units. For reasons unknown to outsiders, Richard Lobo did not recommend his own successor or failed to convince Salil of his choice. Shaji's appointment as the new CHRO sent shockwaves through the HR hierarchy at Infosys. Many questioned why no one from the HR team was considered for the role, and doubts arose about the capabilities of the current HR senior leadership. The decision to appoint someone from the delivery team, who had not formally worked in HR, was seen as undermining the specialization required for HR roles. This led to an exodus of HR professionals from Infosys, leaving the HR team severely understaffed. During my tenure with Infosys, I was the seniormost HR employee at my grade (2.5 years with the company) and the seniormost HR employee managing a specific function (I was handling a reskilling initiative for 2 years. Only other employee with similar experience was a corporate COE team member with 1.8 years of experience with the program). Company focused on hiring the HR team and worked on upskilling the new joiners, but it took time and immense pressure on the existing HR personnel to stabilize the situation.

In other company initiatives, such as the restructuring in 2009, Infosys employed strategies like transparent communication and involving key stakeholders in the decision-making process to mitigate resistance and build support for the changes. The company held town hall meetings and regular updates to keep employees informed and address their concerns. Additionally, Infosys's leadership worked to build coalitions with key stakeholders, including senior executives and influential employees, to ensure their support for the restructuring. This approach helped create a sense of shared ownership and commitment to the changes, which was crucial for their successful implementation.

Symbolic Frame

Infosys has mastered the art of the symbolic frame, using symbols and rituals to convey its values and culture. For example, the company celebrates its founding day annually, reinforcing its commitment to innovation and excellence. Through numerous initiatives, Infosys has built a culture that integrates symbols, stories, and inspiring tales of how its leadership team has steered the company to new heights during uncertain times. Infosys's campuses serve as a canvas for their symbolic portrayal. Spread across large areas and covered with greenery, the campuses feature smaller buildings of less than 10 floors, often hidden by thick foliage. Many campuses also have solar panels, water, and waste treatment plants, and are designed in consultation with top architects to preserve local flora and fauna. This contrasts with the large, tall buildings adorned with glass windows and bright LED lights that are common in other companies, which often dominate the city skyline. Infosys's philosophy behind their campuses is to minimize disruption to the local ecosystem. The quiet, peaceful environment is intended to foster a positive working culture. The company regularly plants trees to mark major milestones, such as employees completing 10, 15, or 20 years with the company, visits from senior leadership, clients, or important government officials. The names of the dignitaries and the dates of tree planting are displayed at the base of the trees. Employees often feel a sense of being part of the company's history when they see these plaques. Security personnel are trained to handle local wildlife with care, including capturing and safely releasing animals like snakes. Sightings of peacocks, rabbits, and even deer are common on the campuses.

Infosys has a unique recognition program for long-serving employees. Those who have spent 15, 20, or 25 years with the company are celebrated with surprise visits from their immediate family (arranged by the company), a commemorative plaque on the company's wall of fame, and an exclusive luncheon with senior leadership. This celebration aims to make employees feel special and appreciated, in addition to the usual financial rewards for long service.

The company has also integrated symbols into its training programs. Completing specific sets of training grant employees, unique badges that signify their expertise in certain skill sets. These badges are added to employee emails and team credentials, can be displayed in email signatures, and come with certain incentives.

The company's commitment to corporate social responsibility (CSR) is another important aspect of its culture and use of symbolic frame. Infosys has implemented various CSR initiatives, such as the Infosys Foundation, which supports education, healthcare, and rural development projects. (Dave & someshwari, 2014). These initiatives not only contribute to the well-being of the communities in which Infosys operates but also reinforce the company's values and commitment to making a positive impact on society. Infosys is seen as a pioneer in virtuous corporate governance. While there is no direct evidence that Infosys actively participated in shaping Indian government corporate governance laws, it is widely believed by the Infosys employees that Infosys's own policies heavily influenced these laws. Infosys introduced corporate governance practices even before they were formally added to the Companies Act in India.

The drawback of the symbolic frame can be that employees may become so ingrained in the 'Infosys way of working' that any different approach may seem blasphemous. Suggestions to do things differently may be viewed with suspicion, and those proposing changes may be seen as traitors.

IV. INTEGRATION, SYNTHESIS AND DISCUSSION

The integration of Bolman and Deal's Four Frames model reveals that Infosys's strategies and practices are deeply interconnected across the structural, human resource, political, and symbolic dimensions. This holistic approach has enabled Infosys to navigate complex organizational challenges and achieve sustained success.

Structural Frame: The clear organizational hierarchy and structured processes at Infosys provide definite

role assignments which promote functional efficiency across business units. Infosys shows its dedication to innovation and digital transformation through ongoing improvements in IT services and advanced technology integration along with strategic programs such as Infosys Cobalt and Infosys Nia. The structured hierarchy occasionally restricts employee independence and delays strategic decisions because several stakeholders must be involved.

Human Resource Frame: Infosys's HR practices focus on employee empowerment, continuous training, and development programs. The company's strategy of hiring fresh graduates from tier two and tier three universities and providing them with rigorous training ensures a steady influx of skilled talent. Infosys's robust upskilling programs for existing employees keep them competitive and drive technological innovations. While these practices foster a strong learning culture, the perceived rigidity of HR processes can make the work seem repetitive and transactional, potentially limiting strategic contributions from HR personnel.

Political Frame: The political dynamics within Infosys are evident during leadership transitions and restructuring initiatives. The leadership changes involving Salil Parekh and the appointment of Shaji Mathew as CHRO highlight the complexities of internal politics and the impact on organizational stability. Infosys's approach to transparent communication and stakeholder involvement during restructuring processes has been crucial in mitigating resistance and building support. This strategy fosters a sense of shared ownership and commitment to change, essential for successful implementation.

Symbolic Frame: Infosys excels in using symbols and rituals to convey its values and culture. The company's campuses, designed to minimize environmental disruption, reflect its commitment to sustainability and a positive working culture. Recognition programs for long-serving employees and the integration of symbols into training programs reinforce a sense of belonging and pride among employees. Infosys's CSR initiatives and pioneering corporate governance practices further strengthen its reputation as a socially responsible and ethically

driven organization. However, the strong symbolic culture can sometimes create resistance to novel approaches that deviate from the established 'Infosys way of working.'

CONCLUSION

By integrating insights from all four frames, we can posit that Infosys has developed a comprehensive understanding of its organizational dynamics. This balanced approach has allowed the company to address structural efficiency, employee well-being, political dynamics, and cultural alignment effectively. It has also enabled Infosys to navigate the complexities of organizational change, maintain its competitive edge, and achieve long-term success. However, continuous adaptation and flexibility are essential to address the evolving challenges and opportunities in the dynamic business environment.

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