Corporate Advice

Caryn Walsh

LEADERSHIP

Threat or Thrive? What's the Culture in your Organisation?

In leadership roles, we look at how well the people (or the team or department) we manage are performing, according to pre-determined goals.

Take a walk around your organisation and get a sense of how it 'feels.'

Are people engaged, enthusiastic and optimistic, bouncing around with a sense of achievement and pride?

Are they subdued and so focussed on their work that they rarely come up for air?

Is there regular conflict and are they defending 'their turf' or is there collaboration, teamwork and optimism?

Culture to an organisation is like personality to an individual.

It is how the business 'feels' inside it and often how it appears to customers and clients from the outside is markedly different to how employees would describe it.

What is Organisational Culture?

Organisational culture is a system of shared assumptions, values and beliefs that govern how people behave in organisations.

It has a strong influence on the people in the organisation and dictates how they dress, act and perform their jobs.

Every organisation develops and maintains a unique culture that provides guidelines and boundaries for the behaviour of the members of the organisation.

Source: http://study.com/academy/lesson/what-is-organizational-culture-definition-characteristics.html

Organisational sub-cultures

'Sub-cultures' often exist in different parts of an organisation that compete with each other, yet together they contribute to a larger, overall culture.

Often these sub-cultures work against each other, further creating silo's that drive separation and isolation through the company with the same result.

That is an Organisation filled with politics, gossiping, elitism and a lack of collaboration and highly performing team-work.

For example: The sales department may have a competitive 'win at all costs' attitude in their approach and roles.

This spills over into their dealing with operations as they believe they 'never get the product out on time.'

The Operations team may be closely knit and highly supportive of each other and enjoy an achievement (Goal) and supportive (Soul) culture.

They resent the impatient and critical approach of the Sales Department and avoid them at all costs.

This is a sound example of a culture working against an Organisation's productivity and profitability.

Why is Organisational Culture important?

Simply, an inclusive and people focussed culture contributes to the success of an organisation.

Individuals are drawn to Organisations because of what they represent, their image and reputation, opportunities offered and how 'appealing' they appear to be to work for.

Goal and Soul achievement orientated cultures attract and retain top talent, drive energy and momentum throughout the Organisation, enhance productivity and collaboration, promote synergy and help achieve positive outcomes.

The opposite occurs when an Organisation has a culture based on fear, power and blame.

How does an organisational culture form?

Organisational culture grows over time and is embedded in regularly practised ways of 'doing things. '

The common symbols (such as the logo and staff uniforms) represent what the Organisation stands for and then reinforce it the culture.

Whilst a culture is normally created by its original founders, it is further embedded when leaders recruit like-minded people (who are similar to them) and indoctrinate employees with the existing values and beliefs that are consistently role modelled by them time and time again.

Most leaders don't reflect on what culture they have or the one they have created.

They get on with the business of running the business, without realising that having a supportive (Soul) and achievement orientated (Goal) culture is critical to their business success.

As an organisation grows and develops, often the culture that proved so successful initially no longer does.

It may start to impinge on the efficiencies of the Company. For example, Mr Jovi started 'Wagon Spare Tyres and Parts' 35 years ago and has used a dictatorial leadership style throughout the decades - and still does.

The culture has largely been one of fear and people have been scared of annoying him. In the past his style was tolerated, but it no longer attracts or retains key talent.

People don't like how it feels to work in his company.

To encourage people to give of their best, we have to understand the values, beliefs and actions that make up the culture.

Strategies and actions of an organisation need to be flexible to meet the changing demands of the business environment and the market within which the organisation operates.

But the most profit-enhancing cultures are those that place high value on supporting and growing their people who in turn provide a top quality product or service.

Tools to drive cultural change

Successful cultural change initiatives are strategically designed and implemented by a dedicated group, led by the CEO.

Cultural change will not occur if the CEO is not on Board. Consider the tools outlined in the model below and whilst some overlap, it clearly indicates which tools are effective in cultural change.

Power tools (Intimidation) – coercion, threats, creating fear, dealing out punishment. Fear will not create a productive and collaborative culture!

Management Tools (Information) – Incorporate productive rituals, traditions and   m e a s - urements into the new culture but move away from those that don't work   (these should be included in the new strategy).

Leadership Tools – (Inspiration) – A clear Vision, influencing others, effective and   positive role modelling, conversations and story-telling at all levels of the Organisations will create a Goal and Soul culture over time.

Mergers and Leadership – When Two Cultures Collide

When two organisations merge, often a collision between two cultures occurs. Confusion reigns supreme, communication is thwarted and people are unsure what to expect and whom to trust.

People often blame 'communication' or 'lack of leadership' or 'ongoing conflict' during mergers, but mainly it is that the leaders of the two companies have not focused on a strategy to successfully integrate two cultures effectively and over time.

There are generally positive aspects of any existing culture, so leaders need to ensure that 'new' does not mean 'out with the old.' Parts of old can still be good.

Conclusion

Organisational culture is a complex process of values, beliefs and actions that grow over time and are reinforced through symbols, rituals and actions.

To change an organisational culture takes time – Harrison believes between 3 to 5 years.

Whilst it is quicker to enhance an existing culture by driving productive aspects of the current culture through the organisation, (changing or getting rid of those aspects that don't work) at times a complete cultural change may be necessary.

Without the top leaders in an organisation being fully committed to creating and growing the new or updated culture in everything they do, achieving sustainable cultural change will not occur.

Changing an organisational culture is both time-consuming and resource heavy and needs to be a driving strategy, at all levels, in taking the Organisation forward.

The results, once successful, will always position the Organisation productively and profitably in the future.

■ Caryn Walsh is an International Business Consultant, Executive Coach, Keynote Speaker

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Please send any questions you may have about your business to info@puremagictraining.com.au. Ms Walsh will gladly answer them.

THE FOUR TYPES OF ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE – AIM FOR GOAL AND SOUL!

There has been significant global research around organisational culture and ways in which to assist, or implement, a productive culture into businesses.

Example

Somebody has to be responsible for the overall success of the team or Organisation (Power). People need to know what their jobs entail and what they are responsible for (Role). Everybody needs to know where they are headed and what they need to achieve to meet their business outcomes (Goal). The entire organisation needs to be collaborative and work together to be successful (Soul).

Take a test

■ *Out of ten (being the highest) rate your Organisation on each*
■ *Which are the two highest?*
■ *Which are the two lowest?*
■ *How does this impact your Organisation?*
■ *List two ways you change move your Team or Organisation to a predominantly Goal and Soul culture?*

We use the work of Roger Harrison, American Organisational Consultant, who defines four types of Organisational cultures – Control, Role, Goal and Soul.

Although each culture needs to be present to some extent in any Organisation, ultimately those that thrive have predominantly Goal and Soul sub-cultures.

	CONTROL	ROLE	GOAL	SOUL
My priority is my	Boss	Duty	Task	People
Decisions come from the	Boss	Policy	Goal	Consensus
Authority comes from	Power	Seniority	Expertise	Wisdom
The system is	Autocratic	Bureaucratic	Charismatic	Democratic
People are	Stratified	Inter-changeable	Unique	Equal
Myths are about the	Boss	Organisation	Champions	Team
The world is a	Jungle	System	Opportunity	Community
As a boss I expect	Obedience	Reliability	Competence	Competence
As an employee I expect	Reward	Security	Challenge	Support

Source: Cox, G, Hopkins, W (1996)

HOW EMPLOYEES LEARN

Their Organisation's Culture

■ They look around them and assess how challenges and stress are handled and promptly assess whether mistakes are tolerated or forbidden

■ They watch the leaders (carefully!) to determine how they act and if they do what they say everybody else should do. Never underestimate the impact of role modelling!

■ They listen to stories about, and within, the organisaton and look at the rituals, symbols and beliefs that the company promotes – such as respect, dignity and compassion – and then work out whether these are merely words on a wall or a deep building block within the organisation

■ They watch and listen to how other people, at all levels within the Organisation, talk and feel about the company.

LEADERS: STEPS TO CHANGE OR ENHANCE ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

■ **Be guided by your Vision.** What is the Vision of your Organisation? Is it clearly articulated? Does everybody down the line know what it is? Is there passion in achieving it? Are you all rowing the boat in the same direction?

■ **Define the current culture.** Design a simple questionnaire and ask your people down the line how it feels to work in your team or organisation. In addition, you can use interviews, focus groups and customer surveys to obtain more information.

Example: The Vision says we are 'a team-based Organisation and provide a top quality restaurant service' to clients, and yet recent employee surveys and interviews indicate there is ongoing conflict throughout the company. There is little collaboration, plenty of blame, conflict and power struggles. Your existing culture does not support your Vision of team-based collaboration and teamwork. What do you have to do to change status quo?

■ **What does your desired culture look like?** How will people behave? What are the three most important values you would like in your organisational culture? Which do you have now and which are you not achieving?

■ **Get your strategy, policies, procedures and resources right.** What strategy, policies, procedures and resources do you have to update, enhance or change for a new culture to slowly grow in the Organisation? Who is responsible for what? What's the strategy to grow a more inclusive and achievement orientated culture? Ideas include:

■ **Get the troops on board to drive a Goal-Soul culture through the Organisation.** Start at the top and don't accept lip-service. The behaviours, words and actions of your leaders, at the top and down the line, are critical to the success of Organisational culture change.