

Succeed by Harnessing Company Culture

...what a consultant needs to know to ramp up their practice

Confab 2009



Review of artifacts on the wall

Discussion questions:

- Who and what are highlighted?
- What do you think is valued?
- How might these culture clues influence your interaction with the organizations as a client?



© Culture Consulting

2

Objectives for today

To gain a practical understanding of how:

- Company culture works
 - Communicate its power
 - Common culture barriers/supports in time of change
- To search for culture clues
- To help leaders shape culture
- To integrate culture work into a project engagement

© Culture Consulting

3

Why understand culture

Culture is like a boat in the ocean – underlying cultural currents can push a project off course or pull it towards its goal.

It is important to know how to navigate the currents. A culture map is helpful in charting a smoother sailing course to more easily achieve project goals.



© Culture Consulting

4

Culture Basics



Culture Description

Binds people together

A set of common “rules of behavior” and underlying beliefs that guide us on how to act day-to-day



Many times not written down, but learned by watching others and by what you are trained & rewarded for

© Culture Consulting

6

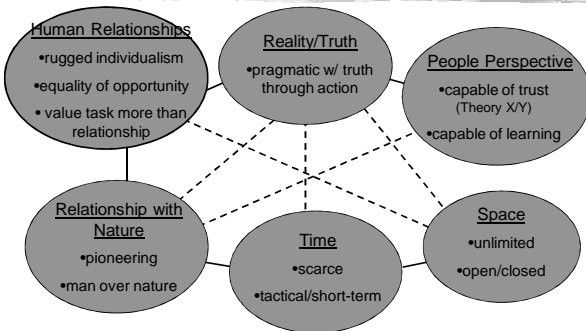
Development of Culture

- Personal beliefs of founder(s) & current leaders
 - Education/training
 - Nationality
 - Significant life experiences
- Industry specific practices
- Company response and learning from crisis
- Stage of organizational development
 - Start-up; mid-life; mature; declining
- Size of organization

© Culture Consulting

7

Culture Assumptions - U.S.

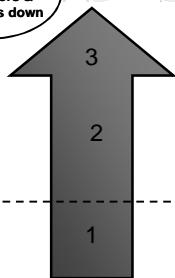


Adapted from Edgar H. Schein, *Corporate Culture Survival Guide*

8

Culture Levels

Infer & shape culture from behaviors & practices down



Behaviors and Practices
(individual and group actions and systems)

Values or characteristics
(talked about reasons, rules for how we should act)

Assumptions
(unwritten and unquestioned beliefs)

Culture is built upon an organization's collective success in responding to its outside environment

© Culture Consulting

9

Dimensions of Culture



© Culture Consulting

10

Importance of Balance

Culture characteristics - taken to an extreme develop inadvertent consequences - re-direct for balance

● Examples:

- Brand Identity → protect & promote distinctive reputation
 - Supports high quality of product/service
 - Can lead to high levels of assimilation where employees must live the brand
- Self-starters → must be able to figure things out on your own
 - Employees expected to be flexible, develop & train themselves
 - Can lead to internal competition & lack of rewards for managing people

© Culture Consulting

11

In Times of Change

Cultural Supports

- Optimistic Spirit
- Ability to Adapt
- Commitment to a long-term vision
- Loyalty
- "Win-Win" Strategy
 - Good for Community – Good for Business

Cultural Barriers

- Self-starter (extreme)
- Internal Competition
- Security (extreme)
- Top-down decision-making (extreme)
- Decisions based on tradition

12

Culture Clues



Focus of Search

- Looking for:
 - Common behaviors, practices and attitudes
 - Underlying reasons for “why people act the way they do”
 - Statements regarding what is rewarded, measured and ultimately valued
 - Consistent themes and similarities in language
 - across people, level, functions, data sources and time
- Look for emerging behaviors and practices
 - Differences between emerging and desired

© Culture Consulting

14

Differing Search Methods

Involve increasing levels of client involvement, scientific rigor & cost

- Level 1
 - Leader interviews, web-based survey & dialogue (qualitative)
- Level 2
 - Limited cross-section of employee & leader interviews/focus groups & document review (qualitative)
- Level 3
 - Scientifically valid assessment (quantitative & qualitative)
 - Survey, interviews, document review & indexes to measure progress

15

Sources of Clues

- Leadership interviews
- Employee: interviews, workshops, focus groups, surveys
- Client websites
- Review of documents
 - Leader speeches, company history, newsletters, annual reports, blogs, employee recruitment material
- Trophies, plaques, posters, employee information boards, paintings, company museums, websites, advertising

© Culture Consulting

16

Culture Clues Case Study

Level 1 – Leader Interviews

Culture Clue Questions

1. Why spending money on this project/initiative?
2. Why do you think it will be easy or hard to implement?
3. Do you think this initiative will require people to go against the grain of your workplace culture?
4. What does your organization currently value and measure?
5. What does it take for an individual to fit in and be successful at your organization?
6. What are your organization's sources of competitive advantage?

© Culture Consulting

18

Helping leaders shape culture



Culture is not good or bad; the question is does it support an organization in where it wants to go?



© Culture Consulting

20

Culture Shaping Process

Client Dialogue & Confirm

Client Interventions

- Leaders
- Systems
- Behaviors

Current Culture

- Strengthen
- Redirect
- Add

Values, Behaviors & Attitudes

Desired Culture

Collect data and assess for strengths, weaknesses of culture

Identify culture points of leverage & possible interventions

Coach & educate leaders to shape culture

© Culture Consulting

21

Culture Interventions

- Three levels
 - Leadership
 - Articulate the vision and desired values
 - Modeling and rewarding the desired behaviors
 - Systems/Practices
 - Verify that the systems support people to act according to the desired values
 - Behaviors
 - Educating, training and rewarding people to practice the desired behaviors

© Culture Consulting

22

Best Practices for Leaders

- Do What You Say
 - work on aligning actions with words
 - people watch what you do, more than what you say
- Under promise and over deliver
- Be consistent and repetitive in talking about why certain behaviors are required and rewarded
- Develop as a leadership group, specific words or phrases to use as clues to support each other in unlearning → to relearning

© Culture Consulting

23

WHAT SONG ARE YOU SINGING?



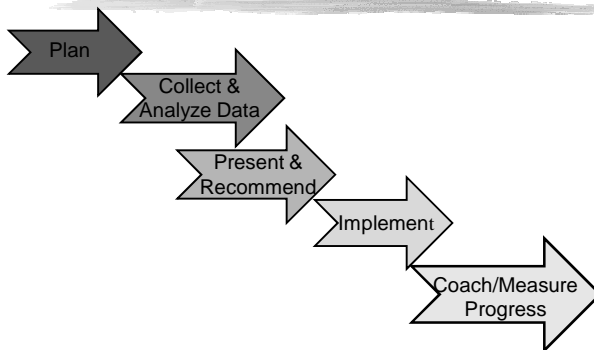
"Oh, for Pete's sake! He walks the walk and he talks the talk...MUST he also sing the songs?"

24

Integration into Work Plan Discussion



Engagement Plan



Culture Resources

- Harvard Business Review on Culture and Change, Harvard Business School Press, 2002
 - Includes HBR article Reprint 3 R0106B – Bernick, Carol Lavin, "When Your Culture Needs a Makeover" (excellent article)
- Edgar Schein, The Corporate Culture Survival Guide (Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1999)
- Richard H. Thaler and Cass R. Sunstein, Nudge: Improving Decisions about Health, Wealth and Happiness (Penguin Books, 2008) www.nudges.org/

27

Terri Kruzan
Culture Consulting
524 Drexel Ave.
Decatur, GA 30030
404.373.7350
terri@cultureconsult.com
www.cultureconsult.com
Blog:
www.cultureconsult.com/leading-workplace-change



28
