

# The Culture Pathway by Pratt

*A Leadership by Pratt White Paper*

## Executive Summary

Culture shapes how organizations feel, function, and perform. It influences trust, well-being, and how people show up for one another long before it is ever discussed.

*The Culture Pathway by Pratt* brings clarity to how culture is created.

This framework shows that culture is built through leadership behaviour. It is not a values statement on a wall. It is not aspirational language or an abstract idea. Culture is shaped through what leaders do each day, especially when pressure is present.

Culture follows a clear and practical sequence:

- Culture begins with deliberate actions.
- Those actions become habits.
- Habits strengthen into committed behaviours.
- Committed behaviours create shared expectations.
- Shared expectations become culture.

This progression removes uncertainty. Leaders can see culture forming and influence it directly through what they reinforce, protect, and correct.

The Culture Pathway highlights leadership influence at every level, with particular attention to boards, Board Chairs, and CEOs or Executive Directors. Leadership behaviour under pressure teaches culture most clearly. Consistency, emotional steadiness, and fairness keep people focused on purpose rather than self-protection.

This work is grounded in the four pillars of leading a charity: hope, inspiration, integrity, and kindness. These pillars are expressed through everyday leadership behaviour, not slogans. When practiced consistently, they create healthy and stable cultures.

The Culture Pathway by Pratt is part of [the Leadership by Pratt series](#), a collection of original, practical leadership frameworks designed to help charities and non-profits lead with clarity and care.



Culture is built through what leaders do each day. When leaders understand how culture forms, they gain the ability to create organizations that are healthy, effective, and capable of inspiring a better world.

## **Why Some Organizations Feel Different**

Have you ever walked into an organization and felt it immediately?

The way people speak to one another feels grounded.

Meetings feel purposeful, not something done just because it's on the calendar.

Even during challenge, there is steadiness.

You can feel it in places where people seem proud to work.

Where disagreement does not feel dangerous and change feels possible.

You can also feel the opposite. Organizations where tension hangs in the air.

Where people are careful with their words and unsure which version of leadership will show up that day.

What you are sensing is culture.

Not a statement.

Not a plan.

A lived experience.

## **Culture, Change, and Well-Being**

Culture plays a decisive role in how organizations experience change.

When culture is clear, nurtured, and protected, people understand what matters. They know how decisions are made. They trust one another's intentions. Energy is focused rather than drained.



When culture lacks clarity or care, people compensate. They interpret signals. They protect themselves. Well-being begins to erode as uncertainty grows. Even thoughtful change efforts struggle to take hold.

Well-being is not something added on top of culture.

It is one of culture's most visible outcomes.

Healthy cultures create psychological safety, clarity of expectation, and a sense of belonging. People feel steadier in their roles. They recover more quickly from challenge. They remain connected to purpose, even during disruption.

Culture takes time to build. It forms gradually through daily leadership choices. It strengthens through consistency. It weakens through misalignment or neglect.

This is why culture deserves deliberate attention, especially when organizations are navigating change.

## How Culture Is Formed

Culture is formed through what people do repeatedly, together, and on purpose.

It grows from deliberate actions that are noticed and reinforced.

Those actions become habits.

Habits deepen into committed behaviours.

Committed behaviours create shared expectations.

Shared expectations, sustained over time, become culture.

This progression reflects what leaders choose to model, reinforce, and protect.

It is shaped by how people are treated when things go well and when they do not. It becomes visible in how decisions are explained, how accountability is handled, and how care is shown under pressure.

This is the grounding idea of The Culture Pathway by Pratt:



What we do on purpose becomes who we are.

Legendary basketball coach John Wooden built culture by focusing on standards of behaviour before results. He believed that consistency in preparation, effort, and respect for the fundamentals created the conditions for excellence. Over time, those repeated behaviours became expectations, and those expectations became identity. Performance followed culture, not the other way around.

Culture is not imposed.

It is practiced.

## **Why Culture Matters in Change and Well-Being**

Change does not fail because people resist it.

Change falters when culture has not prepared people to receive it.

In charities and non-profits, change is constant. Funding shifts. Community needs evolve. Leadership transitions occur. Expectations grow while resources remain finite. These conditions require adaptability, trust, and emotional steadiness.

Culture determines whether people meet change with curiosity or caution.

When culture is healthy, change feels like part of the organization's ongoing story. People understand why adjustments are needed. They trust the process. They feel supported as they learn new ways of working.

When culture is fragile or inconsistent, change feels imposed. People brace themselves. Energy moves toward self-protection rather than contribution. Well-being declines as uncertainty accumulates.

This is not a matter of attitude. It is a matter of environment.



## Culture as the Container for Change

Culture acts as the container that holds change.

It determines how much uncertainty an organization can carry without fracturing. It influences whether people feel safe to ask questions, name concerns, and offer ideas. It shapes whether learning is welcomed or avoided.

Leaders often focus on the mechanics of change.

Timelines, deliverables, communications, and project plans.

These elements matter.

They provide structure and coordination. They help people see what is coming and when. They can reduce confusion.

They do not create commitment.

That work belongs to culture.

A clear, nurtured, and protected culture allows people to stay grounded while navigating unfamiliar territory. It creates shared understanding about how work gets done and how people will treat one another along the way.

Without that clarity, change feels heavier than it needs to be.

## Well-Being as a Cultural Outcome

Well-being is revealed through daily experience.

It shows up in whether people feel respected.

In whether they can raise concerns without fear.

In whether they are able to recover after periods of intensity.

Organizations do not create well-being through isolated initiatives. Well-being is created through culture.



When culture supports clarity, fairness, and care, people experience steadiness. They know what is expected. They trust that leadership decisions are thoughtful and humane. They feel seen as whole people, not just roles.

When culture sends mixed signals, well-being suffers. People expend energy managing uncertainty. Stress becomes normalized. Engagement fades quietly.

Culture is the most consistent signal people receive about whether an organization is safe and sustainable.

## **The Cost of Ignoring Culture**

When culture is overlooked, leaders often misread what is happening.

They interpret hesitation as resistance.

They interpret fatigue as disengagement.

They interpret questions as negativity.

What is often happening is something else.

People are responding rationally to the culture they are experiencing. They are adapting to unclear expectations, inconsistent leadership behaviour, and unspoken rules about what is safe to say and do.

Inconsistent leadership behaviour is especially damaging.

When leadership behaviour shifts with mood, stress, or circumstance, people lose their footing. They spend energy anticipating reactions rather than contributing ideas. They watch tone closely. They adjust their behaviour to stay safe rather than to do their best work.

Over time, trust weakens because expectations feel unstable. Even capable and committed people become cautious. Well-being declines as emotional unpredictability becomes part of the work environment.

This pattern often goes unnamed. Its impact rarely does.



## Why Leaders Must Work With Culture, Not Around It

Culture cannot be bypassed.

Every attempt to work around culture reinforces it and often contributes to the development of unhealthy or toxic patterns.

When leaders bypass culture, they unintentionally signal that speed matters more than trust. That compliance matters more than understanding. That results matter more than people.

Over time, these signals shape behaviour. Silence replaces honesty. Caution replaces initiative. Well-being erodes as people learn what is safer to withhold than to share.

Culture is always learning from leadership behaviour, especially under pressure.

When leaders acknowledge culture as a living system, they gain leverage. They begin to see where small, deliberate shifts can create meaningful change. They recognize that well-being improves when people experience consistency, care, and clarity over time.

This is where The Culture Pathway becomes essential.

## The Anchoring Concept

Every culture begins with choice.

Not choice as preference. Choice as behaviour.

The anchoring concept of The Culture Pathway by Pratt is clear and grounded:

What we do on purpose becomes our culture.

Culture is shaped through everyday leadership choices. Choices about how people are treated. Choices about what is reinforced. Choices about what behaviour is addressed and what is allowed to continue.

Over time, those choices accumulate. They form patterns. Those patterns become culture. This is how culture moves from action to expectation. This is how leadership behaviour becomes the environment people work within.



## From Choice to Culture

Culture does not begin at the organizational level.

It begins with behaviour.

A leader chooses how to open a meeting.

A board chooses how disagreement will be handled.

A CEO chooses how to respond when pressure is high.

A team chooses whether to name an issue or work around it.

These are not abstract moments. They are practical choices with visible consequences.

Each choice sends a signal. People notice what is encouraged, what is tolerated, and what is avoided. Over time, those signals teach people how to behave and what is expected.

This is how intention becomes culture.

## How the Pathway Works

The Culture Pathway names a progression that already exists in every organization. It makes visible what is often happening quietly.

The pathway works through a clear sequence.

### Deliberate actions

Deliberate actions are intentional behaviours chosen in real moments of work. These actions are visible and repeatable. They demonstrate what matters through behaviour rather than instruction.

### Habits

When deliberate actions are repeated, they become habits. Habits make behaviour predictable. They reduce uncertainty and help people understand how to show up.



## Committed behaviours

Habits that are reinforced and protected become committed behaviours. People continue them because they see them as the right way to work, even when it would be easier not to.

## Shared expectations

When committed behaviours are experienced consistently across people and situations, they become shared expectations. People rely on them. They begin to assume them.

## Culture

Over time, shared expectations become embedded. They no longer require explanation or enforcement. They shape how work is done and how people experience the organization.

## Why the Sequence Matters

You cannot shortcut this progression.

Shared expectations do not appear on their own. They grow from behaviours people experience repeatedly. Committed behaviours do not hold unless habits have been formed. Habits do not develop without deliberate action.

Culture reflects the accumulation of what happens first.

Organizations often try to start in the middle. They name expectations without changing behaviour. They talk about culture without adjusting daily practice. When this happens, culture remains unchanged because the earlier steps were never reinforced.

Phil Jackson, who coached multiple NBA championship teams, placed culture ahead of tactics. He focused on shared discipline, trust, and responsibility. Players were expected to practice, prepare, and treat one another in consistent ways every day. Those expectations created stability long before pressure arrived.



The Culture Pathway works because it honours how people learn what is expected. It begins with action and builds forward, one step at a time.

## Why This Matters for Leaders

Many leaders try to influence culture through values, statements, or initiatives.

Those efforts matter when they are reinforced by behaviour.

People believe what they experience.

They watch how leaders behave under pressure.

They notice whether accountability is fair and consistent.

They pay attention to whether words and actions align.

When leadership behaviour is steady, culture strengthens. When leadership behaviour is unpredictable or mood-driven, culture becomes unstable.

The Culture Pathway gives leaders a practical way to shape culture deliberately rather than leave it to chance.

## Culture and Leadership Practice

This understanding aligns naturally with [The Theory of Change for Leading a Charity by Pratt](#).

That framework describes how leadership practice flows outward through decisions, relationships, and impact. The Culture Pathway explains how those leadership practices accumulate into shared expectations and, ultimately, culture.

Leadership practice shapes behaviour.

Behaviour shapes expectations.

Expectations shape culture.

Together, these frameworks show how leadership shows up in daily organizational life.



Culture is not announced.

It is built.

## What Is the Culture Pathway

The Culture Pathway explains how culture is built in day-to-day organizational life.

Not through slogans.

Through behaviour that is noticed, repeated, and relied upon.

Culture forms as people experience how work happens. Over time, those experiences teach people what matters, what is expected, and what is safe.

The Culture Pathway makes this visible by showing how small, practical choices accumulate into culture.

Consider one familiar example drawn from governance practice.

During the creation of a Board Charter, directors agree on how they will work together. One of those agreements is simple: meetings will start on time.

### Deliberate Actions

The Culture Pathway begins with deliberate action.

A deliberate action is an intentional behaviour chosen in a real moment of work.

In this case, the deliberate action occurs when the board collectively agrees, through its Charter, that meetings will start on time. This is not a courtesy. It is a shared commitment.

At this stage, culture has not changed.

What has changed is clarity.

The action signals that people's time matters. That preparation is expected. That the board will honour its commitments to one another.



Other deliberate actions often accompany this choice. Agendas are shared in advance. Roles are clarified. Expectations about participation and respect are named.

Deliberate actions answer the first cultural question: what matters here?

## **Habits**

When deliberate actions are repeated, they become habits.

Meetings consistently start on time. The Chair opens calmly and promptly. Late arrivals are acknowledged without embarrassment. No reminders are needed because behaviour is doing the teaching.

Over time, people adjust.

They arrive earlier. They prepare differently. They stop testing whether the commitment is real.

Habits create rhythm and predictability. They reduce uncertainty and help people understand how to show up.

The same pattern applies to other Charter expectations. Honest conversation becomes routine. Instructions become clearer. Follow-through becomes expected.

Habits answer the next cultural question: is this how things usually work here?

## **Committed Behaviours**

Habits deepen into committed behaviours when they hold under pressure.

This is where culture earns credibility.

A respected board member arrives late. A senior leader joins after the meeting has begun. The pressure to delay is real.

Committed behaviour looks steady.

The meeting starts on time anyway. Respect is maintained. No justification is offered. The Charter is honoured.



People notice this immediately.

The same test appears elsewhere. Difficult conversations are still held. Decisions are still followed through. Accountability is applied fairly, not selectively.

Committed behaviours answer a deeper question:

Does this still matter when it is uncomfortable?

When the answer is yes, trust grows.

### **Shared Expectations**

When committed behaviours are experienced consistently, they become shared expectations.

People stop wondering whether meetings will start on time. They assume they will. They stop questioning whether commitments will be honoured. They expect them to be.

When a meeting does not start on time, it is noticed, discussed, and understood as an exception rather than the norm.

In this way, the Board Charter moves from a document to a lived agreement. Expectations such as honesty, respect, follow-through, and acting as a team become embedded through experience, not enforcement.

Shared expectations reduce friction. They eliminate guesswork. They allow people to focus on purpose rather than process.

Shared expectations answer this question: what can I rely on here?

### **Culture**

Over time, shared expectations become embedded.

They no longer need reminders. New board members sense them quickly. Long-standing members reinforce them instinctively.

This is culture.



Culture shows up in tone, trust, and pace. It shapes how decisions are made, how disagreement is handled, and how people feel when they leave the room.

A culture where meetings start on time is rarely only about time. It reflects respect, clarity, accountability, and care. It signals that commitments matter.

Culture continues to evolve as behaviours are reinforced or challenged.

The Culture Pathway helps leaders see where culture is being shaped deliberately and where it is being shaped by default.

## **Culture Is Always Being Built**

Every organization is always on this pathway.

The question is not whether culture exists.

The question is whether it is being shaped on purpose.

The example of starting meetings on time is simple by design. The same pathway applies to how decisions are made, how conflict is handled, how people are treated under pressure, and how leadership shows up day after day.

Leadership influence lives in the small, repeatable behaviours that set direction, create consistency, build trust, and establish shared expectations.

This is cultural stewardship.

## **Culture, Boards, and the Role of the Chair**

In charities and non-profits, the board sets the conditions within which culture either strengthens or erodes.

Culture does not begin with staff.

It begins with governance.

Through tone, clarity, consistency, and behaviour, boards shape how power is exercised, how decisions are made, and how people experience leadership.



Within the board, the Chair holds a unique responsibility.

The Chair does not own culture alone. They shape it more than any other director. Through presence, steadiness, and conduct, the Chair signals how disagreement is handled, how accountability is applied, and how people are treated when pressure rises.

This is cultural leadership.

## **The Board as Cultural Steward**

Boards are often described as providing oversight and accountability. That description is accurate, and incomplete.

Boards also steward culture.

Every board meeting reinforces culture. The way questions are asked. The way dissent is handled. The way the CEO is supported and challenged. The way decisions are explained and followed through.

Boards send cultural signals whether they intend to or not.

When boards are thoughtful and consistent, culture gains stability. When boards are reactive, unpredictable, or not engaged, culture becomes fragile.

Culture is shaped through patterns of governance behaviour over time.

Boards that are disengaged, inconsistent in attendance, or casual about their responsibilities create uncertainty. When directors do not show up prepared, do not participate meaningfully, or treat governance as optional, culture absorbs that message. Stability weakens. Expectations blur. Confidence erodes.

Culture cannot outpace governance.

## **How Employees Experience the Board**

For many employees, the board represents the final guardian of the organization.



Most staff never interact directly with directors. They may not fully understand governance roles or structures. What they do understand is that the board is where ultimate authority resides.

Rightly or wrongly, the board is seen as the place where unresolved issues land. Where leadership behaviour is either addressed or allowed. Where standards are ultimately upheld or quietly bypassed.

Because of this perception, board behaviour carries cultural weight far beyond the boardroom. Silence is interpreted. Inaction is noticed. Decisions and non-decisions shape how safe, fair, and accountable the organization feels.

Culture is influenced as much by what boards allow as by what they require.

### **The Chair's Unique Influence**

The Chair influences culture through behaviour more than authority.

How the Chair opens a meeting.

How voices are invited into the conversation.

How tension is acknowledged rather than avoided.

How boundaries are maintained with respect.

These moments matter.

The Chair establishes what is acceptable, what is encouraged, and what is quietly discouraged. When the Chair is steady, fair, and clear, the board becomes steadier as well. When the Chair is inconsistent or reactive, uncertainty spreads quickly.

The role of Chair cannot be reduced to facilitation or procedure.

The Chair is a guardian of tone.



## Board Charters as Cultural Anchors

One of the most powerful tools available to a board is a Board Charter.

When treated seriously, a Charter is a cultural commitment.

A well-crafted Board Charter clarifies how directors will work together. It names expectations about preparation, participation, respect, confidentiality, decision-making, and accountability. It makes behaviour explicit.

In [The Role of the Chair in Building a Thriving Charity Board by Pratt](#), the Charter becomes a practical tool for the Chair to set tone, reinforce expectations, and address behaviour with clarity and care.

In doing so, it activates The Culture Pathway.

The act of creating a Charter is a deliberate action.

Living the Charter creates habits.

Honouring it under pressure builds committed behaviours.

Consistency turns those behaviours into shared expectations.

Over time, those expectations become culture.

The Chair plays a central role in ensuring the Charter remains a living guide rather than a forgotten document.

## Culture and Accountability

Healthy culture and accountability reinforce one another.

When expectations are clear and behaviour is consistent, accountability feels fair rather than personal. People understand the standard. They know what is expected of them and of others.

The Chair models this by addressing behaviour calmly and directly. Through clarity, follow-through, and respect.



When Chairs avoid these moments, culture absorbs the avoidance. When Chairs address them with care, culture learns that standards matter.

This is how trust is built.

### **Supporting the CEO Through Culture**

One of the Chair's most important cultural responsibilities is how they support the CEO or Executive Director.

The board sets the emotional context in which the CEO leads. The Chair translates board expectations into clarity and steadiness. They create a relationship where honesty is possible and leadership remains grounded.

When this relationship is predictable and respectful, culture benefits across the organization.

When it is tense, inconsistent, or neglected, that instability travels quickly.

The Chair does not manage the CEO.

The Chair creates the conditions for effective leadership.

### **Culture Is Governed Before It Is Lived**

Culture is experienced daily by staff and volunteers.

Before that, it is shaped by governance.

Boards and Chairs influence culture through what they model, what they protect, and what they correct. Their behaviour sets the outer boundaries of what is acceptable and what is possible.

This work is foundational.



## Culture and the Role of the CEO / Executive Director

The CEO or Executive Director is not the culture.

They set the tone for it.

Through their behaviour, presence, and decisions, executive leaders establish how the organization feels to work in and to belong to. Culture is shaped less by what CEOs say and more by how they show up, especially when pressure is present.

This reflects [The Theory of Change for Leading a Charity by Pratt](#). Leadership behaviour grounded in hope, inspiration, integrity, and kindness creates waves of influence that move outward from the CEO to board and staff, to donors and volunteers, and ultimately to the people and communities the organization exists to serve.

This influence becomes most visible when pressure is high and expectations are tested.

Former NFL coach Pete Carroll often spoke about the importance of consistent leadership presence. Players needed to know what version of their coach would show up, especially after losses. When leadership behaviour is steady, people stay grounded. When it fluctuates, uncertainty spreads quickly.

Culture travels through leadership first.

### The CEO as the Primary Carrier of Culture

CEOs and Executive Directors carry culture through their daily behaviour.

They set the pace.

They set the emotional temperature.

They set the standard for how people are treated.

For staff, the CEO is the most visible expression of leadership. Tone, body language, reactions, and consistency all become cues for what is safe, what is valued, and what is rewarded.



CEOs are always being watched. People look to executive leadership for signals about fairness, steadiness, and trust.

Culture forms through these signals.

This is the first wave of influence.

### **Consistency and Charisma**

Charisma is not the problem.

Charisma can inspire, energize, and mobilize people. The strongest leaders combine presence and warmth with clarity and steadiness.

The challenge arises when charisma is not matched with consistency.

When leadership behaviour shifts based on mood, stress, or audience, people stop relying on what is said and start watching what happens. Over time, that uncertainty erodes confidence and well-being.

Culture does not require perfection.

It requires reliability.

This is where integrity, one of the four pillars of [The Theory of Change for Leading a Charity by Pratt](#), becomes visible in action.

### **Being Watched and Being Felt**

Executive leadership behaviour carries disproportionate weight.

Words travel farther.

Actions are amplified.

Reactions are remembered.

When leaders remain calm under pressure, culture stabilizes. When leaders react sharply, withdraw, or become unpredictable, culture tightens.



I have seen CEOs yell at an employee multiple times in a public setting over room setup, missed deadlines, or guest lists. The behaviour made people uncomfortable, undermined the CEO's credibility, and reflected poorly on the organization.

What mattered was not the furniture. What mattered was what everyone else learned in that moment.

Culture absorbed the lesson instantly.

People learned it was unsafe. They learned mistakes would be punished publicly. They learned composure was optional for those with power.

This is how culture is taught.

### **Decisions, Fairness, and the Weight of Power**

Culture is shaped most clearly through decisions.

Especially hard ones.

Staff pay close attention to how resources are allocated, how recognition is distributed, and how sacrifice is shared.

A common and damaging example occurs during financial constraint. Employees are told there is no room for salary increases. At the same time, the CEO receives a raise.

These decisions may be governed by different contracts and approval processes. That distinction may be administratively sound. Culturally, it often lands poorly.

What staff experience is not the explanation.

They experience the outcome.

When leadership appears protected while others absorb the impact, trust weakens and kindness feels conditional.

Culture absorbs this quickly.



## Emotional Steadiness and Well-Being

One of the CEO's most important cultural contributions is emotional steadiness.

This is not about suppressing emotion. It is about responding with intention rather than impulse.

When leaders regulate themselves, employees feel safer. When leaders escalate, withdraw, or lash out, employees adapt defensively. Energy shifts from purpose to self-protection.

This directly affects well-being. Reacting is visceral. It is immediate, unfiltered, and driven by emotion rather than intention. Responding is thoughtful. It reflects clarity, care, and an awareness of how leadership behaviour shapes culture.

The difference between reacting and responding is the difference between instability and trust.

Kindness, understood as strength with care, is one of the clearest expressions of executive leadership.

## Alignment With Governance

Culture strengthens when executive leadership and governance are aligned.

When the Chair and CEO operate with clarity, mutual respect, and shared expectations, leadership feels coherent. Staff experience that coherence as confidence and trust.

When governance signals are mixed or accountability is uneven, cultural strain follows quickly.

This is where [The Theory of Change for Leading a Charity by Pratt](#) becomes visible in practice. Leadership behaviour grounded in hope, inspiration, integrity, and kindness creates reinforcing waves of influence that move from the CEO to board and staff, to donors and volunteers, and outward to the people and communities the organization serves.

When leadership behaviour is inconsistent or reactive, those waves weaken or fracture, and culture loses coherence.



## Leadership That Inspires Culture

This understanding aligns closely with Kouzes and Posner in *The Leadership Challenge*, particularly their emphasis on modeling the way and enabling others to act.

Culture forms when leaders behave in ways they want others to follow. When executive leadership reflects hope, inspiration, integrity, and kindness in action, culture strengthens naturally.

What is repeated becomes expected.

What is expected becomes culture.

This is the weight and the privilege of executive leadership.

## Behaviour Becomes Culture

What leaders do repeatedly becomes what organizations come to expect.

What is expected becomes culture.

The Culture Pathway by Pratt is grounded in lived leadership practice and supported by a deep body of thinking across leadership, organizational culture, and behavioural science. This work stands comfortably within that tradition while offering leaders a practical and clear way to understand how culture forms.

Across disciplines, a consistent truth emerges. Behaviour precedes belief. Repetition creates expectation. Expectation becomes culture.

## Behaviour Becomes Habit

Behavioural science has long demonstrated that repeated actions shape habits.

James Clear, in *Atomic Habits*, shows how small, intentional behaviours compound over time and become automatic. His work reinforces the idea that culture begins with deliberate actions that are repeated until they no longer require effort.

This aligns directly with the early stages of *The Culture Pathway*, where intentional action gives rise to habit and habit lays the groundwork for shared expectation.



## Habits Strengthen into Committed Behaviours

Leadership literature consistently links behaviour to identity and commitment.

In *The Leadership Challenge*, Kouzes and Posner emphasize modeling the way. Leaders influence culture through visible behaviour that reflects who they are and what they believe.

Brené Brown highlights the importance of congruence. People trust leaders whose actions align with their values and whose behaviour remains consistent under pressure.

Dan Heath, in *The Power of Moments*, adds an important dimension. Culture is shaped through repetition and through moments that clarify meaning and reinforce what matters.

The Culture Pathway reflects this insight. Deliberate actions and committed behaviours show up in moments leaders choose to handle with care, clarity, and intention.

## Shared Expectations Create Culture

Organizational scholars define culture as shared assumptions and expectations.

Edgar Schein, widely regarded as a foundational thinker on organizational culture, describes culture as what a group learns over time about what works, what matters, and what is taken for granted.

Patrick Lencioni, an organizational health expert and author of *The Advantage*, reinforces this view through his focus on clarity, trust, and behavioural discipline. Teams function best when expectations are clear, reinforced, and lived consistently.

The Culture Pathway mirrors this progression. When behaviours are repeated and reinforced, expectations form. When expectations are shared, culture emerges.



## Leadership Under Pressure Reveals Culture

Leadership thinkers consistently point to behaviour under pressure as the true test of culture.

Culture is revealed when leaders are tired, stressed, or uncertain. In those moments, behaviour teaches the organization what matters most.

This insight reinforces the importance of consistency and emotional steadiness within The Culture Pathway. What leaders do when it is hardest shapes culture more powerfully than any statement of intent.

## An Original and Practical Contribution

The Culture Pathway by Pratt brings this body of thinking together in a way that is practical, human, and teachable.

It reflects how:

- behavioural science explains habit formation
- leadership research explains identity and commitment
- moments theory explains how culture is reinforced at key points
- organizational scholarship defines culture as shared expectation
- lived leadership experience confirms that behaviour shapes belief.

What makes this framework distinctive is its clarity. What makes it original is how these ideas are integrated into a simple, sequential pathway that leaders can recognize, apply, and sustain in real organizational settings.

This framework sits comfortably within that tradition while offering leaders a practical and clear way to understand how culture forms.



## Closing Reflections

Culture is often described as something felt rather than built. As something sensed rather than shaped. That framing leaves leaders guessing.

The Culture Pathway by Pratt brings culture into clear view.

This framework shows how culture forms through leadership behaviour that is deliberate, consistent, and visible. It removes mystery and replaces it with clarity. Culture becomes something leaders can understand, influence, and sustain.

Culture begins with deliberate actions.

Those actions become habits.

Habits strengthen into committed behaviours.

Committed behaviours create shared expectations.

Shared expectations become culture.

This progression is practical. It can be seen as it unfolds. It can be reinforced when it is working and corrected when it drifts.

Leaders do not need abstract models or aspirational language. They need clarity about how everyday behaviour shapes trust, well-being, and performance. The Culture Pathway shows how culture is created through what leaders do, what they repeat, and what they protect.

The Culture Pathway by Pratt is part of the [Leadership by Pratt Series](#), a collection of practical leadership frameworks designed to help leaders create healthy, effective organizations grounded in hope, inspiration, integrity, and kindness.

Culture is shaped through choices. Those choices, repeated over time, become who an organization is. When culture is clear and strong, organizations become places where people grow and contribute. That experience carries beyond the workplace. It is how organizations play their part in inspiring a better world.



## Connect with Leadership by Pratt

To learn more about *The Culture Pathway by Pratt* or other frameworks that unleash the potential of charities and their leaders, connect with:

[Leadership by Pratt](#)

[william.pratt@live.com](mailto:william.pratt@live.com)

(306) 530-6404

