# Organizational Culture and Its Impact on Transformational Change

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*The power of organizational culture is a vital consideration when planning for major change – it can either help facilitate the change or undermine it completely. Change initiatives often fall short of their intended outcomes (or fail outright) because insufficient attention is paid to the impact of culture on the initiative. In this paper, we draw on what we have learned over the past four-and-a-half decades in our work with organizations around the globe that have successfully applied the principles of cultural transformation when executing their change initiatives and bring those lessons to bear on the change initiatives organizations are attempting today.*

Culture—"the way we do things around here"—provides guidance, whether intentional or not, on what is done (or not), how it is done (if it is), and why it is (or isn't) done. Culture permeates every organization and plays an important role in providing a strong foundation for organizational success in stable environments. It also has the ability to either support or destroy even the most critical change initiatives.

Therefore, understanding how culture is formed and knowing how and when to attempt to change it are essential elements of successful strategy execution. Transformative change promises can only be kept to the extent that an organization's culture supports them. This paper examines the dynamics of organizational culture and how it contributes to supporting or obstructing change initiatives. We then address whether to attempt shifting a culture and how such an endeavor—if warranted—should be approached.

# THE DYNAMICS OF CULTURE

We define culture as the patterns of shared mindsets and behaviors that provide guidance about how to operate within a particular organizational setting. Culture, in effect, encompasses not only *what* people are thinking and doing—it also influences *why*.

Culture operates in ways that ensure its own continuity and rejects intrusion into its norms. The more a change conflicts with an organization's existing culture, the more likely the culture will work to

defeat it. Thus, the focus of this paper isn't on organizational culture per se, it's on <u>the relationship</u> between an organization's culture and change.

To set the stage for such an exploration, it is important to understand five fundamental characteristics of institutional culture. An organization's culture is:

1. Anchored by two components: mindsets and behaviors

2. Shared by most of the organization

3. Comprised of subcultures

4. Established through evolution and/or design

5. Self-reinforcing, and therefore both subtle and tenacious

Only by grasping these foundational elements can we appreciate the complexities involved in forming and, when necessary, revamping the prevailing patterns of mindsets and behaviors that constitute an organization's culture.

## 1. Culture's Two Components: Mindsets and Behaviors

Culture is comprised of both mindsets and behaviors. While behaviors are easier to identify and observe, they are driven and reinforced by mindsets. This places mindsets at the heart of understanding culture and explains why a focus on actions alone leads to unsustainable change.

A *mindset* is comprised of two key elements: frames of reference and priorities. Frames of reference are the ways we make sense of a situation—lenses through which we perceive and interpret the world. Various cognitive models, values, beliefs, and preferences form these outlooks, as well as other factors such as gender, ethnicity, education, and experiences.

Optimism and pessimism are two simple examples of frames of reference. Optimists interpret the glass as half full, while pessimists see it as half empty. Either way, it's still a glass of water with a specific volume of liquid in it—the frame of reference is what gives the amount of water meaning.

And when certain frames of reference are shared by individuals within an organization, they contribute to the culture that forms.

The other element of mindsets is priorities: the relative importance and value we ascribe to various options. Priorities arise from frames of reference, in that when a situation is perceived a certain way, particular conversations, tasks, and objectives become more important than others. Shifting the frame of reference, however, may make those same activities less relevant, leading to a completely different set of priorities.

The bottom line is that frames of reference are crucial to shaping priorities, which in turn guide decisions and actions. The patterns of regular, daily decisions and actions that result from these mindsets are called *behaviors*. Whereas mindsets are often difficult to discern, behaviors are visible and can be verified more objectively. Whom people do and do not talk to, what they wear to the office, how they interact with clients, what decisions they make, and how they manage conflict are all examples of behaviors that contribute to an organization's culture.

In summary, culture is comprised of shared mindsets (frames of reference and priorities), which ultimately lead to related behaviors. Within an organization, both mindsets and behaviors must be understood in order to influence the culture. Behaviors, in and of themselves, provide the most easily accessed information; however, without addressing underlying mindsets, any attempt to shift a culture to be more in line with an organization's transformational strategic intent will be impossible.

## 2. Culture is Shared

Mindsets and behaviors must be operating as patterns before they constitute a cultural influence. That is, while one person—even the CEO—may hold certain beliefs and behave in certain ways, unless many other people in the organization share and enact these same mindsets and behaviors over extended periods of time (i.e., forming a pattern), they are not considered part of the culture.

Culture provides the frameworks people need to work together and recognize what thoughts and actions they collectively consider appropriate or unsuitable, productive or wasteful, etc. Culture is conveyed and reflected through a number of common practices, including:

- Oral and written communications, such as presentations and emails

- Organizational structure, as reflected by line and staff relationships

- The way power and status are defined, both formally and informally

- What is measured and controlled, such as time, productivity, safety, and quality

- Reward systems, such as compensation plans and supervisory techniques

- Stories, legends, myths, rituals, and symbols, such as company heroes, award banquets, and corporate logos

- The design and use of physical facilities, including how space is allocated and furnished

- What is celebrated and what is ignored

- Who becomes a hero and who is ostracized

## 3. The Enterprise Culture is Comprised of Subcultures

While culture is expressed through common practices, it is not identical across all parts of the organization. In fact, a company's culture is actually an aggregate of subcultures that have developed in response to distinct responsibilities and challenges faced by different groups within the organization.

Subcultures form for a variety of reasons. Some develop based on professional affiliations. For instance, the accounting department may have a culture that reflects mindsets and behaviors

consistent with the organization as a whole, but it may also have aspects that more closely align with being part of the accounting profession. Subcultures might also unfold due to geography; for example, the local culture at a headquarters office in New York City or Geneva may differ markedly from the local cultures in the San Francisco or Tokyo offices. Any group that centers around collectively held mindsets and behaviors has the potential to operate as a subculture.

An organization's corporate culture is made of many subcultures. These subcultures may reflect some of the same mindsets and behavior patterns as other subcultures, but the each also have their own unique norms around what is consider acceptable or not. The ideal situation is for companies to have subcultures that, while distinctive, are consistent enough that the enterprise-wide culture can take root and operate effectively. However, as will be discussed later in this paper, subcultures are a critical consideration when creating plans to shift mindsets and behaviors across an entire organization.

## 4. Culture is Established through Evolution or Intentional Design

Patterns of mindsets and behaviors come about in two ways: through undirected advancement or through deliberate actions. For most organizations, culture *evolves* below the level of people's overt awareness. It is generally the result of a collection of unplanned reactions to short-term pressures (or good fortune), rather than intentional measures taken with a long-term view. Over time, mindsets and behaviors develop according to these reactions, and certain ones become reinforced over and over again. Eventually, they are taken for granted en masse and applied without much thought—they are invoked unconsciously. Once this occurs, these now-habitualized mindsets and behaviors are no longer questioned; they become the invisible "business as usual" blueprint to which people adhere without much consideration.

Today, more and more top executives are attempting some version of a more disciplined, intentional approach. They have determined that it is no less important to create the right culture than it is to ensure the effectiveness of their field operations or the quality of their services, and they believe this won't happen without purposefully guiding—or *architecting*—the process.

Cultures that come about as a result of unguided development are not inherently better or worse than those fostered with architectural intent, but they are different. For example, evolutionary change generally takes much longer to become evident, and the results are less likely to be in alignment with the organization's strategic intent. However, people are generally more comfortable with the slow, organic migration process. When cultural change is more intentionally designed and fostered, on the other hand, senior leaders make a concerted effort to both determine what mindsets and behaviors are desired and invest the time and resources necessary to move people in that direction as quickly as possible. Deliberately guiding a culture's path by no means guarantees success—it will, in fact, ruffle many feathers en route—but it is advantageous in that you are not just tossing a coin and waiting for it to land. You have explicit aspirations, and movement toward (or away from) those aspirations is more visible, so mid-course corrections are possible.

## 5. Culture Is Self-Reinforcing

At both the enterprise and subculture levels, an organization's culture defines, justifies, and reinforces certain thoughts, decisions, and activities. This self-reinforcing cycle is depicted in the graphic below.

Culture provides ways for people to understand important decisions. Based on this understanding, expectations develop that limit possible responses. Those responses encourage people to make certain decisions and behave in accordance with expectations, confirming and reinforcing the culture's original patterns. This process bolsters a

The culture provides a framework for interpreting strategic decisions,

which allows expectations to be developed,

which generates thoughts and emotions,

which leads to decisions about implementation,

which guides and justifies activities that are supportive of the culture.

strong organizational identity; however, it can also restrict the introduction of new mindsets and behaviors that might otherwise contribute to success in a changing environment.
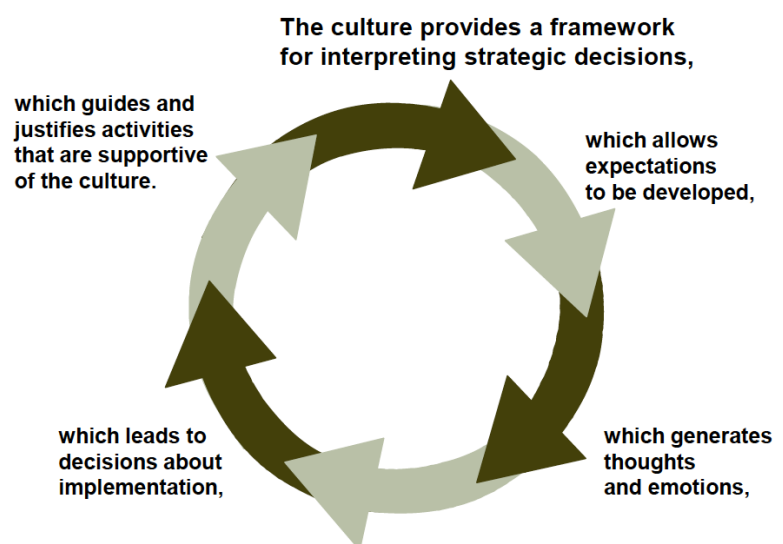
# WHEN IS CHANGING THE CULTURE WARRANTED?

Strategic change does not always require a culture shift. However, it does demand that culture be considered. When assessing whether cultural adjustments are necessary, the first question to ask is:

*"What is the degree of consistency between our existing mindsets and behaviors, and those needed to realize the promised benefits of the change?"*

The greater the disparity between the two, especially in cases of transformational change, the higher the risk of initiative failure without appropriate cultural modifications. On the other hand, if there is a high level of consistency and the change is not transformational in nature (although it may well be considered strategic), the organization's existing culture will, in all likelihood, support the new initiative and doesn't need to be modified.

In the case of one organization, it was facing the loss of its primary source of revenue due to some long-standing performance deficiencies. To pivot, it needed to make several dramatic changes, and quickly. Specifically, certain actions had to be engaged by staff at all levels; nothing less would save the organization.

The issue was that the existing culture inhibited staff from being too critical of each other's performance, out of fear that criticism would be perceived as an ungrateful act, particularly if that person had been hardworking and loyal to the organization for a long time. However, in this case, the stakes were so high that timely, frank performance feedback was more important than preserving a culture of conflict avoidance. The current culture and the needed culture were inconsistent, and so the culture had to change.
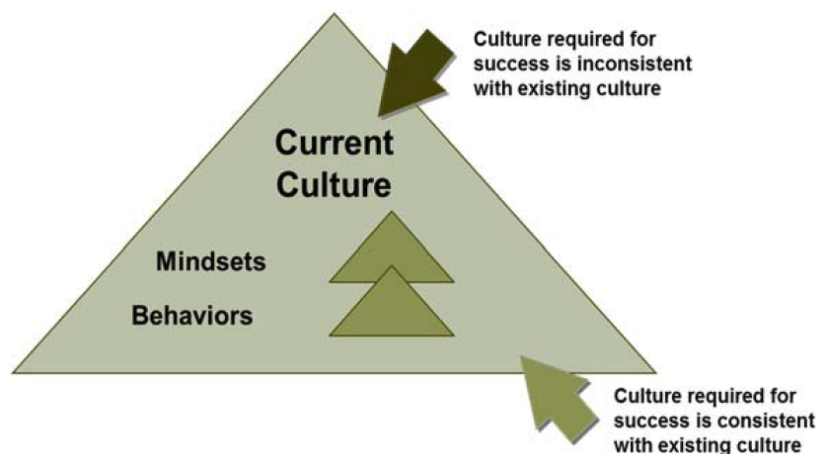
The second, equally important question to ask when deciding whether to move forward with a culture shift is:

## *"How strong are the existing mindset and behavior patterns?"*

Not surprisingly, weak cultures (where people pay little attention to cultural messages) can be redirected more easily than strong ones. On the other hand, if a culture is both strong and inconsistent with the behaviors and mindsets needed for initiative success, it will be crucial to modify the culture so that it supports the change, rather than works against it.
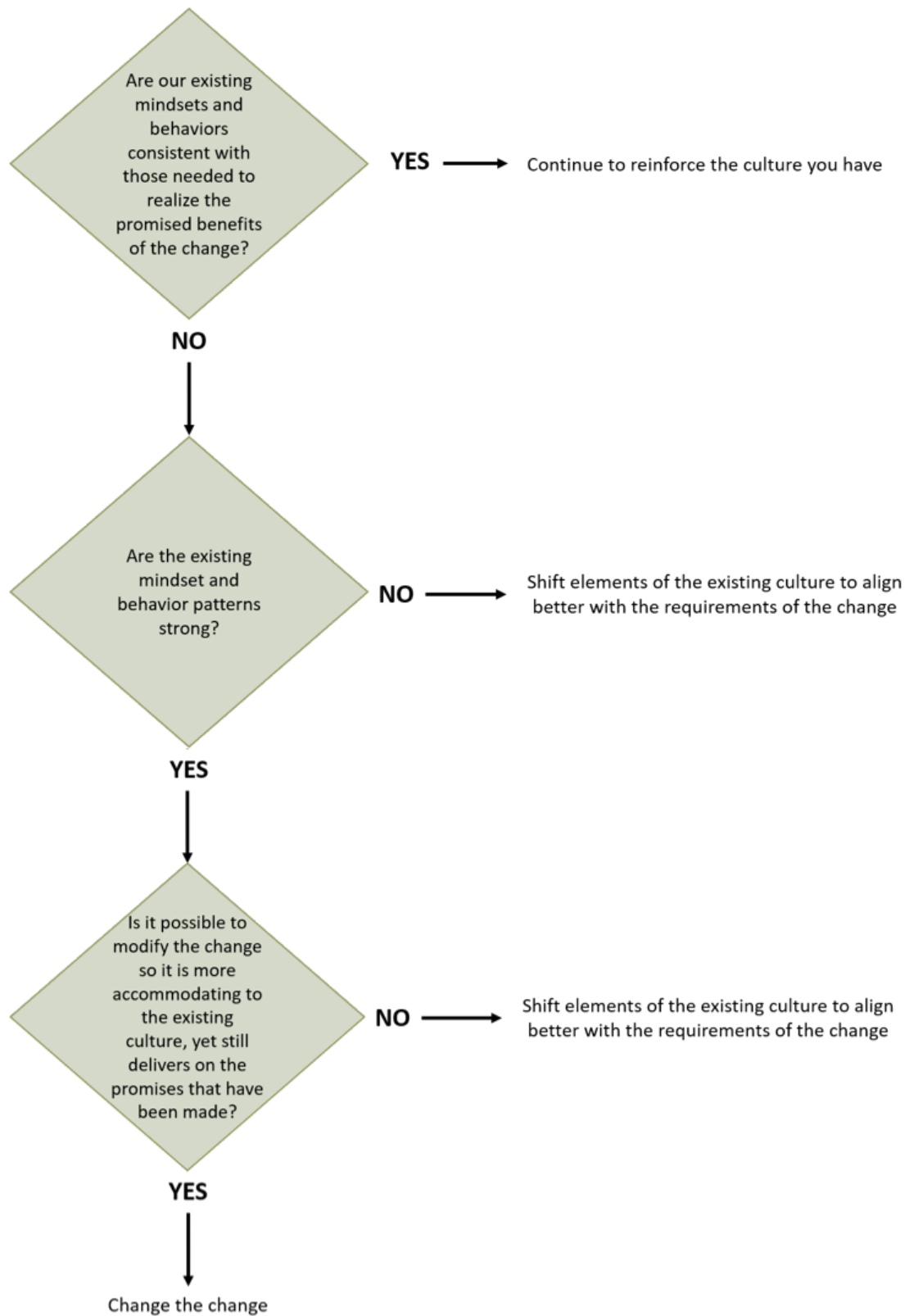
The stronger and more inconsistent the existing culture is with that required for realization, the more difficult, expensive, and risky it will be to change it. Therefore, if the culture and the change need to better align, and the culture is strong, there is a third question to ask:

## *"Is it possible to modify the change so it is more accommodating to the existing culture, while still delivering on the promises that have been made?"*

Because culture is difficult and risky to re-channel, the preferred approach is usually to fulfill a promise of change by recalibrating the initiative itself ("change the change"). For example, this might mean lowering expectations about what will be delivered ("When we began planning this initiative, we hoped we could increase our profits by 15%; now that we are deeper into it, we realize that our gains will more likely be in the 8–10% range") or it may mean extending the timeframe necessary to achieve certain goals ("We remain optimistic that we can achieve a 20% increase in productivity output; however, with what we have learned, we anticipate it will take eighteen months to do so, rather than one quarter").

Unfortunately, the reality is that many important initiatives can't be accomplished if they are significantly modified. When this is the case, rather than change the change, leaders may have no other choice than to change the culture.

# Key Questions to Determine if Cultural Change is Warranted

**Are our existing mindsets and behaviors consistent with those needed to realize the promised benefits of the change?**

**YES** ⟶ Continue to reinforce the culture you have

**NO**

↓

**Are the existing mindset and behavior patterns strong?**

**NO** ⟶ Shift elements of the existing culture to align better with the requirements of the change

**YES**

↓

**Is it possible to modify the change so it is more accommodating to the existing culture, yet still delivers on the promises that have been made?**

**NO** ⟶ Shift elements of the existing culture to align better with the requirements of the change

**YES**

↓

Change the change

# A SUCCESSFUL APPROACH TO CULTURE CHANGE: MOMENTUM & CRITICAL MASS

The self-reinforcing nature of culture will almost always generate some degree of resistance to changing it. This means that if new strategic objectives significantly disrupt well-established mindsets and behaviors, then, in the absence of overt efforts to change it, culture will most likely push back instead of supporting the objectives.

For instance, one organization had a strong internal cultural identity that they were the gold standard for quality in their industry. In fact many key people came to work for the company because of its reputation for "producing nothing but the best." However, when faced with shifting customer needs and reduced access to resources that were critical to generating that level of quality, the decision was made to augment the existing product line with less expensive/lower quality options for the market.

While many people understood the logic of such a move, the decision still produced an uproar. Some people felt that they were losing a key source of pride that had attracted them to join the organization in the first place. The mindsets and behavior norms that supported the ideal that "our customers rely on us to ship nothing but what excellence can produce" and had been ingrained in the organization for decades were being disrupted, and if leadership did not address this cultural upheaval, pushback would likely continue and only get stronger.

For such an organization, there are actually two changes that are necessary: one is about the initiative itself, and one is about the culture required to support the initiative. To "get the ball rolling" on cultural change, it is essential to generate momentum and reach the critical mass needed to manifest the new culture.

As used in the context of this paper, *momentum* is the forward motion of energy toward realization of cultural change. It is fostered by leaders and then exhibited by employees at all levels as they work together to establish a rhythm of progress toward the new cultural objectives. Collectively, these efforts build toward *critical mass*: the point at which there is enough momentum to make realization

of the new culture probable. At the individual level, critical mass occurs when people, on their own, begin to display an internal drive (mindset) that is geared toward the desired outcome (behavior). At the enterprise level, critical mass occurs when individuals across an organization generate enough momentum to make achievement of the intended outcomes likely.

The amount of momentum that is built in the early stages of a cultural shift affects not only the likelihood of achieving critical mass but also the ultimate investment of money, time, and effort required to do so. Therefore, a successful culture change often hinges on leaders' ability to start orchestrating momentum as early as possible.

### REAL-WORLD EXAMPLE

## Building Momentum and Reaching Critical Mass

One global organization incorporated the concepts of momentum and critical mass into their rollout of a new strategic plan and the cultural shift it was going to require. They determined that there were two critical mass points they needed to reach. The first one required all of their top executives (down through their country manager cadre) and some other highly influential individuals in select country offices to be on board. Altogether, the combination of upper echelon leaders and key influencers comprised a list of approximately 60 people.

To ensure most of these individuals would eventually support the changes, a second critical mass was identified. Within the list of 60, senior leadership determined 14 leaders/influencers who were the linchpins to reaching the remaining 46. If those 14 supported the change, the rest of the 60 were likely to follow, and if all 60 were on board, there was a good chance the rest of the organization would follow.

Senior leadership invited the full group of 60 to a three-day "Global Forum" meeting in Dubai where the new strategy and culture would be discussed. To increase the likelihood of successfully enrolling all 60 individuals at the Dubai meeting, the subgroup of 14 key leaders/influencers met several times in advance and were given a preview of what the others would see at the larger meeting. The objective was to have the 14 attend the Dubai meeting

with an already well-developed sense of understanding, commitment, and alignment toward the new strategy and culture.

The result of this careful preparation was that the group of 14 attended the Global Forum as strong advocates for the new vision and were influential in enrolling others at the meeting. By the time everyone left Dubai to go back and tell their respective country offices about what was to come, there was enough individual momentum among all 60 leaders to create the necessary critical mass. The enterprise-wide rollout was off to a strong start.

# A CULTURE SHIFT MUST BE DESIGNED

When the current culture does not support the outcomes promised by a new strategy and "changing the change" is not an option, modifying the culture may be warranted. However, in order to build the momentum and critical mass necessary to ensure success, the new culture should be crafted with no less care than would be applied to the launch of a new product or acquisition of another company. Properly nurturing a new culture is not a peripheral activity; it is paramount for leaders to succeed with major change initiatives.

There are four aspects of fostering new cultural norms that call for careful due diligence by the top echelon: why, what, when, and how.

## 1. The Why

Whenever humans are asked to change existing ways of working, thinking, and interacting, one of their first questions is *"Why? What's wrong with the way we are doing things now?"* While the current culture may not be perfect in their eyes, it is what they know and have adapted to over time. Before leaders begin to promote a new set of mindsets and behaviors, they must first draft a clear and compelling narrative that links these new ways of working, thinking, and interacting to the successful realization of the required change. This narrative allows everyone (including the leaders themselves) to develop a deep understanding of, commitment to, and alignment around the required cultural shifts.

If this argument—for *why* the new mindsets and behaviors are critical—is either not made or made only in vague, high-level terms, the odds of achieving a real, sustainable cultural shift are dramatically reduced. As one leader recently observed, the resulting cultural change will be nothing more than "a thin veneer" that disappears when individuals or their teams are stressed or challenged; in these moments, they will retreat to their old ways of thinking and doing.

Leaders need to be very specific when describing why the new mindsets and behaviors are essential to achieving not just the imminent change the organization is making, but the organization's mission at large. Staff throughout the organization need a way of visualizing what the new culture looks like. Otherwise, the called-for cultural shift is left ill-defined and up for broad interpretation in practice. For instance, promoting a "culture of innovation" might be perfectly clear to the sponsors of a major change, but this wording lacks the kind of specificity that is critical to re-shaping day-to-day patterns of working. If new mindsets and behaviors are linked to specific outcomes, however, they have more power. They provide new frameworks and ways of prioritizing – necessary ingredients for changes in behavior.

## 2. The What

When designing a new culture, it is important to identify exactly which mindsets and/or behaviors need to be altered for a strategic change to succeed—and also which should *not* be changed.

Typically, an organization's existing culture has some elements that should be maintained, or even strengthened, because they already serve the new strategic direction. Preserving and capitalizing on these elements will not only help with fully realizing the change, it will also aid in overcoming resistance to the cultural modifications that do need to be made. For one thing, the new mindsets and behaviors people are asked to adopt will not feel nearly so alien if they are paired with thoughts and actions that staff already find familiar. Additionally, maintaining aspects of the existing culture helps to build a psychological contract with staff that says, "The culture you helped create before had value that we want to preserve," which is important for showing people that everything they did in the past is not suddenly deemed worthless.

Nevertheless, while identifying what elements to preserve is important, it wouldn't be a culture shift if nothing changed. Therefore, the other part of the process is identifying: (1) those aspects of the current culture that do not support the strategic initiative and should be targeted for elimination or modification, as well as, (2) the new mindsets and behaviors that will be critical to achieving the intent of the strategic change. This list of mindset and behavior changes should be kept as short as

possible to help facilitate their adoption and to minimize the risk of overwhelming the targeted populations.

## 3. The When

Experience tells us that staff look to their leaders when inferring appropriate mindsets and behaviors. This is especially true when cultural changes are being introduced. It is human nature to ask *"How serious is my leader about these new mindsets and behaviors? Are these shifts for real or just a passing phase?"* Therefore, the decision to engage the rest of the organization in a cultural shift should be made only after there is evidence that senior leaders have fully internalized and are committed to living out the new mindsets and behaviors themselves.

One CEO of an international organization worked with his executive team on developing five critical new behaviors for a full six months before announcing the new strategy and culture initiative to the rest of the organization. He realized that he needed to change the culture at the top before he asked 30,000 other leaders and staff to make the cultural shift. As he shared with us*, "I need to be caught in the act of these new behaviors by my peers and subordinates on an everyday basis. Any slip-up and I've undermined my credibility with this team."*

In addition to ensuring top executives fully understand, are committed to, and align with the new culture, there is another timing consideration that relates to communication. Given the importance of articulating the connection between the required culture shift and the desired outcome of the strategic change, the timing for engaging the organization with the new mindsets and behaviors should be tightly linked to the rollout of the new strategy. If the culture change attempt is made without that strategic context, it will appear like a good idea at best and unwarranted at worst. However, if the organization is engaged too late, realization of the strategic change could be jeopardized. Thus, as the saying goes, "timing is everything."

# 4. The How

While fostering a new set of mindsets and behaviors involves some artistry, there are a few consistent activities that all successful culture shifts include. Whether formally engaged or intuitively applied, the following actions by senior leaders form the basis for creating new cultural norms:

- Gather sufficient input from others throughout the organization in order for top executives to crystalize their views on the desired culture

- Focus on what culture is needed to support strategic change (which may/may not be what leadership would prefer or be comfortable with)

- Ensure that executive leaders share deep understanding, commitment, and alignment regarding the intended cultural outcomes

- Identify key subcultures where the new culture must gain traction in order to reach critical mass. Enroll subculture leaders in the desired mindsets and behaviors, and explain why it is imperative that they become the new norm.

- Help subculture leaders and their staff to interpret and "localize" the new culture.
  Do this by opening a dialogue around questions like: *What does the new organizational culture mean for us in our area? How do we operationalize these mindsets and behaviors in such a way that our people feel they are relevant and serve an important purpose?*

- Introduce the entire organization to the new mindsets and behaviors

  o Provide concrete examples of the new mindsets

  o Provide concrete examples of the new behaviors or practices

o Explain why these mindsets/behaviors are important, and describe what the emerging culture will look like and the process that will be used to encourage everyone's involvement in the transition

- Employ cultural levers, i.e., highly visible actions an organization can take to shape its culture. These include things like incentives and pressures, how decisions are made, what leaders pay attention and allocate resources to, criteria used to measure performance, etc.

- Identify gaps that continue to persist between the current and desired cultures (at the enterprise level, as well as within each subculture)

- Develop mitigation plans for closing priority gaps and a tracking process to report progress to senior leaders

To see these elements in action, let's say that a particular organization determined it was important to operate as a team-based system rather than focusing on individual performances. The existing culture, however, was more oriented toward each staff member achieving his or her separate benchmarks. To *intentionally design and implement* the new culture, senior officers would need to first develop a clear statement that describes the team-focused way of operating, why it is necessary, and how it connects with the organization's mission. They would then need to identify the specific organizational processes (such as goal-setting, performance evaluation, and incentives) that need to be altered to facilitate the new team-oriented approach. Throughout the culture shift, every senior leader would need to "practice what they preach," so that as they enroll a cascading network of leaders below them, those leaders can model their own behaviors on those of their superiors. (This includes subculture leaders, both formal and informal.) Then, as they communicate the plan to all levels of the organization and engage in implementation, senior leaders should anticipate resistance and prepare for how they will handle it. Finally, progress toward the team-based culture should be monitored on a frequent basis, with modifications made and gaps closed as necessary.

While this may seem like a lot of work for senior officers, it's not distinct from what they should be doing anyway to ensure the strategic initiative's success. There are some culture-specific actions

leaders must engage, but for the most part, leaders' primary responsibility is to act as impeccable role models for the new mindsets and behaviors. Fostering the new culture should be embedded into their day-to-day activities, from every decision they make to every word they say. After all, as the adage goes, actions speak louder than words, and if you're not walking the walk, you cannot expect that anyone following you will do any differently.

# CONCLUSION

Culture, which consists of both mindsets and behaviors, is shared by members of an organization. It functions in a way that is self-reinforcing and manifests itself at both the enterprise and subculture levels. As a result, while culture is able to provide a strong foundation for organizational success in stable environments, it can become a significant impediment to success when executing major change.

Culture change should not be taken on casually, nor should the potential need for it be deferred or ignored. Shifting cultural norms is one of the most challenging endeavors an organization can undertake. The process is much more detailed and nuanced than this brief overview reflects; however, it is our hope that we have sufficiently addressed the fundamentals of what must be accomplished. By following the broad strokes presented in this paper, senior leaders can form a solid foundation upon which they may then build the culture needed to support their organization's new, transformative objectives.

# SUGGESTED READINGS

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# ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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Daryl is founder and chairman of Conner Partners, a consulting firm specializing in strategy execution; Conner Academy, a professional development firm dedicated to helping leaders and change practitioners explore character and presence as a means for advancing their capabilities; and Conner Advisory, a consulting firm dedicated to serving leaders who are pursuing *changes that matter*.

During his 40-plus years of practice, Daryl has educated and advised strategic leaders and seasoned change practitioners in many of the world's most successful organizations. His focus has always been on helping them both understand and address the challenges and opportunities they face during transformational change.

Daryl's work is built on a strong foundation of research, extensive consulting experience, and a master's degree in psychology. He has authored two books—*Managing at the Speed of Change* (Random House, 1993) and *Leading at the Edge of Chaos* (John Wiley & Sons, 1998)—and more than 250 other publications including journal and magazine articles, monographs, book chapters, and videos.

You can read Daryl's blog on executing major change at [connerpartners.com/daryl-conner/blog](connerpartners.com/daryl-conner/blog) as well as his new essay series on the mastery path for experienced change practitioners at [conneracademy.com/category/essays/.](conneracademy.com/category/essays/.)

## Ed Boswell

Ed is co-founder and CEO of Conner Advisory, a consulting firm established for the sole purpose of supporting leaders who are pursuing *changes that matter*. In this capacity, he collaborates with leaders from a diverse set of humanitarian and development organizations such as World Vision, Doctors without Borders, and Relief International, as well as associations such as InterAction and InsideNGO that support the international NGO community.

Prior to starting Conner Advisory, Ed was a partner at PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) where he headed up the US People and Organization consulting practice. In this role, Ed was responsible for leading a team of more than 400 practitioners who helped clients execute large-scale strategic change, transform HR into a more effective and strategic function, and optimize organizational talent. Before that, he served as President and Chief Executive Officer of The Forum Corporation, where he advised senior business teams involved in major change initiatives.

A recognized leader in the field of strategy execution, Ed co-authored *Strategic Speed: Mobilize People, Accelerate Execution* (Harvard Business Press, 2010), which provides a blueprint for leaders who are executing transformational change in their organizations. Ed earned his Ph.D. in psychology from the University of Pennsylvania. While at Penn, he also received The Wharton School Certificate in Business Administration.