

A CULTURAL STRATEGY

Introduction

This proposal is intended for anyone with responsibility for the people approach in their organisation, or anyone who intends to be. It is vitally important to retain peoples' identification and linkage with their founding culture, purpose and values over time, and hence provide and then promote the desired culture.

Edgar Schein (2010) defines culture as:

a pattern of shared basic assumptions that was learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems.



Organisational values and purpose need to be the foundation of the business.

A HELO view to look beyond the immediate operational issues and grip the opportunity to lay organisation's cultural foundations for the future.

Scope

An organisation's culture is and should be much more than *'the way we do things here!'* In order to keep culture, purpose and values at the heart of your organisation it is important to identify *What Matters Most* and seek to drive continuous improvement.



Identify organisational culture and leadership.
Focus on the dimensions of culture.
Transform the leadership in culture building and development.

Subjects to be covered include: the organisation's background; the drivers of cultural change; key culture change activities; change agents' reflections on the culture change; staff reflections on the culture change; impact of the change activities.

The importance of culture

How culture affects business performance

Keeping ahead of *'the way we do things here'* requires continual attention, as culture, purpose and values affects the standard and style of customer service, the satisfaction, engagement and retention of staff, all of which directly affects performance.

If employees identify with the business' values, feel comfortable with the organisation's culture and are passionate about purpose, they will feel more engaged, motivated and valued, resulting in improved performance.

Providing and promoting understanding

Focusing on culture, purpose and values

At the founding of a business or organisation, the purpose of that business is evidently clear. Over time, as more people join and leave the organisation, and changes and development occur, identification with *What Matters Most* can become lost. As the business or organisation develops and grows, as typically more restructuring, reengineering and changes occur; specialists are added to develop the organisation culture, purpose and values.



Living out the values of the organisation will change attitudes and behaviours, and have a positive effect on performance.

This work includes:

Tell our stories – what it's like to work here.

Consider the feelings, gestures and words experienced at work.

Recognise the cultural roots, where it has changed or developed in a good or bad way.

Identify where the culture has deviated from the beginning.

Use this knowledge to transform the attitudes and behaviours to promote, and those to discourage.

Dealing with change and growth – the cultural way

Balancing the introduction of structure and process during periods of change and growth, without compromising culture, purpose and values

Listening to the voices of the business, employees and customers adds vital knowledge to an organisation and helps to keep the founding history alive. Without this knowledge, it is much harder for people to be aware of historical roots, proud of current achievements and confident for the way ahead. Second, this process keeps the organisation's culture, purpose and values at the front of mind of people.

Some degree of process and structure is required to guide work, prevent duplication of effort, and remain lean. It is clear that thinking about the impact on culture before implementing a process or making the organisational structure more complex, is the ideal opportunity to reinforce the culture, purpose and values of the business.



The golden opportunity to understand the business through the culture.

Culture, creativity, quality and innovation

Releasing and developing the intellectual property (IP)

As an organisation changes and grows this development could affect the customer experience, if the new structures and processes are inappropriate – change for the sake of change. Second, the introduction of structure and process can affect staff confidence, morale and commitment.

It is vital that time and space is created to allow people to make the most of this opportunity, understanding how the business operates and its reason for being before introducing changes. Knowing where the business came from, and what it stands for, sends out a very strong message about the kind of organisation it is: this is how inappropriate behaviour is addressed and desirable behaviour rewarded.



Creative organisations and employment are growing faster than those in any other sector.

Potential for high levels of innovation and the creation of new IP (ideas, tacit knowledge, networks).

Outcomes

Integrated strategies improve resilience and sustainability

What gets measured gets managed. Surveyed strategies applicable in cultural businesses continually monitor cultural activity, at a time of technological change, and repeatedly refocus on What Matters Most.

