

FREE GUIDE

Navigating Workplace Culture



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Pause,

Workplace Culture

A LEADER'S GUIDE TO UNDERSTANDING AND INFLUENCING CHANGE

In a 1991 Wall Street Journal article, Peter Drucker, a renowned management guru, argued that efforts to change corporate culture often fail because they overlook the deep-rooted and often unspoken elements that drive organizational behavior.

He never said the widely cited words “culture eats strategy for breakfast” but rather a more nuanced “culture-no matter how defined-is singularly persistent.”

This guide will present you with actionable steps to understand and respect your culture and then gently shift and influence it for a better strategic fit where needed





Short-term considerations

- **Observe and Listen.** Before making any changes, spend time observing and listening to your team. This will help you understand the existing culture and identify areas of alignment and friction.
- **Acknowledge and respect the existing culture.** Change can be threatening. Acknowledge the strengths of the current culture and respect the efforts that have built it.
- **Identify cultural ambassadors.** Identify and empower cultural ambassadors to influence their peers and model new behaviors.
- **Nudge, don't shove.** Instead of imposing sweeping changes, introduce small, incremental nudges that encourage the desired behavior.
- **Communicate clearly and consistently.** Clear and consistent communication is key. Share your vision and the reasons behind the changes.
- **Align processes and rewards.** Ensure that your processes and reward systems reinforce the desired behaviors.
- **Be patient and persistent.** Workplace culture adjustment is a marathon, not a sprint.

Long-term adjustment



Identify the current culture

Spend time observing team interactions and listening to their conversations to understand the existing culture. Use surveys, interviews, and assessments to gather insights on employee perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, values, and behavior.

Define desired results

Clearly define the organization's desired core values, vision and strategic goals. The crucial next step is to define the critical behaviors needed to achieve the vision and goals.



Define the related shift needed

Perform a gap analysis to compare the current culture with the desired culture. Identify (a) specific cultural traits that need to change to achieve the strategic goals and (b) the traits can already be used as is.

Long-term adjustment



Develop & implement an action plan

Treat the cultural shift initiative as a formal change project. Use project management methodologies to set objectives, track progress, manage risks, and ensure accountability. Remember to identify and implement quick wins to build momentum and demonstrate the benefits of the cultural shift early in the process.

Engage leadership

Ensure that leadership is fully committed to the cultural shift. Leaders should model the desired behaviors and communicate the importance of the cultural change. Provide training if necessary to develop the skills needed to manage and influence culture effectively.



Continuous improvement

Foster continuous learning and improvement. Encourage employees to share ideas and best practices for maintaining and enhancing the desired culture.

In Closing

Managing workplace culture is one of the most challenging aspects of leadership.

Peter Drucker suggests that effective management should work with the existing cultural elements to implement strategic initiatives. By aligning new strategies with the existing culture, leaders can harness the strengths and values already present within the organization to drive change and achieve desired outcomes.

If a cultural shift is still needed be mindful of the deep-rooted and often unspoken elements of the organizational culture and proceed cautiously with shifting only where needed.

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