



"The best book on culture I've ever read."

— Adam Tarrow, Host of the "How to Lead" Podcast

CULTURE IS THE NEW LEADERSHIP



HOW GREAT COMPANIES
INSPIRE MILLENNIALS,
IGNITE PERFORMANCE,
AND WIN THE WAR
FOR TALENT.



BENJAMIN ORTLIP



PROLOGUE

MASLOW WAS RIGHT

“What a man can be, he must be. We call this need self-actualization.”

~ Abraham Maslow

If you don't make it any further in this book, let this one thought sink in:

For the first time in the history of the world, the workforce has reached what Abraham Maslow called “self-actualization.”

I know, it's a bit of a mouthful.

But that one statement contains the most significant development in the business landscape today. It's at the root of everything. In that one statement are the answers to the very challenges that confound today's leaders.

What issues do you see when you look around? Is rapid change overwhelming daily operations? Is the shift to remote work disrupting progress? Do you see increased difficulties with recruiting and retention? Employee burnout? How about all of the above?

There's a golden thread running through all the common maladies of today's workplace. And if you follow that thread to the end, it leads to a major shift in the role that work plays in civilization itself:

Work is no longer just a means to an end. It is now an end unto itself.

It's a human reality that when a job fails to meet key psychological needs, a person's sense of drive shuts down. Multiply this phenomenon across the company and you've got a serious problem on your hands. Multiply it across 3.4 billion people, and you've got today's global workforce – discontented, disconnected, and disengaged.

There's a fundamental shift behind this worldwide phenomenon. That's what this book is about.

This is not the first book about company culture. To date, the Library of Congress recognizes 437 volumes that actually contain the word "culture" in the title, and hundreds more that deal with the topic at some level. We don't need another book that merely chips away at the psychological mysteries that throttle human performance.

It's time to put the pieces together.

When the mountain puffs smoke at increasing intervals, an eruption is imminent.

Across the modern workplace, molten lava has been oozing for more than three decades, burning through desperate management efforts as it rolls downhill. It's not that we've failed to detect any seismic activity, but we've yet to call it what it really is: a human resource earthquake... a silent humanitarian crisis. The cost it brings in terms of turnover and disengagement is massive. The average organization is losing 31% of what it spends on payroll every single year! That's the equivalent of a car that gets 8 miles per gallon. It might be an acceptable way to cruise the strip, but it's no way to run a company.

My work puts me face to face with the rank-and-file sufferers who often burst into tears when given the invitation to tell me where it hurts. Let's not even address the mental health burdens created by the noxious environment of a thoughtless culture.

When a workforce reaches self-actualization the differences can be subtle, but the implications reach across global economies and penetrate down to the neural pathways where things like ambition and commitment and concentration are decided.

Maslow described this entire phenomenon nearly a century ago.

Maslow, as you may recall, was the psychologist who observed that our motivations in life are entirely dependent on our station in life. Basically, hungry people yearn for food, fed people yearn for meaning, and so on.

As a global workforce, we've been climbing slowly up Maslow's famous hierarchy of needs since the beginning of civilization. The vast majority of human effort throughout that time has been fueled by basic survival needs: food, shelter, clothing, etc. However, the past century has seen monumental changes. Today's workers are much more evolved, and that makes today's workplace much more complex. How do you motivate people to perform basic tasks inside an organization when the true hunger in their soul is to experience social connection, or to build better mousetraps, or to change the world? How do you connect those dots so the organization can keep churning forward?

These are the questions upon which the future of the workplace pivots. Those who discover the answers and solve the riddles will build kingdoms. Those who don't will perish, abandoned by a workforce that has moved on.

For the past fifty years or so, the success of most organizations has been determined by strategies that fall under a category called *leadership*. The emergence of leadership as a skillset has enabled more growth - and more *accelerated* growth - than at any other time in history.

When it first rose to prominence in business conversations, the concept of leadership was actually a little fuzzy. Discussions about it mostly emphasized the idea of having a personality and a presence that others found inspiring. Leadership meant a natural instinct for taking charge. It meant the ability to form connections with workers at all levels, and even to groom them to move into leadership roles themselves. Leadership was something everyone recognized but few could explain very well.

As an organizational discipline, leadership wasn't a codified subject... yet.

By the end of the 20th century, leadership had become one of the most proliferated topics in business. Leadership books had earned their own section in bookstores. There were leadership models, leadership seminars... coaches, workshops, academic majors, and entire institutes dedicated to advancing its pillars.

The key thing to note about leadership is that it wasn't *invented* in the 20th century, but that it was finally *codified* during that period. In fact, it was the achievement of codifying leadership that enabled companies to replicate leadership practices and drive an explosion of business growth.

Generally speaking, *culture* - the organizational discipline of fostering an engaged, productive workforce - is where *leadership* was about a century ago. Today, culture is something everyone recognizes but few can explain very well. Like leadership, culture has always been there. But it will be the ability to *codify* culture as an organizational discipline that enables companies - and people like you - to harness it for the next wave of explosive economic growth. It's already beginning to happen in many places. Books have been written to highlight various components of culture. Tools have been introduced to collect employee feedback. New platforms aim to foster community in the face of hybrid work models and virtual meeting environments.

Identifying the components and tools is a great start, but the achievement that qualifies any skillset as an institutional discipline - whether it's management, leadership, or culture - is the ability to quantify it... to recognize what it is, and what it isn't... to identify all the factors that influence it... then to measure and manage those factors. To codify it.

That's what this book is about.

Culture is no longer a nebulous concept or an elusive "vibe" — it's a new operational discipline that all great organizations manage with scrutiny and vigilance. Culture is the new leadership!

QUITTING IS STARTING IN DISGUISE

In the 1980s, I had a dream job in the advertising industry writing commercials and promoting a number of household brands. I got to work with famous athletes and entertainers. My clients were some of the world's top companies. The pay was good. The hours were reasonable. And the future glowed with potential.

There was just one problem: I was *miserable*.

I couldn't put my finger on it at the time. How could such a great job be simultaneously so bad? I was conflicted.

My Judeo-Christian upbringing had plenty to say about work ethic. And yet I felt increasingly powerless to resist the malaise that overcame me. On the outside, I was going through the motions just fine. On the inside, I was slowly dying. At first I tried to fight it. Then to hide it.

Ultimately I decided it was best to be honest about it... at least with myself. So I stopped trying to hide it and I just let it play out in the open. I knew there would be consequences, but I couldn't bear the thought of spending the rest of my career in silent misery. Whatever was wrong with me, I wasn't willing to go on. At one point I even began documenting my symptoms on a conference room wall for all to see. It was a scene straight out of *Jerry Maguire*. Eventually, in an effort to expose my disintegrating value to the company, I simply stopped coming to work. I wasn't really showing up in spirit, so why pretend otherwise? I checked myself out voluntarily. Thirty years before the Great Resignation of 2021, I staged my own personal walk-out.

At the time, it was confusing. I had no global pandemic to blame. There were no articles in *Forbes* about all the other people quitting their jobs. I wasn't part of a workplace revolution. There was nothing triumphant about it. I simply felt like I didn't measure up... that I lacked the discipline to fit the world's system.

Little did I know, I wasn't alone. At the exact same time my career was hitting the reset button, millions of workers around the world were also turning up infected with the same strange symptoms. The outbreak was so significant that in 1990, the Gallup organization launched a global assessment to study this bizarre phenomenon. They termed the condition *disengagement*. For more than three decades since, Gallup has been tracking the progression of this syndrome across the workplace in its now-famous Q12 study.

As it turns out, by facing my condition directly and honestly, I'd managed to escape.

In a twist of fate, I was recruited to write and consult on the very principles that had been shaping my workplace experience from the beginning. I worked alongside some of the most prominent thought-leaders and authors in the areas of management and leadership. I learned their ideas inside-out as

a ghostwriter, a consultant, and a content creator. In the process, I was being taught about the inner workings of employee motivation. I came face-to-face with the dynamics that determine the difference between career misery and career fulfillment. I came to understand how management, leadership, and culture impact worker motivation and performance. I discovered why my dream job in advertising had ended in disappointment.

Most importantly, I recognized a monumental development - an inflection point - in the nature of work itself. It's a change so significant that it will topple global brands on its way to altering the way people work for the foreseeable future.

In short, the next half-century of work hinges on the ability of organizations to codify culture. As I'll share, that's precisely what I've been doing for the past three decades. Along the way, I've been implementing these concepts inside some of the greatest companies in business today. And just like I've been doing for leaders in a wide variety of industries, I'm going to tell you precisely what you need to be doing, how much of it you need to be doing, and what you should expect as a result of doing it.

CHICKEN SOUP FOR THE WORKFORCE

In 2011, the executive team at Zaxby's asked for help with their culture. When it was founded in 1987, Zaxby's had been an instant hit across the Southeast. It served chicken with an unmistakable swagger. Zaxby's was like Chick-Fil-A's cooler, younger brother. For its founders, Zach and Tony, the company was an extension of their childhood friendship, and included a vast network of friends and business colleagues. But, twenty years later, the brand had hit a wall. Their franchisees were complacent. The whole brand was listless.

I was invited to work closely with the C-suite to implement the same principles I'll share in this book. In just three years, Zaxby's doubled its revenue without significant personnel changes. Simply put, the brand turned up the engagement of its existing people. Soon after, the company was acquired by Goldman-Sachs in a lucrative deal.

That's the impact of codifying culture.

Zaxby's is just one of many examples. The same scenario has played out in numerous restaurant chains, in healthcare, in manufacturing, in telecommunications, and in transportation. In company after company, these same concepts have been unlocking the reserves that are pent up in the workforce today. And they can work for you too.

All businesses stand on the same three legs: product, process, and people. The product leg represents the goods or services you bring to market. The process leg refers to the systems used to deliver them profitably. And the people leg stands for the wide variety of human efforts along the way. Here's the important thing to notice: since the Industrial Revolution, extensive work has been done to maximize the value and efficiency of product development. Likewise, we've squeezed every ounce of incremental gain from process improvement. Products and processes have been examined, codified, and streamlined ad nauseam. However, the people leg – the science of human performance – has remained a bit of a mystery.

We've been skipping leg day!

Casual Fridays, ping-pong tables, and attaboys don't even scratch the surface of the sophisticated science begging to be exploited. They're as laughable as a Dundie Award. The people leg is a blue ocean, waiting to be harnessed for the next wave of economic growth.

MORE THAN A FEELING

The problem with most conversations about culture is that they focus on the feelings of their people. Employee feelings have their place, but in order to affect engagement and effort, you have to go one level deeper to employee needs. Needs govern the subconscious allocation of effort. When you understand how to operate at the level of employee need, it's like strapping yourself into the cockpit of a powerful new machine.

The problem with feelings is that most jobs are just that: a job. Needs, however, represent a door to a person's core motivations. As you'll soon see, there's a glitch in the employer-employee matrix that applies to all work

everywhere, whether you're curing cancer or licking envelopes in a dimly-lit supply room. The glitch was the key to doubling revenue at Zaxby's. The glitch is your yacht for navigating the blue ocean of people... steroids for the people leg of the business.

The principles I'm about to share have unleashed billions of dollars in incremental productivity and profitability for big and small companies alike, in a wide variety of industries – most of it coming from front-line workers performing the most menial of jobs. The key lies in taking proper inventory of the many diverse motivations (and the deterrents) that influence how every individual approaches their work.

Reflect:

Have you noticed a change in the mentality toward work?

Stop wasting money on company culture.

There are countless tips and tricks for culture. But how can you tell which ones your company needs? And engagement surveys don't give you a strategy to follow. It's time for a new solution. The Culture MRI quantifies culture so you can take specific action and measure the results.



Track Progress

Measure year-over-year improvements in performance and profitability.

Address Issues

See exactly where your culture needs attention and how to address it.

Raise Performance

Attract, retain, and engage the best of today's workforce.



Most companies see a 20%-40% gain in bottom-line performance.

www.theculturemri.com

© 2024 The Culture MRI® All Rights Reserved



THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO READ THE SAMPLE CHAPTER OF CULTURE IS THE NEW LEADERSHIP!

I hope you found it insightful and valuable as you continue to explore ways to revolutionize your workplace culture.

If you're ready to dive deeper and unlock the full potential of your organization, I encourage you to purchase the full book on Amazon [here](#). Your journey to inspiring leadership and a thriving culture is just a click away!

We'd also love to stay connected with you. Please connect with us on LinkedIn [here](#) and take the full survey available on our website [here](#). Completing the survey will provide you with a personalized 16-page custom report tailored specifically for you. It's a powerful report designed to help you make informed career decisions and uncover what truly motivates you at work.

Lastly, your feedback means the world to me. After reading the book, I would greatly appreciate it if you could leave an honest review on Amazon. Your review will help others discover the value of Culture Is The New Leadership and support them in their own cultural transformation journey.

Thank you again for your support and commitment to creating a better workplace for everyone.

Best regards,
Ben Ortlip



BESTSELLER

“The best book on culture I've ever read”

