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A white, white paper

Sustainable Culture Improvement: How to make shift happen.



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***You cannot not influence.
You cannot not be influenced.***

- Antano Solar

”

As a leader or manager, you are one of the most important influences on the culture you create in your team or organization. You have a lot of power and influence. Every word, action, non-verbal gesture or inaction are being read and understood or misread every day.

Ask yourself, are you consciously and consistently creating the workplace and team culture you want?

Culture is a buzzword bandied around by many executives and consultants, many have jumped on “culture change” bandwagon using fanfare, posters and town hall meetings despite the growing evidence that they don’t create sustainable culture improvement. It’s never been about the pool table, the stand-up desks nor employee of the month trophy. Culture cuts wider and deeper than all of these combined. And while culture is said to eat strategy for breakfast, few know what’s on the menu.

What’s really required is a fresh approach, a minimalist mindset of doing less to impact more using consistent, incremental course corrects or what I call “**shifts**”.

CHANGE IS TOUGH

“

Our unscientific estimate is that as many as 50 percent to 70 percent of the organizations that undertake a reengineering effort do not achieve the dramatic results they intended.

**- Michael Hammer & James Champy,
Reengineering the Corporation,
1993.**

”

You’ve no doubt investigated training programs, mentoring, employee surveys, team software and assessment tools. While all of these contribute a piece of the puzzle you’ve probably been frustrated that the main thing, a sustained and adaptable culture of trust, remains elusive.

Culture however cannot be solely in the realm of HR, WHS or the executive. Just like a health program cannot merely have a disease or body part focus, but must consider the whole person body, mind and soul, growing a healthy culture requires a complete understanding of human dynamics, how and why people change, collaborate, form tribes and behave.

Complex, continuous change is situation normal in business today which is why culture improvement cannot be an isolated side project. Culture **is** the cornerstone of your entire organization and its future success, culture is the glue between strategic direction and operational action.



Alignment: Resisting the Cult of Culture

A key challenge to overcome is that everyone wants to name and control their own piece of the culture puzzle ie: safety cultures, customer-centric cultures, quality improvement cultures and lean management cultures. It's all culture and it needs to be seen, experienced, developed and leveraged as one organic whole.

I know how it goes - the safety manager goes to a conference where they talk about the need to create a strong 'safety culture', the manager sees competitors winning 'safety culture awards'. Within weeks they've implemented a safety smart, safety first initiative plastering the office and tea room walls with safety awareness posters, demanding safety is on the agenda of every gathering of more than two people and recording every paper-cut and near miss.

I'm not begrudging their day in the spotlight and I'm not discounting the value of such initiatives. However, strategy is meaningless unless it penetrates your organisation from top to bottom, side to side and middle out. Without total alignment throughout the entire organizational organism, strategy is nothing but clever campaigns, even when executed well.

One such company that executes this well is Basecamp. With such a diverse group of people, from many different places, they even [wrote a NYT best-selling book called REWORK](#) that details how they run a happy, healthy, aligned business.

"Treating people right is fundamental to how we do business. We treat our customers as we'd want to be treated, we treat each other like family, and we treat ourselves to a good day's work and a good night's sleep."

- Basecamp

Four Inhibitors of Growth



OVERWHELM

Managers are overwhelmed with too much to do and too little time. With all they've got to carry they don't feel up to the job of delivering the consistent culture message and agenda.



CYNICISM

Cynicism, fear and friction are building and the rah rah approach doesn't work anymore. Employees are complaining that they've been down this path before and that nothing changed.



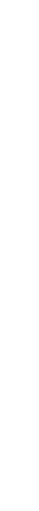
CHANGE FATIGUE

Change fatigue has set in at the frontline and the appetite for affirmative action has decreased. It won't be long before you notice the effects of them applying the change brakes.



TOP HEAVY

The well-worn top down approach to culture is creating a bottleneck, overburdening senior leaders with all the decisions, keeping them stuck and slowing innovation and improvement down.



Shift of Focus

If you want to improve the quality of life of employees, enrich customers experience, improve productivity, increase profits and ensure a positive impact on the world, you need a shift of focus.

No longer is the industrial era approach of a top down driven, bottom up action approach working. What's needed for today's business world is a middle out, holistic approach. You need your leaders and people to get out of their heads and hands and start coming from their hearts, their core.

While responsibility should lie with the owners, leaders or executive, it must it is also become a mainstream function of every department, team and individual. It must be adopted by all across all areas of the business - alignment from the middle out is critical.

Adobe for example builds trust and alignment throughout the company by strategically avoiding micromanaging. Their managers take on more of a role of a coach, letting employees set goals and determine how they should be assessed. Employees are also given stock options so that they know they have both a stake and reward in the company's success. Continual training and culture that promotes risk taking without fear of penalty are part of their open company culture.



Where's your focus?

FOCUS	TOP DOWN	MIDDLE OUT	BOTTOM UP
APPROACH	TELL THE PROCESS	TRUST THE PROCESS	TRY THE PROCESS
DRIVER	HEAD	HEART	HANDS
OUTCOME	FEAR	FLOW	FATIGUE

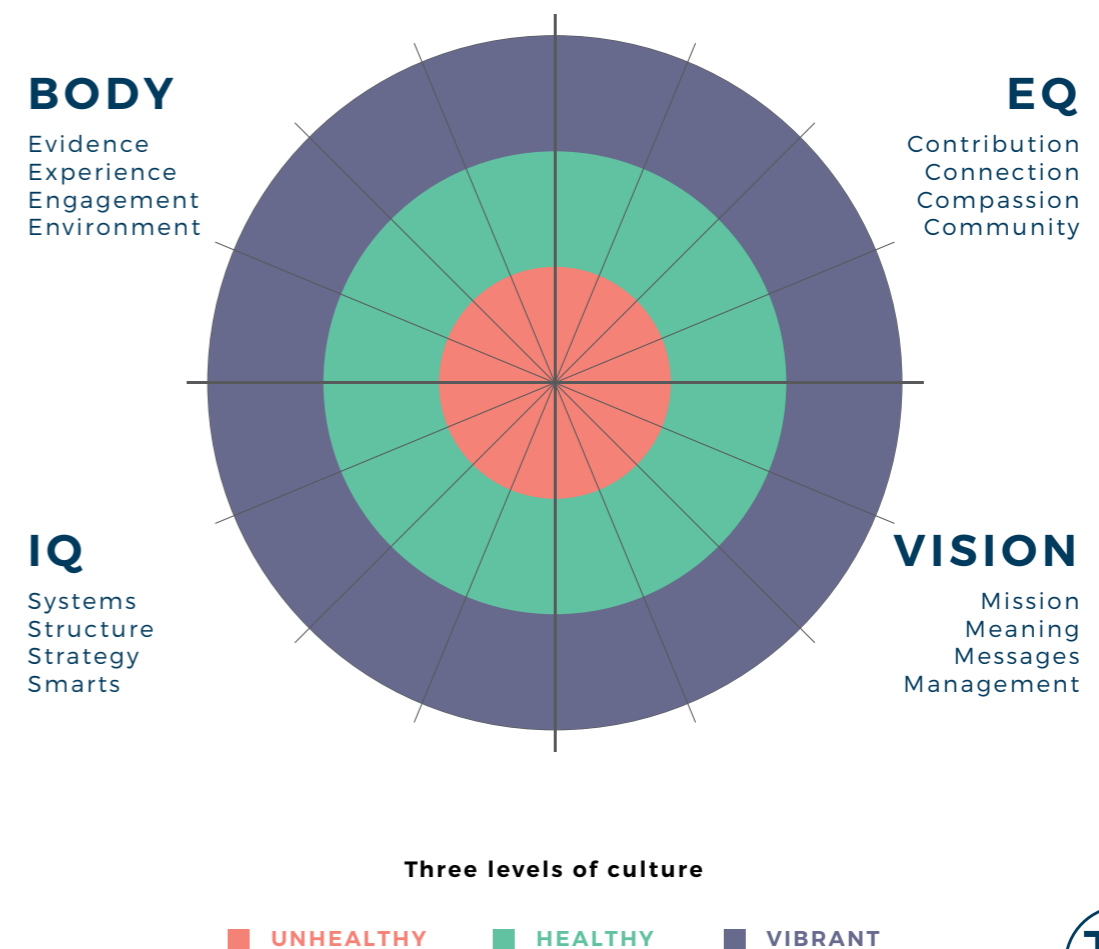
Cracking the Culture Code

There isn't a single corner of a company where culture doesn't have a part to play. It's short sighted to push it to be the sole responsibility of one department, it needs to be woven into the fabric of the entire organization or organism, just like DNA.

Understanding the delicate balance of individuals, teams and organisations, of the spoken and unspoken group norms, the rules about how people think, speak and behave in a company matter. Without a way to decode and understand what's going on in a company from a humanistic, tribal perspective you've got Buckley's chance of planning, executing and predicting the future.

Company culture is the **personality of a company**. Essentially culture is currency and great company culture doesn't happen on its own, it requires investment. Even the best culture needs to continually revisit itself to meet a growing company's needs. The most successful cultures are working towards being healthy and vibrant in all four quadrants outlined in The Culture Code Circumplex.

THE CULTURE CODE SIMPLEX[®]



Why bother?

Two words – employee cynicism. They’ve all seen it before, rationalization, cost cutting, reshuffle, realignment. They’ve received every branded t-shirt and cap you can imagine and they only use them when mowing their lawn.

Cynicism and lack of buy-in is on the increase and it’s costing organisations in many ways. According to Gallup, the percentage of “engaged” workers in the U.S. -- those who are involved in, enthusiastic about and committed to their work and workplace -- is only 34 per cent. Research shows that drama in organisations costs employers and companies \$25,000 per employee each year for each leader dealing with drama.

Yet for many the term ‘culture’ still evokes a kind of soft skills woo woo quaintness that doesn’t correlate to bottom line success. This couldn’t be further from the truth. The fact is that culture can be quantified, defined, measured and improved providing tangible, bankable results.

Will it be worth it?

AI Insurance have undertaken many experiments in the development of their culture following a merger. Working with passionate leader Belinda Smith they’ve articulated their why, their values, developed a culture code and continued and strengthen their culture moving from satisfactory to healthy and vibrant through meaningful 10 degree shifts. Their efforts are paying off with increased attraction, retention, morale and employee commitment and overall improved financial performance and business outcomes as a direct result of putting people first.

Key benefits of a healthy vibrant culture are that staff are more satisfied and motivated, clearer on what is expected of them and more likely to stay with the organization. Teamwork is more effective with improved collaboration and coordination meaning less time needed to manage and deal with the people stuff for leaders and managers.

I was recently at Newcastle Harbour watching a coal ship manoeuvre into the port when I realized turning around a culture is like turning a big ship in the harbour. It takes controlled careful movement, tiny corrections and firing of the engines, constantly surveying and reading the conditions and feedback and the support of a few committed, expert tug boats drivers to dock precisely.

Sustainable culture improvement is much the same. It takes controlled, careful movement, tiny course corrections and the support of a few committed experts. Developing greater empathy, emotional intelligence and psychological maturity of the heart in each employee is the best way to improve and manoeuvre a culture. Systems and processes are easy to change but the hearts and minds of people less so. Personal leadership development amongst all people is what will help a culture dock in port.

TIME TO MANAGE	COMPANY CULTURE
1x	VIBRANT
4x	HEALTHY
6x	SATISFACTORY
8x	UNHEALTHY
10x	TOXIC

Experiments are key to making shift happen

“We started to redefine everything we could about company culture. We studied all the best practices, we developed our own. We tried to understand what really made culture work, what made the human mind work. And we started experimenting, and experimenting, and experimenting.”

- Vishen Lakhiani

“Customers will never love a company until the employees love it first.”

- Simon Sinek

Education company MindValley, was started in 2003 by meditator and founder Vishen-Lakhiani with just \$700. The company today has a highly enviable culture and generates \$20 million in revenue annually with a value of more than \$100 million. Vishen’s goal from the outset was to build a company culture that attracts the best minds in the business, harnesses the power of passionate professionals, and captures the most excited employees in the industry. Despite paying lower wages than other international competitors, MindValley continues to attract some of the best of the best to fuel their growth. His approach – experimenting – or as I call it making 10 degree shifts, little changes and tweaks and tests to make improvements.

Ready to make the shift?

Improving culture is simple to say but challenging to do. Companies without the expertise or experience in their ranks are recommended to seek out support and guidance of individuals or companies with strategic culture growth expertise. It's not a straightforward process and careful monitoring of the culture pulse along the way will provide insights to decrease resistance to change and increase acceptance of the new.

The whole concept of the 10 degree shift is not to get overwhelmed by the smorgasboard of areas to start making improvements. Instead start small and do it consistently. Consider one of these areas to make a small shift in:

- Connection - how employees deal with customers
- Systems - how mistakes are identified, discussed and managed
- Messages - how communication cascades and flows
- Experience - how the brand lives and breathes
- Strategy - how decisions are made that move the company forward
- Environment - how employees are kept safe, happy and healthy
- Contribution - how the company participates, belongs and gives in the community

If you're ready to give the minimalist approach to leading a go, one with less talk, less stress, less meetings, and less headaches. And if you want to transform your work, life, team and culture to one of focus, fun and flow, reach out and book a chat with AJ here www.calendly.com/uqpower

Need some support?

The 10° Shift Performance Enhancement Program for developing high performance, healthy, sustainable cultures works below the superficial surface of organisational performance challenges -the individual - to engage each person in a process of completely transforming their understanding of how they are accountable for the results in their own lives which has a middle out ripple effect on the remainder of the company.

This program is not a magic pill or a quick fix (they never work). It teaches at a personal, team and organizational level, to make consistent 10 degree shifts to move away from micromanagement, meetings and measures, towards sustainable long term performance enhancing techniques of top performers.

Training in isolation doesn't create sustainable change which is why our program runs over 90 days to support people to practice the skills and learn everywhere at work. Utilising practical tools and strategies the program will support your people to adapt - to become more invested, resourceful, accountable and creative.

About AJ - The Minimalist Leader

Alexandria Joy, or 'AJ' for short, has spent over a decade helping leaders and managers find their sweet spot in the middle where they can do less and achieve more. As the CEO - Chief Empowerment Officer - at UQ Power, empowering high performing, committed, emotionally resilient people is her constant goal. She believes that whether you have your employees for 3 days, 3 months or 30 years your goal should always be that they grow and leave better people than when they arrived.

AJ is a minimalist and loves it so much she's downsized her life and lives in an off grid, state of the art tiny house that's just 2.4 x 7.5m. What she learnt through the process of letting go of 75 per cent of her possessions is equally applicable to leadership and culture - it's all about letting go of what's weighing you down that counts.

She'll support you to identify what to let go of and how to make small 10 degree shifts so you can achieve greater focus, vitality, simplicity, productivity and work/life balance delivering a quantum leap in results and satisfaction with less friction and more flow.

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If you do not manage culture, it manages you, and you may not even be aware of the extent to which this is happening.
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- Prof Edgar Schein



**Adaptation is the rule of human
existence, not the exception.**

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SUCCESS
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