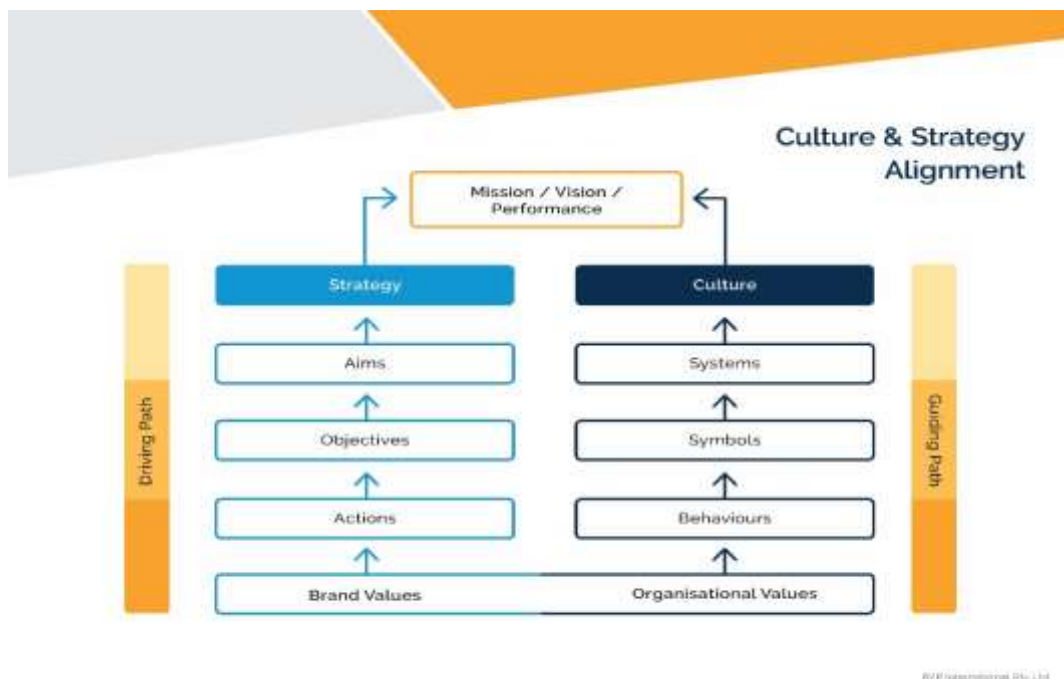


RYP QUARTERLY

15 Culture Myth Busting Tips

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Team Culture is the difference between a team that performs and a team that does not. It is the intangible point of difference of any organisation. It is difficult to see and measure but is something felt and experienced every day in every interaction with every team member, customer, client, or supplier. Put simply, it's your team dynamic and it's your business identity. It's not something taught at school, University or in a management-training course, but it's something every leader is responsible for.



What follows are 15 tips to help leaders formulate their own formula for leading, managing and shaping their own team culture. Culture will always precede performance every time.

1. YOU DO NOT CHANGE CULTURE BUT SHAPE IT

A culture is a living breathing thing that changes constantly with the shift of people in and out of teams. If people were machines, then it would be easy to change a culture, simply by flicking a switch. But people are emotional beings and have feelings, thoughts, and beliefs.



Like raising and educating children, it takes time, effort, persistence, patience, discipline and above all contextual repetition.

2. CULTURE IS REVEALED IN THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF STAFF, CUSTOMERS AND SUPPLIERS

The up-front promise to any customer, staff member or supplier will be revealed in stories of their lived experience. It is not about how they score their experience but how they describe it. In this data obsessed world, scores do not reveal the reason behind it, stories do. The more you seek to listen and understand, the more you will understand the authenticity of a culture.

3. BRAND IDENTITY AND TEAM CULTURE GO HAND IN HAND

It is pointless promoting your brand to the outside world as being one thing, when your team culture is the antithesis of that promise. For example, you cannot promote a brand identity of being 'creative, empowered and enterprising', when the internal culture is compliant, hierarchical and process driven.

4. STRATEGY IS THE 'WHAT' – CULTURE IS THE 'HOW'

Whether a strategic plan is executed effectively or not is a pretty good indication of a culture. A great team culture executes and delivers on their plans well, whilst poor team cultures do not. The success of any business lies with their ability to apply and execute the agreed business plan.

5. CULTURE IS NOT THE SOLE DOMAIN OF YOUR HR PROFESSIONALS

The Finance Department is not responsible for Sales Performance. Likewise, HR is not responsible for team culture. It is the collective responsibility of all Managers and Leaders. As the old saying goes "fish stink from the head." Good staff don't leave organisations, they leave poor teams and managers.

6. IT IS WITH FRONT-LINE LEADERS WHERE CULTURE COMES TO LIFE

This is where the rubber hits the road as they say. How do front line leaders and their team act and behave in the pursuit of good judgement day in day out, especially when the heat is on? The more effective the front-line leaders are at understanding and role modelling the desired culture, the more likely 'Business As Usual' Performance will be acceptable and will require less supervision by senior management

7. CULTURE IS NOT A SCORE BUT A LIVING DYNAMIC

If a team is confident, connected and thinking 'can do', it's likely they will achieve better results. Like human-nature it has its peaks and troughs and requires support, encouragement, nourishment and above all mindfulness.

8. SYMBOLISM IS EVERYTHING WHEN SHAPING CULTURE



What a leader measures, comments on, ignores or repeats speaks volumes for what is deemed as important. If team culture is not being discussed, celebrated, and promoted by a leadership team, then it's more than likely being ignored. "The standard you walk past as a leader is the standard you accept".

9. THE UNWRITTEN RULES ARE MORE IMPORTANT THAN ANYTHING STUCK ON A WALL.

The learned behaviour of teams comes from unwritten rules. The unspoken standards and behaviours which are deemed as acceptable, learned behaviours, habits of staff and teams, this where culture lives. Unwritten rules include language used, good and bad behaviours, rituals, disciplines, dress code and celebrations. When the team is under duress, teams will default to the learned status quo behaviours.

10. STAFF MIRROR IMAGE THE TOP TEAM, IT IS THE ACTIONS, LANGUAGE AND BEHAVIOURS OF THE LEADERS WHICH BRINGS CULTURE TO LIFE

No point saying one thing and doing another. Teams will mirror image the values and attitudes of their leaders. Leaders set the tone, discipline, and symbolism of what is deemed appropriate and important to any organisation or team.

11. OSMOSIS IS A POWERFUL TOOL TO BUILD CULTURE

Good team chemistry just seems to happen when teams click. This does not happen by accident. Natural team chemistry happens when a teammates gel together, perform well and overachieves, in a manner which is unspoken. Team Members take individual and collective ownership for the performance of the team in a manner which is seamless, automatic, and natural. This happens because of the actions, behaviours, attitudes, efforts, and habits of the team members. If everyone on the team acts thinks and behaves in a certain manner, it becomes infectious.

12. CULTURE IS NOT A COMPETENCY

Culture stems from a willingness to be part of a team. It requires the right state of mind from all team members (attitude is everything), a sense of belonging and, above all, a belief and commitment to the greater team effort. None of these are competencies, but something every team member and leader has responsibility for

13. INTEGRATION AND DIVERSITY ARE KEY

We all bring something to a bigger pie. All team members have a list of strengths and that is why they are hired, not for their weaknesses. Understanding the diversity of attributes within the team helps bring a more integrated approach to team dynamics. It is not about assimilating a team member to a particular status quo, but about building the length and breadth of attributes into the team.

14. A SENSE OF PRIDE AND BELONGING IS CRUCIAL FOR TEAM DYNAMICS TO WORK

Passion, volunteerism, innovation, and proactivity are not attributes that you just ask staff to turn on. It requires the right encouraging team environment that helps facilitate these



attributes and showcase that they are indeed valued and appreciated. Staff are motivated by the sense of achievement and the recognition for achievement. Meaningful feedback and acknowledgement from the leader to a team member is everything.

15. DON'T CONFUSE STAFF HYGIENE FACTORS WITH MOTIVATORS

Job descriptions, meaningful appraisals, KPI's, fruit bowls, EAP services and the odd staff lunch are hygiene factors. Important, but not motivators. Having a sense of progress, recognition, and reward for achievement, feeling valued and having meaningful work that is acknowledged by Leaders and Managers are key motivators. Asking staff to just do their job is tantamount to asking staff to breathe!

FINALLY

Just when a leader gets sick of saying it, some staff are just starting to get it! Repetition, storytelling, reminders, and feedback loops are all mission critical methodologies when shaping a culture. Just like parenting. The coaching of culture must take place as and when the right or incorrect behaviours occur. It is all about action learning. As things occur it is incumbent on the leader to catch staff doing things right or to coach up improved performance. Ignore it at your peril.

“Good luck. It’s never easy but find your own formula and keep persisting.”

Facta Non Verba – Deeds Not Words

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