

ACHIEVING CULTURE CHANGE

HOW TO SEIZE
THE MOMENTS
THAT MATTER EACH
AND EVERY DAY



THE BUZZ AROUND CULTURE CHANGE

In recent years, many have come to see culture as one of the defining challenges of business. Howard Stevenson, Professor Emeritus at Harvard, who *Forbes Magazine* describes as Harvard Business School's "lion of entrepreneurship," places it at the center of today's challenges, saying: "Maintaining an effective culture is so important that it, in fact, trumps even strategy."

This is shown in the experience of a wide range of business leaders. For instance, Brian Chesky, the digital entrepreneur and co-founder and CEO of Airbnb, says: "A company's culture is the foundation for future innovation. An entrepreneur's job is to build the foundation." Howard Shultz, former CEO of Starbucks, goes further: "The only thing we have is one another. The only competitive advantage we have is the culture and values of the company. Anyone can open up a coffee store. We have no technology, we have no patent. All we have is the relationship around the values of the company and what we bring to the customer every day. And we all have to own it."

Culture is clearly important, but what is it exactly? Though clues are provided in what Howard Shultz has said, the word itself can sometimes appear slippery and amorphous, all too easily becoming whatever its user wishes it to be. To avoid such ambiguity, we adopt the following simple definition: **Culture is the sum of the values, beliefs, and behaviors shared by the majority of people.** This definition is sufficiently flexible to encompass the myriad varieties of organizational culture – ranging from that found in Google to that of small start-ups or byzantine bureaucracies – while being sufficiently robust to be meaningful. The sense in which we use this term agrees with that of Schulz, in that the "right culture" for an organization is right for that particular organization and that one alone: By this definition, an organization's culture needs to match its strategic intent.

Realizing the required behaviors to support an organization's strategic ambitions is far from straightforward. Alan Murray, President of *Fortune*, says: "Changing an entrenched culture is the toughest task you will face. To do so, you must win the hearts and minds of the people you work with, and that takes both cunning and persuasion."

Just how difficult this task can prove to be is demonstrated by the lack of success of many such efforts. In our experience, one reason for this high failure rate is that the complexity of the challenge is seldom mirrored by the sophistication of the approach. All too often culture change, far from being strategy driven, degenerates into a set of PowerPoint slides or posters. Frequently, businesses appear to gamble all on a "big bang" – ignoring sage advice not to put all their eggs in one basket. Our experience tallies with that of the ancients, testifying that doing so is not only extremely high risk but also unnecessary.

In this paper, we seek to provide an overview of the steps to take to ensure success for those contemplating or about to embark on a change in certain aspects of culture. We adopt an approach that avoids "big bangs" and which is based on lessons distilled from our experience in working with a wide range of companies in today's rapidly changing environment. We share this in the form of:

- **Five lessons** that new CEO Jeff (a fictional character) learns the hard way.
- **Five practical implications** of these lessons, with tips for their effective application.

We have written this paper in the hope that leaders can use the lessons described here as the basis for ensuring lasting change, achieving it with minimum pain.

CULTURAL CHANGE MUST BE INEXTRICABLY LINKED TO BUSINESS RESULTS

Meet Jeff. Jeff is a relatively new CEO of a mid-sized printing company with headquarters in Chicago. On another level, Jeff is a typical CEO, in a typical firm, irrespective of industry or geography. His story is designed to resonate with those senior executives, who are faced with rapid organizational transformation, and understand that changing an entrenched culture will be critical to the survival and success of their firm. As Jeff embarks on a new era, his needs, fears, and expectations are candidly laid out in the form of a journal. Jeff's journey is designed to offer us all valuable lessons in achieving enduring cultural change.

Jeff's family-owned business started in the 1950s and has grown rapidly throughout the United States and internationally. The business had seen good annual growth for most of its 65 years history. Jeff took up the reins last year during a period of negative or no growth. This new reality means that the business now needs to start making some radical changes.

The company has a great culture overall, and staff love working for the business. Jeff is determined to start seeing growth reappear and knows he needs to make changes to the company's vision, strategy, and values. He must ultimately update or reform certain aspects of the company's culture. Although this type of change is new to Jeff, he hopes his 20 years of management experience have given him the necessary tools to get this change done well. As part of this initiative, Jeff had taken personal responsibility for publicizing the new company values statement and personally launched the program at every site.

He knew that many of the other members of the leadership team already suspected what the recent survey demonstrated: The shift in measurable behaviors had been relatively weak, the behaviors remained inconsistent, and they were a long way from their goal.

Jeff understood that quite a few in the organization greeted all talk of behavioral change as woolly and irrelevant. He believed that the lack of direct customer contact was one reason why the changes had been floundering. While improved customer responsiveness was key, he knew that the heart of the problem lay elsewhere: Flexibility was a strategic imperative. He had pushed this message at every opportunity – every staff meeting, every progress review, one-on-ones with other members of the senior team – but he could sense that, although they agreed with him in principle, they hadn't bought into the process.

Jeff found the talk he had that morning with Len, the company's operations director, most revealing. "We have always been a hard-nosed, results-oriented company," Len told him, as if this were news to Jeff. "The bottom line is all that matters here." Jeff responded by saying he saw no contradiction between being customer savvy and results oriented, and pressed Len on the importance of the change required. That evening, Jeff collected his thoughts. He had been keeping a journal since his early days as a manager. This discipline brought order to his thoughts, capturing ideas that could otherwise be lost in the constant action of busy days. Jeff always sought to be tough on himself and ask the most difficult questions.

Why do we want to change?

Len clearly hasn't bought into the need for change. He seems to think that the very idea of it isn't worth wasting time on. If Len thinks this way, then, despite what I get told, probably others think similarly.

In our scheduled get-together this week, we need to go back over why I think this is important. This will probably feel like going back to square one for some but, if that's what it takes, that's what we'll do.

Is the change linked explicitly to tangible business outcomes?

I know from experience that this is the golden rule of change. How can I make it clearer? Len seems to think that the change goals are disconnected from the bottom line. I believe they're fundamental to achieving growth but, if Len can't see it, then it's probable that others in the leadership don't see it either.

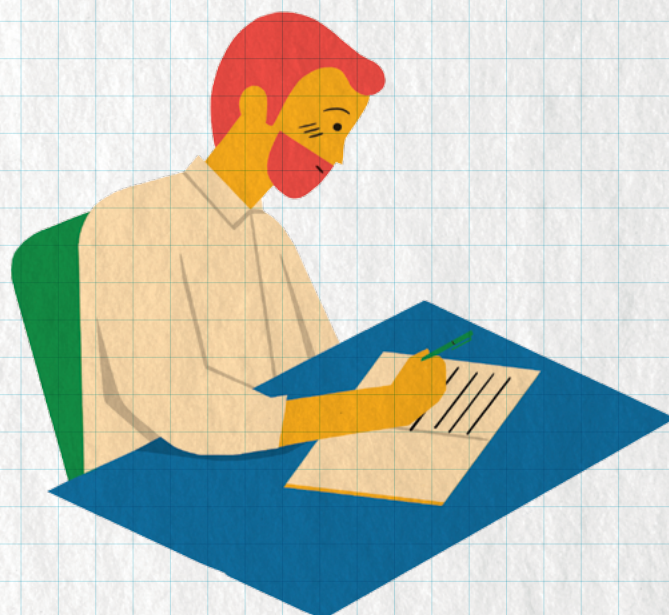
I need to look again at how we can hardwire the new behaviors to the business objectives. Doing so will help bring much-needed focus to the change effort. Trouble is, I have no real idea how to do this. To make it happen, I need the leadership's input and commitment. Yet another reason why we need to go back to the drawing board.

How do we ensure all employees understand how the change translates into the work they do and the results they're accountable for?

The conversation with Len highlighted a deeper problem: If we don't get it, then what on earth is going on at the ground floor? I need to find a way to demonstrate at a practical level why the behavior change is needed if we're to make real progress.

We need to find a way to demonstrate how these changes will lead to improved performance and outcomes.

I've been ignoring a basic truth: As a team, not only do we need to demonstrate to every employee why the new behaviors are required but we also need to elevate these changes and turn them into moments that matter to the customer. I'm certain that, once the staff see how delighted our customers are with this new focus on service, they'll want to do more and more of it. I live in hope, at least.



LESSON 2

PAY ATTENTION TO SUB-CULTURES AND CELEBRATE DIVERSITY

At first, it seemed to Jeff that their recent get-together had been the most productive yet. Despite some initial doubts, it made sense to the team that they needed the change to have a stronger link to the measurable outcomes. Jeff had noticed a level of energy in the group that had been absent for some time.

Nothing is ever that simple. Though they got off to a good start, within a couple of weeks there was noticeable backtracking. It was clear that there was still something preventing many of the key people from putting their full energy behind the desired behavior changes. Andrea, for one, appeared to have doubts – ones that she had not expressed fully at the get-together.

Ostensibly she had come to see Jeff about another subject, but the topic quickly shifted to that of the values program. It soon became clear that she wished to challenge what had been agreed earlier. “The tech staff can make neither head nor tail of what was being asked of them. They’re not customer facing. They never talk to anyone else other than their own team, so why are they under the microscope?”

He had listened, letting Andrea do the talking. He sought to appear reasonable, acknowledging the truth in what she said, while underlining yet again how important the change was to the success of the company. Andrea said she understood, but what was being asked was just not relevant to her function.

By the end of the conversation, Jeff felt exasperated, particularly so since Andrea’s objections clearly echoed the earlier ones of Len: The previous get-together was meant to have sorted this out. He tried not to show his frustration to Andrea, however, doing his best to reassure her. It was not an easy conversation.

Avoiding conflict with Andrea achieved little. The heads of other departments showed similar signs of backsliding. While they agreed with the goals that had been set at the get-together, at least in principle, the tasks being asked of them were not relevant to their role or objectives.

One of Jeff’s strengths is that he does not give up easily. He mulled over what Andrea and the others had said, trying to make sense of their objections (in his own mind, he labelled their comments “resistances”). Over the following days, light slowly dawned. His journal entries from the period record his reflections.

*Have we been paying attention to the needs of the various organizational subdivisions?
Do I understand their cultural similarities and differences?*

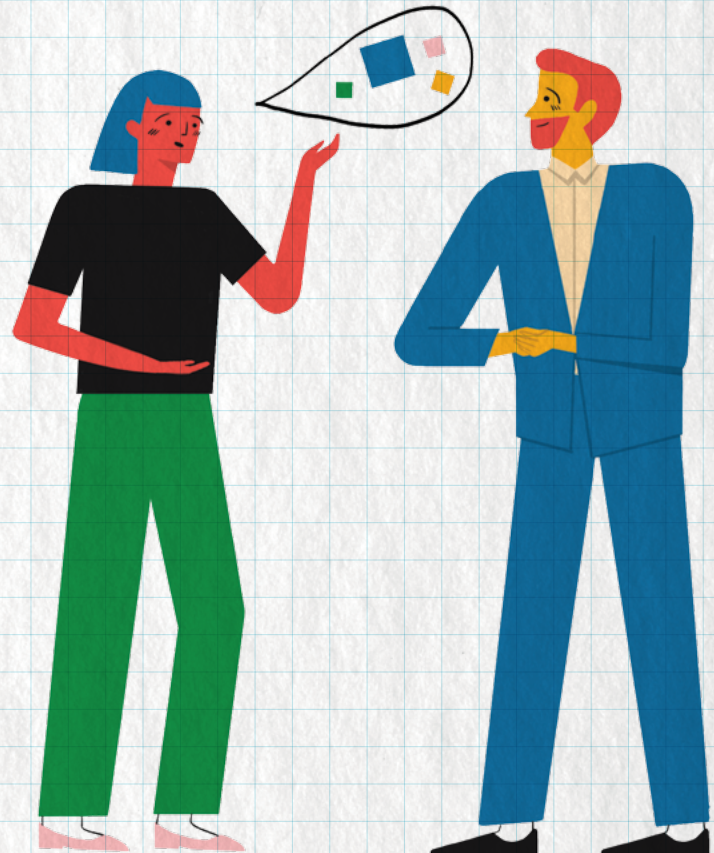
Andrea is right, of course (she often is) – the program needs tailoring. IT's culture is different from the rest of the organization because its people are the techy types required to fulfill its role. The same is also true, at least to some extent, of research and development, marketing, and a number of other functions. I should have seen this earlier. One size seldom fits all, whatever Henry Ford might have thought.

I need to actively invest time and resources to understand, nurture, and build upon our organization's subcultures.

The different subcultures in the organization probably result from a whole range of factors that I need to pay attention to.

What are the important behaviors, the ones that define aspects of our corporate culture? How do we make sure they're all aligned with the organization's strategy, purpose, and values?

Somehow, we must find a way of creating unity while allowing this diversity. Yet another challenge for the leadership team – and for me. This is not the right question on which to attempt to sleep.



LESSON 3

ENSURE LEADERS ARE ALWAYS INVOLVED AND ACCOUNTABLE

Jeff had started his next meeting with the team assuredly, but all too quickly found himself wrong-footed. Instead of leading (by example) on the importance of role modeling, as he confidently expected to do, he found he was receiving unfavorable feedback from his colleagues. They were clearly less than impressed.

For much of the afternoon, it was as if he were wading through treacle. The consultant's survey was clear. There were customer complaints about lack of responsiveness as well as negative feedback, not just about him but about almost every person on the team. No rancor – at least, not within the team – so that was good.

Then there was something of a light-bulb moment. Somewhat to Jeff's surprise, it was Len who made the critical intervention: "I believe we've all been missing the point. We need to show people what responsiveness and flexibility look like for them daily and not just tell people what they aren't doing. This is why we're not making the progress we want. The staff don't understand the ask."

Further discussion ensued but, as it was already late, they scheduled another get-together for the following week. The meeting broke up with a surprising degree of optimism.

Jeff's journal entry that night recorded some of the most critical decisions on his journey. The entries clearly reflect his internal struggle to come to terms with what the team was telling him, albeit not always successfully.

Our behavior has a major impact on the culture.

I thought I was ahead of the game on this but today's get-together shows me that the others don't agree. Am I seen as collegial as I would like? I lead from the front and make decisions quickly. I guess this does create problems sometimes. But the team is telling me that this isn't what they need from me at present. I somehow need to change my approach, but how – and is it worth the risk to the program?

I know we demonstrate leadership through our actions and, without the right actions, we won't achieve the desired changes in behavior.

They say I'm not delivering. But I am listening. Clearly, I need to do a bit more listening – and not be so quick to make decisions. I need to let things progress at a different pace. This isn't going to be easy.

Recent events show, once again, that small actions have a big impact – positive and negative.

I knew we needed today's get-together. Although it was at short notice, the meeting was top priority for the team and the organization. Rod didn't see it that way, of course; nor did some of the others. In that sense, it was the wrong signal with the wrong result.

If others in the organization don't see us acting in accordance with what we're promoting, they won't engage with the change.

It's worrying that we've made so little progress as a team over these past weeks. The team – including me – hasn't been "walking the talk."

I need to ensure that all members of the leadership team spend more time working with their own teams to develop a clear understanding of how the desired changes in behavior translate into practice.

We're failing to support each other in making the required changes. We're falling behind as a team.

We shouldn't relegate specific behavior changes to being the sole responsibility of the human resources (HR) function.

It's my responsibility. It's our responsibility. No one made a conscious decision that it should have been delegated, of course. No one said "Let HR do it." But that's exactly what's happened by default. Each one of us somehow thought that, once the program was underway, it could largely be rolled out without further intervention. How wrong we were.



LESSON 4

FOCUS ON TANGIBLE ACTIONS THAT SHIFT INDIVIDUAL BEHAVIORS

Despite Jeff's fears, Len's intervention changed the atmosphere in a positive manner. The team appeared more focused. During the follow-up, each member of the leadership team listed their own personal behavior changes in relation to the goals. The question then was "Would they stick to this?"

Jeff sought to maintain the momentum over the coming weeks. At the personal level, although he understood what was required of him, it was far from easy to put into practice.

The team was already scheduled to meet the following week and Jeff was looking forward to seeing how others were doing. In preparation, Jeff felt he needed to jot down a few thoughts.

Culture is the product of the behaviors, values, and beliefs that everyone in the organization demonstrates.

This I know by heart, though I think I missed something key: just how hard it is to change one's own behavior. Now, it's also clear to me that other people might not perceive my actions in the way I intend.

We've demonstrated that we can't achieve the required behavior change solely through a communications program: We need to lead by doing.

We've already lost time because, earlier, we approached change as if it's largely a communications challenge. We're now losing more time because none of us – I least of all – understands how to effect behavior change.

Behavioral change is complex: While it's made transparent through what people do and say, it's also influenced by other internal aspects, such as paradigms, stories, structure, and incentives.

Have we got the balance right in what we're doing?

How do I even start to solve this one? It's great that we collectively listed the behaviors each of us needs to change, as well as how these connect to the overall objectives of the program. Surely that's progress. But if we're still at this stage in our own team, should it be any surprise to us that the majority of those on the ground have no idea what the culture change means for them?

I/we urgently need to act in ways that are tangible, pervasive, and directly connected to our strategy.

We need actions that will directly affect what people say and do to change how they work.

The problem is I still have no clue what the right actions are. As far as we're concerned, all this is still mainly in the future tense. Sometimes I feel we're working in the dark.



CULTURAL CHANGE IS A LONG JOURNEY...

...rather than a single event

Though they still had a very long way to travel, unbeknown to Jeff, they had already turned the corner. One surprising consequence of Jeff's newfound uncertainty was that this aided his transition to greater collegiality and increased flexibility in decision making. He actively sought the input of others on the team because he had reached the limits of his own knowledge and experience. More often than in the past, he did this informally. The greater informal contact meant there was less need for formal get-togethers. And when they had those get-togethers, they were more like celebrations than wakes. As with a suddenly uncoiled spring, there was a release of energy throughout the leadership team. This, in turn, rippled throughout the wider organization.

The analogy is faulty, of course: The change continued to be much more gradual than Jeff would have wished. The energy released did not always translate into traction. There was still plenty of slippage, plenty of re-examination of decisions, and plenty of redesign. One major difference was that Jeff now saw this as an essential part of the process and so actively encouraged it, rather than resist it as he had previously. He was now not just the team leader but also a team member.

Slowly but surely, everyone in the leadership team gradually became more successful at exhibiting the desired behaviors: As a team, they started to show greater flexibility. Their performance began to improve – there was more open

disagreement than before and much less passive dissent – which resulted in better outcomes and quicker decision making. Gradually, the desired behaviors also started to trickle down throughout the organization. Team members were careful to reinforce these new behaviors with incentives and rewards. They were at last succeeding in effecting change.

It was a lasting achievement that Andrea's model became the accepted one: Everyone agreed that taking on board what the frontline managers were saying was a good idea. The program was constantly adjusted in light of this. In turn, the departmental teams were led by their customers' demands – and the program was tweaked regularly in response to the ongoing feedback.

Only now, very late in the day, did they begin to think about the impact of the culture change on the organization's fundamentals. Jeff headed the effort to translate how the new metrics that had been developed by the change could be hardwired into the organizational structure, systems, and processes.

The change was a step-by-step process and a lengthy one, but it was effective. By the end of the year, there was a surprisingly high degree of buy-in and a measurable level of impact.

Jeff felt some pride at what had been achieved: He had taken all the steps that were necessary, given the program his total commitment, and made sure the behavior change succeeded. Despite some false starts, he felt it was a job well done.

Jeff's journal entries reflect the learning gleaned from this hard-won achievement.

Jeff was delighted to still have the great culture that had been nurtured over many years but with a few new additions which made all the difference.

This was Jeff's last entry prior to what became renowned as a memorable end-of-year celebration.

Behavioral change, if it's to achieve the desired business outcomes, requires multiple interventions realized within an iterative process.

I guess I initially resisted this fact, hoping for a quick fix. Now I believe that revisiting the challenges, impact, and issues on a regular basis is the only route to success.

Feedback and adjustment are key.

Change happens through a process of "natural evolution" rather than a one-off effort.

As a result, it has sometimes felt as if we haven't known where we were heading. Despite this, I realize there was no quick fix that could have achieved the same outcome. Maybe I was initially too wedded to the idea of a program that would dazzle by its impact; maybe this was an ego thing. I understand, now, it was the small things – the many small moments – that really mattered.

Ideas for change need to be allowed to bubble up unimpeded: Knowledge from the frontline needs to complement ideas from the top.

Buy-in is everything, but then so is ensuring that the change is fine-tuned to the current needs of the strategy. At the start of the program, I forgot that the culture of the organization isn't uniform: Each department and function is subtly shaded and nuanced in terms of its culture. It was critical to success that we accommodated those minor differences. And without this, we couldn't have realized the strategy.

We need structural modifications, including metrics, processes, governance, and professional development paths, to reinforce and underpin the behavior change.

Maybe I was more like Len than I admitted to myself earlier, seeing culture change primarily as "soft stuff." Now we're many months into the program, I know that nothing is further from the truth. Changing culture isn't easy.

We're in for the long haul: We need to maintain our present relentless focus on the culture for the foreseeable future.

The next challenge will be how to keep the program feeling fresh.

Meanwhile, we can start by celebrating our victories.



HOW TO CHANGE

IMPLICATION 1 **PUT LEADERSHIP AT THE CENTER OF DEFINING AND DRIVING THE BEHAVIORAL CHANGE**

We know from many conversations that culture is perceived as an intangible that is just too difficult to shift. Therefore, before any discussion about culture, it is necessary for the organization's leadership team to first be aligned on its strategic goals and target business outcomes. Any misalignment in these areas is likely to undermine the change. Once leaders have a shared end goal in view, they will be able to develop and define the behavior that is required to achieve it. Though this might seem obvious, it is all too often ignored or skirted around.

The need for leadership cohesion underlines an important point: The involvement of leaders in behavioral change goes well beyond simply reviewing and approving objectives. Members of the leadership team are always actively involved in the change as participants, whether they acknowledge this or not. They are in at the starting gate because they have responsibility for the present as well as the future culture.

Leaders must also live out the desired behaviors, norms, and values that are required to achieve this (see 5 below).

We all take cues from the actions and behaviors of those who have power and influence over us. Studies in behavioral change in organizations

show that leaders who "walk the talk" can bring meaning to the descriptions of the desired new culture, making it real for others in the organization. Leaders play a critical role, therefore, in guiding, engaging with, and promoting the desired new behavior. This obliges them to identify which actions will potentially have the greatest influence on other people's behaviors (see 4 below).

IMPLICATION 2 **DESIGN WHERE YOU WANT TO END UP**

Arguably the most critical step is to form an accurate picture of what behaviors will be required to accelerate the organization's success, and then decide how to measure these behaviors that underpin the culture. This lays the foundations for change. Without this understanding, it will be very difficult to help staff identify accurately what is required of them to fulfill the organization's strategy – or to know whether they are making progress.

Building up a measurable picture of the desired behaviors ensures the organization is equipped with:

- A rich data set that provides an objective and measurable overview of the culture in identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the organization, as well as the areas to be built upon.

- A comprehensive view that can help challenge long-held beliefs in a constructive and data-rich way.
- The opportunity to engage with individuals and functions at every level of the business, heightening awareness of what is required from the culture. This can help kick-start some of the required behavior changes.
- The means by which to identify the specific actions that can be effective in changing the culture.

IMPLICATION 3 **ACTIVELY ENGAGE ALL LEVELS OF THE ORGANIZATION IN “WHAT THE CHANGE MEANS TO ME”**

For the sake of simplicity, we have focused largely on behavior change in this paper. However, this is only one of several determinants of culture. While behaviors articulate the culture, behavior is subject to and interacts with the processes, systems, policies, and structures of the organization. For instance, hiring the right people to fit with the organization’s culture is one particularly critical aspect. The culture of the organization, in terms of its values, beliefs, and behaviors, is the outcome of the sum of all these aspects. These factors determine what those within the organization believe its culture to be.

Once leaders can articulate how the desired behavior will support their strategic goals, as well as what the desired culture entails, they will be able to start communicating these things more widely. This means holding conversations across the organization about “what the change means for me.” Generic communications are always likely to fail to address this most important conversation.

Organizations are often heterogeneous and include a number of subcultures within them. Each of these subcultures is determined by a range of factors, including function, historical

circumstance, and geography. By taking a more targeted approach that acknowledges this diversity, it is possible to make the process of change more efficient and more effective.

Tailoring the program to the needs of the subcultures helps ensure widespread engagement. The more that people believe the change to be purposeful, the sooner they will feel accountable for the new way of working. Only then will they step forward to define what it really means for them: a most vital step in implementation.

A number of organizations take this approach a little further, articulating the critical “cultural connection points” within their organization. They do it by identifying the key people that other employees connect to, trust, and listen to. Actively engaging these people in the process increases the effectiveness and depth of the behavior change.

Successful programs encourage people to step forward and act, publicly recognizing and rewarding those who behave in ways that are consistent with the desired direction of change.

IMPLICATION 4 **USE CONCRETE, VISIBLE ACTIONS TO DRIVE CHANGE**

Changing certain behaviors of an organization requires a concerted effort, usually over a prolonged period. No organization has unlimited resources or capacity to absorb change, so this effort needs to be targeted where it can be most effective.

A number of frameworks are available to help identify the specific levers most likely to have meaningful and lasting impact on business outcomes. Our experience shows that, as well as behaviors, the areas to be targeted should

include the structures, decision-making processes, managerial practices, and appraisal and reward systems of the organization.

In changing behavior, it is important to think about the moments that really matter. The lack of attention paid to these moments in organizations is astonishing: a staff member's first day, who trains them, how they are introduced to colleagues, daily interactions with supervisors and managers, who they learn from when serving customers. These everyday moments define what we think, how we feel, and ultimately what we do.

Leaders and managers should therefore demonstrate what the change means in practice. This includes finding ways to encourage people to do the right things to promote the target behavior. In addition, they can help move the change forward by aligning the organization with a single, inspiring idea. Symbolic acts (interventions that demonstrate in a visual or memorable manner the contrast between the new behavior and the old) can have long-lasting impact. When such actions are seen as well-rooted and genuine, they can prove catalytic, creating a "story of change" that ignites the imagination of all those involved.

To bring about lasting change and declare victory, it is critical for everyone to experience continuous examples of the behaviors you want to see every day. People get to know how an organization really works by observing those with whom they work: The actions of leaders, line managers, and colleagues are therefore critical in shaping outcomes. This is true not only in changing behaviors but also in reinforcing and supporting changes in policy, structures, systems, and processes.

Elevating the moments that really matter, on a regular basis, avoids the potential downsides of traditional big-bang programs. An incremental approach enables flexibility while not overly committing the organization to major investment

in unknown territory. It also enables the culture to respond rapidly to the changing business environment, so it can adjust quickly to evolving strategic goals.

IMPLICATION 5 START NOW, PRACTICE THE NEW BEHAVIORS, PUT THE STRUCTURES IN PLACE, AND FOCUS MANAGEMENT ATTENTION

As soon as the leadership team is clear about what it requires of the new culture to support the chosen business strategy, it is important to start quickly, making small changes that demonstrate the required behaviors. This is a far more powerful approach than lengthy rollouts or overly ambitious programs.

Actions that can support the change include:

- Clearly articulating and reinforcing the expectations of the new behaviors in all communications, so individuals understand the relevance of the change.
- Role-modeling the desired behaviors.
- Carrying out "symbolic acts" – elevating them so they are noticed and become moments that really matter in supporting the new business direction.
- Aligning people around a single inspiring idea that motivates them to do the things which demonstrate the desired behavior.
- Providing recognition for those who exhibit behaviors consistent with the business objectives.
- Making sure employees hear regularly about successes in achieving the desired behavior change goals.

Many of these actions apply to operational managers just as they do to the leadership team. The way managers interact with each other, with their subordinates, and with their peers sends important signals about how important the new ways of working really are.

Beyond the formal structures, organizations can also identify and seek out key opinion leaders across the organization. Such people when located at the “cultural connection points” can have a disproportionate impact on the change outcome as a result of their formal and informal sources of influence.

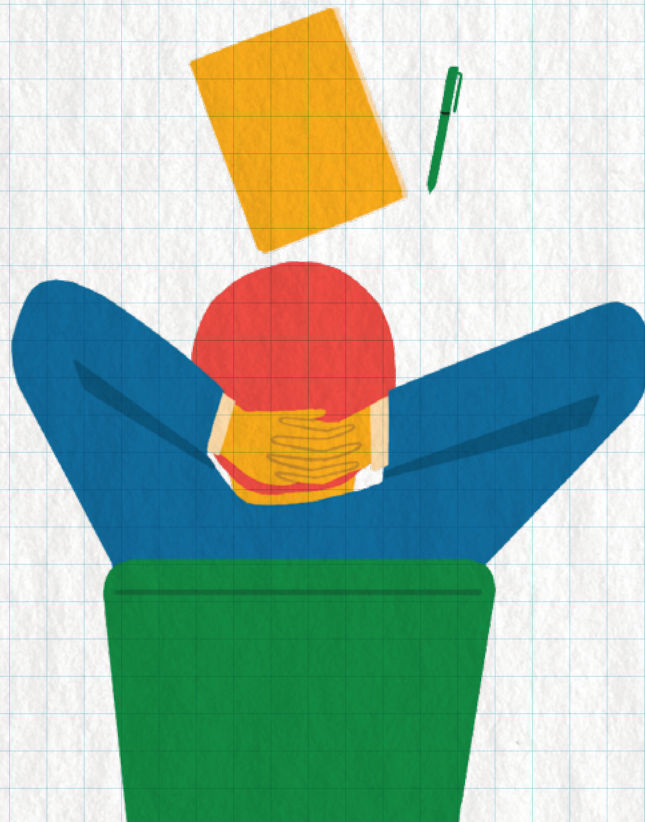
To understand whether the change is making progress or not, it is vital to gather feedback in a systematic manner. This is essential for ongoing learning and course correction, and will help improve the speed and reach of the change. With an active process of assessment and feedback in place, an initiative can be tweaked regularly, which continuously improves it and adapts it in an iterative process.

If an organization decides it needs to adjust certain behaviors to enhance its culture, this decision must be backed up with appropriate levels of investment in governance and implementation. All too often, organizations approach behavior change as a “nice to have” and not as a fundamental part of its strategic intent. In these circumstances, it should not come as a surprise when the program fails to achieve its desired outcomes. Success demands investment and leadership commitment, often over the long term.

SUMMING UP

There is a well-known quip attributed to Peter Drucker that suggests “Culture eats strategy for breakfast, lunch, and dinner.” Whether you agree with this statement or see it as something of an overstatement, it is indisputable that culture is central to organizational performance. Poor or inappropriate behaviors that form part of the culture undermine strategy. Successful businesses show time and again that possessing the right culture can prove to be a source of competitive advantage.

Changing specific behaviors of the organization to support its business objectives is top priority for many business leaders today. All too often the nature of this challenge is underestimated – with inevitable consequences. This paper hopes to show how these challenges can be overcome and managed effectively by taking an incremental and iterative approach, which from the outset ties the desired changes to the desired business outcomes at each step. Our experience shows that, by starting with the simple lessons laid out in this paper, organizations can produce genuine and deep-rooted transformation in specific aspects of their culture.



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