



Culture Success Story

Grassroots Change, Leadership Resistance

The Issue

A state highway department was attempting to modernize its entire operation. There were significant issues of entrenched habits and culture, in a highly charged political environment. The leadership changes completely every few years, and the new leader has to create momentum for change quickly, during his limited tenure.

Challenges

- Political and economic pressures demand the organization operate with more results with fewer resources.
- A new director is trying to implement change through an executive team that has been in place for many years with no demand for innovation or change – the entrenched managers are very resistant to change.
- Employees are mixed in their response to the idea of change, which has not been articulated clearly or involved them enough.

Overarching Goals

- Build commitment for a “new way of working.”
- Create a common, shared understanding among senior leadership of what needs to change and how to accomplish it.

Corporate Culture Pros Intervention

- Extensive interviews with senior management team, key employees and vendors to assess existing organizational cultural barriers to performance.
- Facilitation of a management staff meeting designed by Corporate Culture Pros, to elicit support for a strategic planning off-site retreat, that would help to spotlight cultural issues that were hindering strategic implementation;
- After facilitating management meetings, designed and conducted a 3-day strategic planning meeting for 40 members of the management team. The meeting focused on a collaborative building” of a new vision and action plan for the coming year – which built momentum of excitement that propelled managers to make changes to the culture.
- Corporate Culture Pros created a “report” of the entire work session in real time, so the plans were converted from “wall maps” to working documents while the session took place, and could be implemented while excitement was still high.

The Payoff

- A senior leader in the organization said: “In two days you showed us what leadership looks like”;
- People conducted similar meetings for their districts, based on this Strategic Alignment meeting;
- For the first time, line workers became involved in improving their day to day operations;
- One senior leader said “We have yet to see the full results, but we expect millions in savings from this strategic planning meeting.”

The Moral

Small levers create big movement, if pushed in the right place.