Culture Assessment Toolkit

Defining, Identifying, and Measuring Your High-Performance Culture

© 2013–2019 Corporate Culture Pros. All Rights Reserved.
Meet Corporate Culture Pros

Welcome!

- We are Corporate Culture Pros: A boutique consulting firm passionate about creating workplaces that grow people, customers, and profit.
- Whether you are dealing with a merger/acquisition, digital transformation, or a turnaround you will find proven tricks and tools here. For over 20 years, we’ve dedicated our careers to training leaders and organizations how to lead cultural change to impact positive business performance.
- In the Digital Revolution, every single aspect of work – who, what, when, where, how – is transforming. Culture building ignites widespread passion, leadership, and competitive advantage – ensuring YOUR organization evolves and adapts – versus facing extinction.
- This Assessment Toolkit will help you assess, diagnose, and pinpoint the habits you need to strengthen teamwork, collaboration, and the capacity for ongoing change.
- Visit us as CorporateCulturePros.com for more tips and tools on building cultures that can navigate the modern organization.

Lisa Jackson
CEO / Co-Founder

Gerry Schmidt
Co-Founder and Principal
Culture Defined
How people work together, that either helps or hinders your ability to adapt, compete, win.

Culture is
• The “glue” that fosters successful implementation of a winning strategy.
• Clear definition of success: Financially and otherwise.
• **Behaviors** that unify leaders, managers, technology and front line service providers – and break silos.
• The decision process an organization uses to balance competing goals: Long and short-term thinking, internal v. external stakeholders, change v. stability, people v. performance, innovation v. cost-cutting.
• Day-to-day methods for creating transparency across the business: Prioritization, meetings, communication, attracting and retaining the right talent.

Culture is not
• Values and Beliefs. These CAN be important anchors for culture, but are often undefined or too fuzzy and intangible for people to know what they mean.
• Posters, coffee mugs, t-shirts, games, food and beer taps. These are symbols of the culture, but mean little without the real work of building connection.
• A fixed way of doing things regardless of style, taste, and circumstances. Culture in today’s global enterprises need common decision processes while allowing for local spirit, style and pride.
• The executive’s view of what they think “culture” is. Most often, senior leaders have the least accurate view of the culture.

**Bottom line:**
Are people in your company enabled to do their best work?
Culture Building Benefits

- **This Toolkit provides** tips, tools and instructions for achieving 3 main outcomes in a team or organization:

  - Remove culture barriers to business growth and profit
  - Retain great people by enabling them to do their best work
  - Develop leaders who can adapt to constant change
Why Culture?

Business Case for Culture Building
Results to Expect
No More Steady State; Adapting is Essential to Innovation.

As the world has flattened and become more transparent, there are new competitive forces requiring a greater rate of adaptation. Worker and customer expectations are colliding with the ability of an organization in any industry to meet complex demands and constant change.

The “spaces between change” are shorter and smaller: There is no more steady state.

Running a profitable business is harder. Annual changes in the Fortune 500 list – and profitability – demonstrate how quickly you can become extinct if you don’t adapt.

In attempts to stay competitive, change programs and processes (cultural and other) have mushroomed in popularity. Do you know the collective success rate of all efforts to lead change in business today? Multiple studies document the alarming failure rate (and billions of dollars wasted) on change/improvement programs that fall short. (next page.)

To succeed in such a challenging era of change, leaders need an ongoing process for breaking down barriers internally, engaging more people in executing strategy, and fostering high performing teamwork. This ongoing method is about building new habits of work – the enduring purpose of Culture Building.

Today’s leaders must change how they lead in this era. They must focus on:
- Inspiring people
- Generating passion for work
- Removing bureaucracy, random prioritization, and arbitrary decision making that plagues so many organizations.

The goal of Culture Building is to foster ongoing clarity and alignment, that creates competitive advantage that is difficult to copy.

Being adaptable is a capability, not an event. Being adaptable is the seedbed for innovation.
The Failure Rate of Change

“75% of change efforts end in failure”
Mourier, Conquering Organizational Change, 2001

“58% of change initiatives failed to reach their goals”

“63% of TQ or change initiatives in the high tech industry failed to achieve anticipated improvements”

“90% of TQM projects miss their target”

“Business Process Reengineering fails 50-70%”
Why Change Really Fails . . . and The Magic Wand

You probably know the standard reasons change fails:
Leaders lack sustained commitment.
(lack of sponsorship)
Organizations get distracted.
(flavor of the month, corporate ADHD)
Change resistance.
(low employee engagement)

The Goldilocks Problem:
Most successful change initiatives are built in an environment that is “just right” for that environment. Then, they are exported with the promise “This will work for you too.” But when imported, they are Too Hot. or Too Cold – Never Just Right. Why? Every group or system has unique mindsets, capabilities, challenges, and behaviors that ARE COMPLETELY UNIQUE. Any true capacity to adapt to change must be grown within, not imported from outside.

The Fingerprints Rule is how you get it right: If you want people to own the work, you must create a process that allows them to DO the work. This is especially true with younger generations. When people know what’s important and believe in your leadership, they can fix almost any problem in the business. The Fingerprints Rule is like having all the super powers and magic wands in the kingdom sitting in front of you … why go to the mall to buy it?

Your people KNOW how to help you compete better and build a great workplace. You just have to ask them.

Culture Building means activating The Fingerprints Rule: “What will help people want this change?”
The Power of Fingerprints in Action

A consulting colleague brings small, cross-functional groups of pharmaceutical sales reps together with a **tough challenge**: Boost sales (in flat growth cycle) by 10%.

**The Task**: Give us implementable solutions within defined and reasonable cost boundaries. **Working agreement**: Managers are excluded from the meeting to ensure the most candid discussions.

Nearly every time, the group’s plans produce a **major breakthrough in results**. Why? The keys to the kingdom are in the right hands. Follow the Fingerprints Rule ... by tapping the wisdom of the people closest to your customers.

How are you using the Fingerprints Rule in your organization?
Results You Should Expect

Culture Building must be grounded in a clear purpose. There are three outcomes our clients seek when committing to culture building:

1. Remove Culture Barriers to Business Performance
The link between culture and business performance is proven. In every industry are companies who excel at innovation and exceeding customer expectations. Southwest Air. Amazon. Starbucks. You don’t have to be an iconic example to leverage corporate culture into better financial performance. You just have to know how to do it. This Toolkit provides the map and the steps.

2. Retain Great People, Enabling Them to Do Their Best Work
Top talent want to be challenged, not frustrated by bureaucracy. If you want to keep great people, you have to rethink hierarchically driven, rule-based systems and foster electric, energized, creative teamwork. That’s when magic happens. What is it worth to you, to have 100 or several thousand people in your organization say “I LOVE working here” or “This is the best place I’ve ever worked!” This is what the Culture Builder Toolkit can help you do.

3. Help Leaders Adapt to Constant Change
Every organization is facing more and faster change. The marketplace is more competitive than ever, based on technology, the internet, and globalization. Culture building can improve any effort to successfully drive continuous change.

Cultures building creates great leaders AND competitive advantage.
When Should A Culture Change?

Let’s begin with our two cents on **when a culture should – and should not – change.** Transformational change is what all companies are facing to attract and retain talent in a virtual world.

**When the business reality changes** – especially big changes like mergers, turnaround, a new leader takes the helm – an organization’s past strategy, structure, and culture do not align to the New Reality. This creates Tension. (see next 4 slides). The business may begin to slip in its ability to perform, allow people to do their best work. Change efforts overwhelm people, making it harder to adapt.

**When an organization is pursuing a new strategy – or other major change** – leaders must re-align the culture with the New Reality. This works best when you focus on small changes within groups who are ready – versus sweeping top-down change. Similar to improving your physical health, you must build new habits that are easy to remember and adopt, or change won’t sustain.

**The approach in this Toolkit** will show you how to align ways of working (culture habits) with the challenges and demands of a New Reality, whether the environment is global competition, rapid technology change, M&A, major workforce changes.

---

Culture Change is necessary whenever a significant business change is underway, that impacts how, when, and with whom people work together.

The goal of cultural change is to eliminate the natural tensions that arise from disrupting peoples’ lives a work – making the journey as positive and normal as possible, while minimizing disruption to the business.

---

The goal is to create systems in your company that support people in doing their best work.
Culture Building is Simple (and yet, not easy)

An example of a habit/behavior most organizations need to improve is “Decision Making.”

Decision making is a systemic issue which impacts many areas of organizational performance: Teamwork, meeting effectiveness, escalation and infinite appeal of conflict, employee engagement.

One culture habit we recommend to our clients is “Faster, Better Decision Making.”

Key behaviors we recommend are: “Establish clear decision rights on projects, foster a bias to act, push decision making to the lowest possible level.”

Identify key behaviors and turn them into habits to drive business performance

To support and enable this habit over time usually requires training and leadership coaching activities. We cover this behavior/habit in more detail in subsequent chapters of this Toolkit.

The goal is getting everyone aligned to this new habit.
Cultural Building is creating strong “pull to the right” toward change-friendly habits

3 levers to strengthen “Pull to the Right”
1. Foster a sense of urgency for change: Everyone knows WHY!
2. Leaders role model the new habit/behavior, those who don’t are replaced.
3. Crystal clear goals that allow mid-managers to re-prioritize or stop work that does not align with the new habits or change.
The Role of Mindsets in Culture Building

A process of culture building would not be complete without discussing mindsets – a powerful element of the Iceberg Phenomenon.

**Mindsets are beliefs and assumptions that drive behavior**, including decisions. Mindsets in an organization’s culture have roots in early beliefs held by founding leaders – which may no longer be true (especially for organizations started 30, 50 or 100 years ago). When behaviors in a person or group don’t change, mindsets (aka, beliefs) are usually a part of the reason.

**Mindsets and beliefs are sometimes conscious, but usually are not.** They are indicated by phrases like “We must ... We have to ... We should.” They are indicated by your personal experience “I did this even though I knew better.”

When you believe in something, you act on it (regardless of challenges or barriers). If you believe transparency is essential to trust (which you believe is important in the workplace), you will communicate to build trust. If you pay lip service to trust, but don’t really believe it, your communication will convey that.

EXAMPLE: If an employee believes helping the corporation make more money is in alignment with their own personal values or interests, they will act in alignment with that. Otherwise, their behavior will be at odds with the leadership agenda to “make the numbers.”

EXAMPLE: People who believe they can personally change, typically have a greater repertoire of behaviors than those who say; “I am who I am and that won’t change.”

What are YOUR mindsets / beliefs about culture? What are those of your President, CEO or Key Executive?
Culture Assessment
Preparing for Change

6 Steps to Culture Assessment:
1. Assess Change Readiness
2. Assess the Organizational Culture
3. Share Results with the Senior Team
4. Share Results with Participants
5. Define the New Culture: Pinpoint Key Behaviors & Culture Habits (5 Culture Habits every company needs)
6. Frequency of Change Monitoring
7. Culture Self-Assessment Questions
Assessment is About

Creating a clear road map of the current state of your culture, and identifying behaviors to change, as well as those that stay the same.

Answers the questions:

**HOW** Effectively is our culture driving performance?

**WHAT** Areas of our culture need to improve?

Drives BUY-IN for building a culture that fosters winning performance AND committed, passionate employees.

Creating culture as a source of competitive advantage is how you gain an edge in today’s rapid-change marketplace.
Assessment Overview

Why Culture Assessment is important:

Culture must be made concrete and tangible if leaders are going to commit to high performance in an era of Millennial talent.

Knowing where you are is the first step in changing.

Employees have the most accurate view of the culture. Senior leaders are often protected from what it’s “really like” in the trenches.

Goal for Culture Assessment:

A clear Culture Manifesto, identifying specific behaviors necessary to achieve their vision, strategy and goals. For example, if you are planning a market expansion strategy, what culture behaviors exist in your current markets (where the highest growth is happening), and ensure those are present in new markets. You also want to identify which behaviors are present in the slower-growth markets that need to change to support better growth. (eg, how decisions are made, how leaders communicate).

When to Use:

To jump-start any culture building effort, and want buy-in and engagement to new ways of working.

When you are starting a new venture, whether growth through merger, a new business, or an expansion.

Following significant or rapid growth in the business.

In This Toolkit are two assessment approaches you can do yourself.

1. Change readiness assessment, to determine negative and positive influences that will effect the success of your change effort.


Benchmark your culture to industry peer database of over 1,000 companies, and see the correlation between YOUR culture and 7 common business metrics. We add focus groups and interviews for a thorough assessment approach, creating a powerful story for executives. Visit us on the web to learn more.

Culture Assessment is seeking people’s input on what needs improving, and educating leaders how listening to employees will improve performance.
6 Critical Steps to Culture Assessment

1. Assess Change Readiness: What factors will help or hinder your change?

2. Assess the Organizational Culture: Executives have the least accurate view of the culture. You need to include people at mid-manager, first-line supervisor, and front-line employee levels.

3. Share the results with the Senior Team: To open a dialogue with leaders about the importance of culture and its role in business.

4. Share the results with participants in the assessment: This is often done via small, interactive webinars, led by the manager or leader of that group. Ideally, group size is less than 10-12 people to allow for free-flowing, meaningful discussion.

5. Pinpoint Key Behaviors & Culture Habits: Pick a FEW areas you want to target for improvement, based on your assessment, strategy, goals and organizational pain points. (or based on 5 Culture Habits everyone needs).


In a large organization, it’s best to assess culture in a small, target audience who are critical to a strategy or business change before expanding to a large audience.
Step 1. Assess Change Readiness

About this assessment: The negative and positive influences that impact your ability to drive cultural building (which can be applied to any change) have been identified over a decade of observing what causes change efforts to fail versus succeed.

How to implement: In a culture building effort, you will typically form a core team of people to lead and drive behavioral change, led by the CEO. This team can individually assess their view of the organization’s change readiness, based on the 8 influences that impact culture building success – see next page.

How to interpret results: Urgency, sponsorship, and trust are most important. They are of equal importance – no change will work unless all 3 are strong positive influences. You must address issues within these to lead any sincere and credible effort in culture building. (In Stage Two - “Awareness” - of this Toolkit are tools and tips for doing this.)

Assessing readiness can be a powerful conversation-starter about culture, when done with the right people.
Assessing Change Readiness

### Negative Influences
- There is little perceived risk of not changing the culture.
- Long history of success or monopoly in market has created complacency.
- Key executives are not aligned about the need for culture change and see it as “soft stuff” that doesn’t drive the business.
- Leaders are distracted, too busy and not personally committed to their role in culture change.
- No experience leading culture change (or major system-wide change.)

### Positive Influences
- Desire for culture change is strong and widespread.
- Consequences for not changing are big and widely understood.
- Key executives are aligned about culture change and its relationship to business performance.
- CEO/Top Leader committed to visible support for culture change until complete.
- Top Leaders experienced at leading culture change

### Urgency
- Desire for culture change is strong and widespread.
- Consequences for not changing are big and widely understood.

### Leaders as Sponsors
- Key executives are aligned about culture change and its relationship to business performance.
- CEO/Top Leader committed to visible support for culture change until complete.
- Top Leaders experienced at leading culture change

### Trust
- Trust across the organization is mostly low (increasing turnover, low engagement, in-fighting.)
- The business is not winning and people question the leaders’ ability to set it on course.
- Trust across the organization is mostly high
- People trust their leaders’ competency to lead a winning game plan for the business

### Change Infrastructure
- No dedicated change team, inadequate resources available for it.
- Lack of experienced change agents to guide the culture change.
- Teams are adequately funded and staffed for culture change.
- Experienced change agents are assigned to the culture change project/initiative.
Assessing Change Readiness

**Negative Influences**
- Employees do not know what culture change is, why it's important, and what they're supposed to do about it.
- Limited 2-way dialogue or limited response to the dialogue.
- Implementation of change has been seen as inconsistent and unsuccessful.
- Doom loop: Change has left burnout unresolved emotions, bad feelings.
- Decisions often pushed up the hierarchy.

**Influences**

**Positive Influences**
- Employees are aligned about the need for culture change and what to do about it.
- There is frequent two-way dialogue between leaders and employees about the culture change.
- Implementation of change has been seen as consistent and successful.
- Virtual cycle: Change has built a positive expectancy for change.
- Decision rights are held where needed, generally low in the organization.

- Communication
- Implementation
- Empowerment
Step 2. Assess the Organizational Culture

We use a combination of 3 Methods to assess organizational culture:

Survey (Included as separate PDF):
1. Focus Groups.
2. Interviews.
3. Each is outlined with tools and sample approaches.

1) Conducting the Survey

About the Culture Builder Self-Assessment: The 30 questions in the assessment (provided as a separate PDF with the Culture Builder Toolkit) were developed by Corporate Culture Pros based on 14 years of analysis and experience about management practices that most closely link to business performance measures for growth and innovation.

How to conduct: Select a valid random sample of the target audience (where change is needed.) Survey 10% minimally, if the target audience is under 100 people you should invite the whole group. Ensure you survey people at all levels of that target audience, not just senior leaders or employees – you want a valid sample from each level.

Senior leaders typically have the least accurate view of the culture. If possible, have an external or HR person collect data to determine which responses came from which level, as there are often big variances in the view of the culture between the top and the front lines.

You can similarly do the same by function if so desired.

Additional Tips: For a smaller company or effort, you can shorten the survey to 10 questions (1 per category) and still get meaningful data. Add 2 questions to the survey “What aspects of our company culture do you most appreciate? What aspects make it difficult to do your best work?”

2) Focus Groups. Focus Groups can be powerful, although people will only be honest if they trust the promise of anonymity (you really need to engage an outsider if you want full honesty). You MUST give people reassurance of anonymity or it is unlikely responses will be candid. Who is an external consultant or facilitator whom you can trust to receive and compile the data? This is the best way to do a cultural assessment.

3) 1:1 Interviews. Best way to get an in-depth understanding of what the themes and patterns mean, and learn specific results.

An assessment of culture should be done by an outsider to ensure anonymity, if you want full honesty. Choose a trusted coach or facilitator who is not employed by the company for the best results.
Sample Focus Group Questionnaire (using outside facilitator)

**OPENING**

Thanks for taking the time to be here.
My name is ____, I work for _______________. We have been working with (CEO/Culture Team) over the past couple of weeks in an effort to better understand the culture that exists here at ________________.

Our approach to cultural assessment combines 3 methods: We’ll be speaking 1:1 with _____ (# of people, if relevant). We’re conducting focus groups with (X%) of the organization. We’re also providing an anonymous organization-wide (department-wide) survey.

At this point you should have received an email inviting you to participate in that survey. (Encourage them to complete it, if they haven’t yet)

Our goal is to provide our leaders with honesty clarity about the aspects of our culture that are helping or hindering us in being a great organization.

Before we dive in, you should know we take confidentiality very seriously. Yes, we will be taking notes, but these are to help us review high-level themes after completing all of the focus groups – and share these themes with leaders. In no way will anything you say be linked to you as an individual. Our only goal is to look for themes that cut across all of the groups.

We have a series of questions as a guide, but will keep the conversation fluid and interactive, and just go where it goes.

Before we dive in, does anyone have any questions they’d like to ask?

Participant introductions (assuming they don’t know one another.)

**QUESTIONS (SAMPLE, CHOOSE 4–5)**

- What’s it like to work here? What words would you use to describe the environment?
- What do you think this company values? Why do you think that?
- What words would you use to describe this organization to others?
- What’s the water cooler talk around here?
- How does communication work around here? What methods are in place and used most often?
- How do you typically find out about organization-wide information? What format? From whom?
- How transparent would you say the organization is?
- How well do you collaborate across departments?
- Do you trust your leaders?
- If you were leading the organization through this transition, what would you do?
- What else is important for me to know that hasn’t yet emerged in our conversation?
- What questions do you have of me?

**CLOSING**

Share the next steps in the process, the timing, and when people can expect to hear the results.

Hear time and input.
Sample Interview Questionnaire
(using outside facilitator)

“Hi ____ here. Thank you for taking time from your busy schedule to speak with me.

I hope you read through the email from (CEO), explaining his goals for this effort. (if done.) Some logistics before we begin:

First, this conversation is completely confidential. None of what you say will personally identify you; specific comments are compiled into themes that will be shared as part of the whole assessment debrief.

After the Leadership Team has reviewed this information, they will come back to those who were interviewed and share the major themes, what they learned, and what they hope to do to address this feedback.

Any questions before we begin?
What do you do for Organization?
Years with company _______________
In this role __________________________

What is your view on the current state of the organization? Good news, trouble areas?

How would you describe the culture today:

2–3 areas that work well and should be preserved
2–3 changes you think would improve the environment

If you were offering advice to CEO/Top Leader and the Leadership Team, what would you want them to know, do differently?

We design questions that are specific to the organization’s change / issues – e.g., Communicating during a merger. New strategic direction. New leadership team.

Anything I haven’t asked, that you want to share with me? (ending with this often pulls in that little gem they haven’t spoken about yet.)

For Leaders/Managers only:
- What has been your experience here as a leader in this organization?
- What are the greatest challenges that leaders here face? What are their competing priorities, or what generally gets in their way?
- As a leader, how do you believe the (change) will impact your role?
## Step 2. Assess the Organizational Culture

### How to interpret results:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Look at top 3 high and top 3 low scores</td>
<td>Especially the median (most common answer).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Look at patterns across levels</td>
<td>Senior leadership to front-line employees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consider which of the lowest 5 questions</td>
<td>Are most important hinderers to your goals/objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vision, Planning and Customer Focus</td>
<td>Are high leverage areas for most companies. If these are low, start working on improving these scores first.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Re-survey 1-2 focus areas every 60-90 days</td>
<td>Which behaviors are most important to change? Continuous frequent monitoring helps drive change more quickly.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Corporate Culture Pros offers a benchmarked cultural assessment and objective external guidance if needed.

Our assessment compares your culture scores to a global database of nearly 1000 companies. The linkage between your scores and business metrics is demonstrated through research studies, spanning 25 years. This often helps establish urgency. (See description of the Assessment on our website)
Step 3. Share Results with Senior Team

- The CEO/President and his or her direct reports need to align themselves about culture building and its role in the strategy before you engage other groups. Culture work must be championed from the top or it will never take hold – and you run the risk of setting an expectation that results in disappointment.

- Reference the “Getting Started” section of this Toolkit to educate leaders about why culture is so important to business today.

- The goal for the 30-question cultural assessment to identify weaknesses that drive urgency for changes in the culture – this is why you must survey below the executive team; they typically have the least accurate view of the culture issues. These questions have been proven through research to be drivers of business performance; they are not random questions.

- The best way to tell the story is to visibly show the difference in culture scores between the senior team’s view of the culture, versus the levels below. If there is no difference and they are all high scores, ask yourself if there’s a barrier to being honest? Or is everything really working well? If the scores are mostly similar and all low, that’s the best urgency for change; the senior team agrees with the organization that there are culture issues and it’s a matter of prioritizing what will be the most impactful changes to make.
Step 3. Share Results with Senior Team

The executive team works best with culture when provided a menu of possible actions to take. For example, if trust is the issue, pinpoint the source: One bad leader? Repetitive rounds of layoffs? Increased product complaints? Once the source is identified, it becomes easier to discuss actions you might take and a dialogue in the business (with whom) that would improve trust.

The culture assessment conversation should be a doorway into territory about what’s going on in the business. In a recent client, the culture assessment debrief was the first time anyone had directed the conversation to HOW the culture was impacting business performance. It became a powerful enabler for a series of important conversations for removing barriers to people’s daily work.

In the Awareness stage, we offer facilitated sessions to help cascade the executive team commitment to the next 2 layers of leaders, and then to all employees. [page 102-104]
Step 4. Share Results with Participants

Often, surveys are conducted and the people who participated see nothing about the results, or are sent output of compiled results that have no context or meaning.

**A culture survey should be different:** This is an opportunity to engage people in a meaningful conversation about what they see and want to change, to improve the business.

**The best strategy for debriefing** culture assessment results is in small groups led by a manager who has a relationship with the group, and who has good skills at drawing people out.

**A simple way to approach the debrief:**

**Share the results.** “What surprised me, what encouraged me.” Keep this simple – no more than 30-40 minutes.

**Ask the group.** What surprised you? What was hopeful? Concerning?

**Explore the “pressure points” behind the data.**

“I’d like to spend some time exploring what we could do to improve our work environment and make it easier to do our best work.”

“I would like to keep the conversation focused on what’s within our control, and to identifying a few concrete and specific areas we can work on.”

**In the Awareness and Alignment stages of the Toolkit,** there are descriptions and tools for how to more fully engage people in culture building. In Assessment, the key is to tell people what you learned and what you plan to do about it. This should happen within 30-60 days of the assessment being performed.

The key to successfully engaging people in a “culture conversation” is a commitment to implementing several ideas that come from employees. If it’s all talk and no action, there’s likely to be an increase in people’s cynicism and frustration.
Step 5. Pinpoint Key Behaviors & Culture Habits

Earlier, we defined culture building as “Removing culture barriers to business performance, enabling people to do their best work, and helping leaders adapt to constant change.” This is the OUTCOME of culture building.

**HOW do you achieve this?** By identifying a few key behaviors and culture habits, based on your assessment, that are most high leverage to move the needle on all 3 areas. A habit is the result of repeating new behaviors.

The “5 Culture Habits” listed in two pages are based on 15 years’ experience of proven practices to improve these 3 areas. Below are a few additional examples of ways to approach defining key behaviors/ culture habits to improve.

**NOTE:** Whatever focus areas you identify in this stage are likely to adjust as you navigate through the culture building process.

---

Less is more. You gain faster traction if you identify and quickly resolve a few pain points that frustrate people.
Step 5. Pinpoint Key Behaviors & Culture Habits

Example One

Feedback from Assessment
Set a goal of improving your assessment scores based on the self-assessment. You can do this with the assessment included in this toolkit (which does not include the benchmarking).

Example Two

Pain Points & Felt Need
Pinpoint behavior changes that remove frustrating barriers to people doing their best work. This can mean changing simple approvals, clarifying how to resolve simple problems (like getting cafeteria vendors paid), changing the way meetings are scheduled and run (a big pain for most large companies).

Example Three

Culture Link to Strategy
A client was changing from a strategy of printing and shipping printed manuals, to providing the same product via software embedded in the cockpit of commercial airplanes. The culture behaviors to execute that strategy were VERY different – including a much stronger customer focus, a project based structure, and urgency/speed that did NOT compromise accuracy. Another client was shifting from a strategy of selling to federal government builders, to selling primarily to local governments. The culture behaviors required faster decision making, shorter timelines, better communication between functions in the business, and the need to cultivate personal relationships (versus subject matter expertise in managing complex paperwork).
5 Habits of the Modern Workplace

- Clarity & Alignment
- Communicate to Build Trust
- Cadence and Bias to Act
- Collaborate to Break Down Silos
- Customer-Focused
5 Culture Habits Defined

1. **CLARITY** toward a compelling purpose and direction.

   When everyone in the organization understands the Vision and Strategy and believes in it, this improves business performance more than any other cultural intervention. This activity is harder than leaders think, and is rarely done well. (In Awareness)

2. **COMMUNICATE** to foster trust between leaders & employees.

   Trust is the missing capital in business today, and is key to attract and retain great people, drive innovation, and adapt quickly. Change leaders need to understand how trust is built – and eroded. ZERO tolerance for leaders who foster mistrust if you’re serious about culture building. (In Alignment)

3. **CADENCE** and bias to act that empowers your front lines.

   Decision making is highly dysfunctional in most companies; which slows down people and project. The goal is to drive decision rights lower, embed a bias for action into the entire culture.

4. **COLLABORATE** across boundaries.

   Complex global organizations struggle with hand-offs, coordination, role clarity. An essential culture habit in today’s organization is “Collaborative Work.” Bridge boundaries with shared goals, diverse teams, and collaborative leadership skills, to hone the ability to adapt, innovate, and execute in step with the market and customers. (In Adaptability)

5. **CUSTOMER** focus. Really.

   Get closer to your customer. Start driving decisions based on feedback from the marketplace. Ensure the organization is obtaining the same market-focused, customer-relevant data from the front lines to the top, versus deciding priorities in a vacuum. (In Adaptability)
Step 6. Frequency of Change Monitoring

If you have never surveyed employee opinion (or done anything with them once you collect them) you may find the first survey draws a lot of “heat” – pent-up frustrations can simmer for years, and it’s common for the first culture assessment to feel like a gut-punch.

**Small change approach:** The key is to persist with implementing *small* changes based on the feedback, keep the results visible, and then you will see a shift from complaints to sincere recognition that we’re trying to get better.

It’s always a good idea to add a question “**What specific ideas do you have for improving our culture even more in this area?**” – as long as you are committed to implementing 1-2 of the ideas that come from this.

**Spot Checks:** We recommend that you re-survey the culture improvement target areas within 60-90 days of the original survey. This can be just 2–3 questions, to keep the process simple, relevant, and scoped small.

**Follow-Up Survey** after you have made progress on embedding new behaviors. You will use the full survey, with the same audience. This should happen 6–12 months from the first full survey.

Assessment of culture can foster trust, when leaders show employees they are listening collectively (not just one or two leaders). People want to give more when they see their good ideas being implemented.
The Iceberg in Assessment
“What You Can’t See Sinks Your Ship”

As you pinpoint key behaviors and culture habits to change, keep in mind that the highest leverage areas to pinpoint MAY NOT be just a “behavior” (the second level).

You may realize that one powerful mindset change is crucial. For example, one client identified that the biggest cultural change they needed to make is “We are not a product peddler ... We are a customer solutions company.”

This mindset change itself, conveyed with a sense of passion, urgency and importance, will make it clear what day-to-day environment, capabilities, and behaviors you need to change. These levels work together, and in our culture building work we are always on the lookout for “What is the highest leverage change we can make in the Iceberg?”

Be thoughtful AND strategic in pinpointing your Culture Habits. It may be a mindset, a capability, skill, or ensuring the look and feel of the work environment is in alignment with the new strategy or business direction.
The Human Element of Change: Getting Assessment Right

More than any other survey, a culture assessment must answer WHY to people being asked to provide input. Culture assessment often brings up trust issues if they exist (people will question how the information will be used and is it really anonymous?).

The invitation should be personal from the top leader AND their manager, explaining why this is so important to the organization.

Don’t undertake a culture assessment unless you plan to debrief every participant in some way, within a few weeks (months at the most). Culture assessment raises curiosity. You need to satisfy it, or it can be seen as “just another survey managers will use to justify decisions that don’t benefit us.”

Major pitfall: Whatever you do share needs to be transparent in both strengths and weaknesses – don’t sugar-coat. If you hold back, it will erode trust. A mindset that helps: “No one is to blame for the current culture, and yet, we are all responsible for improving it.” When leaders publically look in the mirror and are transparent about their weaknesses, it will foster trust.

Remember, organizations don’t change. People change. People want to see their leaders go first.

Personal Resiliency Element:
During the assessment phase, top leaders often take the feedback personally. One top leader, after seeing the culture assessment data, said; “It’s like telling me my baby is ugly and it smells.”

A mindset that helps during this phase is “Assume everyone’s input comes from positive intent.” People want to improve the organization as much as the leaders do. A mindset of “positive intent” is the opposite of “cynical and jaded,” and is common in individuals with a high level of personal resiliency.
Culture Manifesto

WE BELIEVE
in ordinary acts of
BRAVERY
in the COURAGE that
DRIVES ONE PERSON TO
STAND UP FOR ANOTHER

—DAUNTLESS MANIFESTO—
Culture Manifesto, Defined

From the Italian word “manifestare” meaning “to manifest,” Random House dictionary defines Manifesto as:

A public declaration of intentions, opinions, objectives, or motives, as one issued by a government, sovereign, or organization.

We define a Culture Manifesto as:

A declaration of your intentions, objectives, and beliefs in fostering a great organization and a great place to work.

It is important that this come from a leader initially – so that it expresses his or her original purpose for the team, department, or organization.

Once the leader has clarity on his or her own perspective, it is quite powerful to assemble a group of people to create it together.

It can INCLUDE your Values, but often is a more detailed description of them, as well as the customer value proposition and employee value proposition that you intend to create.
Creating Your Culture Manifesto: Best Practice Process

1. **Ask Your People.** Beyond the product we sell, what kind of opportunity do you see, for how to differentiate ourselves to our customers?

2. **Reflect...** Keep a pad of paper with this title near your workspace, and jot notes throughout the day, as you experience the interactions and challenges in your organization.

3. **Write With Passion!** What do you believe, want and intend to create as an organization, that is a reflection of your own personal beliefs and values, as well as how you intend to create value for your customers and the relationship you want to have with your workforce.

4. **Look at Examples.** (Netflix, Hubspot, Google). This will help you to see how others have done it, but don’t copy-and-paste. Get in touch with your own truth. Create it from within!

5. **Reference the 5 Habits.** (slide ??). These may provide some good food for thought, as they are a reflection of 15 years’ study and practice in understanding the expectations and needs of the modern workforce. Add to them or adapt them to your special language!

6. **Build The Story.** What does this Manifesto mean to you? Why is it important? What do you want people to DO with the information in it?

7. **Make it Real.** Use it for hiring, on-boarding, and to inspire and reward current staff.
Culture Manifesto Example: HubSpot

THE HUBSPOT CULTURE CODE
1. We are maniacal about our mission and our metrics.
2. We strive to Solve For The Customer.
3. We are radically transparent.
4. We believe in autonomy not autocracy.
5. We are unreasonably picky about our people.
6. We invest in individual mastery and market value.
7. We constantly question the status quo.
Culture Manifesto Example: Netflix

7 Aspects of Our Culture

- High Performance
- Freedom & Responsibility
- Context, not Control
- Highly Aligned, Loosely Coupled
- Pay Top of Market
- Promotions & Development
Leadership Role in Culture Building

LEADERSHIP

The leader always sets the trail for others to follow.
Challenges in Culture Assessment Implementation

Culture work is by definition, less defined and clear in many ways, than other change efforts.

The challenges you can come up against in culture work can derail the best intentions, and often are hard because they involve disconnects between the people who WANT the culture work to happen (front line employees, first-level managers, directors) and the top of the organization – who are often concerned about cost and becoming distracted.

Culture challenges that you need to watch for, and address before you implement a survey include:

1) **Lukewarm Support from CEO and executive team**
   - “We know culture is important but ours is fine!” or
   - “We have too many other priorities to make culture #1”
   - “We installed a pool table, declared our values, offer good snacks? Isn’t that culture?”

If this is happening, do not proceed. In this day and age, more executive “get” culture is important, but they also need to get their role in shaping and modeling the culture. If they keep putting it on the back-burner, and you are trying to sell them on doing it – it won’t work well.

2) **Uncertain Future** – you get early traction with culture, but the lack of a clear measurement system and road map to guide the work sometimes creates a feeling like “What are we doing?” or “Are we on the right track?” and the energy around your culture work may fizzle. Make sure that you have a clear ROI case for culture – whether it’s retaining people (and the cost savings with it), shorter project timelines, or creating an internal brand that customers love.

3) **Fuzzy Accountability** – it’s not always clear where you need to prioritize, and how to engage the right people in the right ways to move the needle on culture. Start small, and make 60 or 90-day actions count. If you need coaching on this, we can offer virtual support. Email lisa@corporateculturepros.com

4) **Time Crunch.** People love culture but don’t always want to do the work. Make sure that you are really clear in prioritizing what will make a difference, and choose at least 1 action that is visible and meaningful to employees, based on THEIR pain points or feedback.

I’m always here to help! Just email me with any questions, concerns, or issues you’re running into and I’ll do my best to provide a good answer.
Culture Building: Who’s on First?

**Culture IS an expression of leadership** – the collective habits of leaders’ personal history, beliefs, values, and habits. To understand this, let’s explore a simple example:

In life, habits are cultivated by modeling: You are more likely to eat like your parents regardless of what they tell you to eat. If your parents were active, you probably adopted the habit of exercise. People learn by modeling those they look up to. This is how human beings work. Later in life (in our 20’s) we develop the ability to think independently of what our parents taught us; yet we always act from deeply embedded mindsets that drive learning and habits. These are very difficult to change because they were established early in life and are largely unconscious.

This works the same for a business. Your company’s culture today is an expression of what past (or current) leaders’ did.

**The trick becomes in defining “What is a leader?”** While they are usually those who hold the biggest titles (CEO or VP), in today’s dynamic world, there is increasingly room for leaders-without-title to emerge, who cultivate:

- Strong networks
- Followers (not just Twitter)
- New ideas
- Teamwork

Consider this: Perhaps there is room for informal leaders to do things differently!

What part of the organization could you lead (influence, demonstrate) to help the Formal Leaders see the value of a new kind of cultural revolution?

**Believing is Seeing!** Most of us are acting out unconscious habits, established years prior. It takes training and persistent, conscious effort to break these habits, and replace them with better ones.

**Show them it’s possible by Being the Change You Want to See in the World.**

**Bottom line:**

Leadership and culture are not separate.

Leaders must SHOW their willingness to change, before they can ask others to. WALK LOUD.
The next 3 pages show an outline of the full [Culture Builder Toolkit](mailto:lisa@corporateculturepros.com).

The Culture Builder Toolkit is no longer for sale as a separate product. Email [lisa@corporateculturepros.com](mailto:lisa@corporateculturepros.com) if interested in a workshop or virtual coaching.

---

**Corporate Culture Pros**  
**4 stages of Culture Change**

1. **ASSESS**  
Create CLARITY about what should (should not) change, in the culture.

2. **ACTIVATE**  
Let go of the past, foster widespread MOTIVATION for desired future.

3. **ALIGN**  
ACCOUNTABILITY to new behaviors, first by leaders and then more broadly.

4. **ADAPT**  
Expand the CAPACITY for sustainable, ongoing change and innovation.
Are You Ready to Move to Awareness, Stage Two?

Goal for Assessment phase: The top leader sees, understands and commits to making changes in how people work together AND the changes are clearly defined as a few key behaviors.

6 Questions to determine if you’re ready to move to the Awareness stage:

1. Have you asked enough people in the organization for their view on the culture? (sample all levels, 10-20% of the target change audience).
2. Have you prioritized the fewest culture habits (3-4) that are necessary to change in the culture? It works best to keep the first target culture habits small and do-able – under-commit and see it through. These can be broad: Clarity of direction, faster decision making, work across boundaries; Or, they can be specific: Speak transparently, reward teamwork, know your customer.
3. Have you clearly defined how you will measure success/progress toward these? Define this clearly up front – through hard metrics? Through a survey monkey style spot check?
4. Is the most senior person (CEO, President) committed, and publicly stated his or her intentions for culture alignment to his or her team? (or whatever you label it.)
5. Are several key members of the executive team on board and committed? (it’s OK if it’s not 100% at first, as long as the CEO / President is committed as well as a few of his key members).
6. If your organization is larger than about 500 people, you will need to ensure a few people have some part of their time dedicated to the necessary steps in cultural (new habit) building. Culture building efforts work best when they are well-targeted and very focused. Once you have success, you can expand.
STAGE TWO

Building AWARENESS
Creating Urgency for Change

5 Steps to Building Awareness:
1. Establish Urgency
2. Clarify Direction
3. Revisit Your Culture Habits
4. Build The Story of Change
5. Cascade Sessions to Foster Awareness
Forging ALIGNMENT
Getting People Moving Toward a Common Direction

6 Steps to Forging Alignment:

1. Sponsor Culture Building
2. Define Responsibilities in Culture Building
3. Recruit & Organize Change Leaders.
4. Implement a Communication Strategy
5. Implement Culture Habit #2: Foster trust-based communication in all interactions
6. Working with Mindsets
Developing ADAPTABILITY: The capability for ongoing change

4 Steps to Developing Adaptability:

1. The Case for Adaptability

2. Implement Shortcut Habits 3, 4, and 5:
   - Faster, better decision making
   - Relentlessly pursue role clarity
   - Improve customer focus

3. Facilitate Two Conversations using Change Leaders:
   - Recovering from reorganization
   - We are masters of our destiny

4. Develop Mindsets of Learning & Personal Resiliency
Stages 2, 3 and 4

The next 3 pages show an outline of the full Culture Builder Toolkit.

The Culture Builder Toolkit is no longer for sale as a separate product. Email lisa@corporateculturepros.com if interested in a workshop or virtual coaching based on Corporate Culture Pros 4 stages of Culture Change

1. **ASSESS**
   Create CLARITY about what should (should not) change, in the culture.

2. **ACTIVATE**
   Let go of the past, foster widespread MOTIVATION for desired future.

3. **ALIGN**
   ACCOUNTABILITY to new behaviors, first by leaders and then more broadly.

4. **ADAPT**
   Expand the CAPACITY for sustainable, ongoing change and innovation.
# Culture Self-Assessment Questions

Custom select for Survey Monkey or program of your choice.

1: Strongly disagree  2: Disagree  3: Neutral  4: Agree  5: Strongly Agree

## Questions

### Vision

1. Our vision/mission excites and motivates me personally to commit
   - [ ] 1  [ ] 2  [ ] 3  [ ] 4  [ ] 5

2. I know what makes us better or unique in our market
   - [ ] 1  [ ] 2  [ ] 3  [ ] 4  [ ] 5

3. I know how my job contributes to achieving our vision/mission
   - [ ] 1  [ ] 2  [ ] 3  [ ] 4  [ ] 5

### Planning

4. I know our game plan to win
   - [ ] 1  [ ] 2  [ ] 3  [ ] 4  [ ] 5

5. We are in alignment about specific goals to achieve our vision/mission
   - [ ] 1  [ ] 2  [ ] 3  [ ] 4  [ ] 5

6. Our planning process ensures we narrow constantly to the right priorities
   - [ ] 1  [ ] 2  [ ] 3  [ ] 4  [ ] 5

### Engagement

7. I am treated with respect here
   - [ ] 1  [ ] 2  [ ] 3  [ ] 4  [ ] 5

8. Our organization is guided by clear, stated values in our day-to-day work
   - [ ] 1  [ ] 2  [ ] 3  [ ] 4  [ ] 5

9. We have fun at work!
   - [ ] 1  [ ] 2  [ ] 3  [ ] 4  [ ] 5

### Meetings

10. Every meeting is focused on a clear goal that everyone knows
    - [ ] 1  [ ] 2  [ ] 3  [ ] 4  [ ] 5

11. Meetings have the right attendees
    - [ ] 1  [ ] 2  [ ] 3  [ ] 4  [ ] 5

12. Meetings are action-oriented
    - [ ] 1  [ ] 2  [ ] 3  [ ] 4  [ ] 5

### Decision Making

13. We make decisions at the right level
    - [ ] 1  [ ] 2  [ ] 3  [ ] 4  [ ] 5

14. When I make a decision it sticks – no escalation
    - [ ] 1  [ ] 2  [ ] 3  [ ] 4  [ ] 5

15. Our decision process is clear and transparent across the organization
    - [ ] 1  [ ] 2  [ ] 3  [ ] 4  [ ] 5
Culture Self-Assessment Questions

Custom select for Survey Monkey or program of your choice.

1: Strongly disagree 2: Disagree 3: Neutral 4: Agree 5: Strongly Agree

Questions

Collaboration
16. People in our company cooperate together to find solutions – no turf wars
17. Our leadership has set shared goals that require more than one department to succeed
18. It’s easy for me to reach outside my team or department when I need an answer or help

Feedback
19. I know what is expected of me
20. I receive regular feedback about how I’m doing
21. Our team can tackle hard, relevant issues effectively

Communication
22. Leaders frequently communicate progress toward our vision/mission
23. My ideas and feedback are solicited and responded to
24. Our leaders walk their talk – actions and words are the same

Customer Focus
25. It is easy for our customers to do business with us
26. Our products and services deliver what matters most to our customers
27. Front-line employees are empowered to solve customer problems right away

Learning
28. I am trusted to take appropriate risks to make things better here
29. We generously invest in developing people in our company
30. I have the ability to change or improve my environment
Culture Self-Assessment: Scoring

What’s Your Culture Grade?

Scores of 130-150 = A-B. Keep up the good work. Tell us your story!

Scores of 110-129 = C. You need some targeted improvements; use the Culture use the Culture Builder Toolkit Assessment to help define them. | page 44 |

Scores of 90-110 = D. Better get moving fast! Call us for a complementary Culture Strategy Session now.

Scores below 90 = Uh-oh - Culture barriers to performance need attention! How soon can you schedule your complementary Culture Strategy Session?

All Culture factors are not created equal.

Pay particular attention to the following questions. Based on Denison’s research, they are most indicative of stronger business performance:

1. Our vision/mission excites and motivates me personally to commit.
2. I know our game plan to win.
3. Our planning process ensures we narrow constantly to the right priorities.
4. Our decision process is clear and transparent across the organization.
5. People in our company cooperate together to find solutions - no turf wars.
6. I am trusted to take appropriate risks to make things better here.

Where do you stand?

Compare yourself against the 4 cultures most likely to derail innovation and growth.

Want More Data?

Learn about our formal culture benchmarking process to determine your culture’s performance in comparison to 1015 companies, as a driver of 7 bottom line performance measures.

Call 303-898-3920 or Email Us for Culture Help
Contact Us

We hope you have found this information helpful.

For more information on how Corporate Culture Pros can help your culture building or cultural change efforts:

Visit us on the Web:
Email lisa@corporateculturepros.com
Call 303-898-3920.

Follow Us

Twitter
LinkedIn