



WHAT IS CULTURE? Many influences on the success of your business may feel outside of your control, but culture is something you as a leader can positively impact. In fact, the cost of not doing so can be crippling. Culture impacts individual and team performance, client service, interpersonal conflict, sickness, retention of talent – the list goes on.

You can't pick 'culture' up in both hands and hold on to it, but you can see, hear and feel it when you walk into a business. Edgar Schein, an American professor of psychology, said culture is "the basic assumptions and beliefs that are shared by members of a business unit." Those assumptions and beliefs play out in people's behaviour, their body language, their interactions with others and their response to challenges.



CULTURE AVENUE: The pandemic proved it is possible to adapt and evolve ways of working and behaving. It had a huge impact on culture and there is no better time than now to review yours. So, where to start if you want to venture down Culture Avenue?

Pump up your courage and resilience	Assess your current culture	Identify the gap	Take action
<p>You may not like what you discover but need to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - acknowledge what you hear - prioritise areas of concern - take appropriate action 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - what do clients say about us? - what do employees tell us directly, or indirectly, about what it's like to work here? - how about suppliers, how do they find working with us? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - digest feedback gathered - how does it compare with how you want people to experience your organisation? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - notice opportunities to fit action against strategy - don't expect change overnight or for culture to remain static, it constantly evolves - there is no one-time fix

PEOPLE PERFORMANCE: Culture closely links to employee engagement which significantly impacts financial results and business success. Most employees start out wanting to do a good job and evidence shows that happy, engaged employees perform at their best. Timothy Gallwey, a professional sports player and instructor, said "Performance = Potential – Interference."

Does your culture enable high performance? Does it help you attract and retain the best talent? To enhance performance through culture, consider: How clear are individuals on your company Purpose and Vision? Do individuals understand what's okay and not okay in terms of behaviour? How well equipped and confident are employees to deliver on expectations?

TOP TIPS FOR GETTING A CULTURE BACK ON TRACK

Ask yourself - How well are company values and beliefs articulated, lived and celebrated? How do I know this?

Be curious and open minded - avoid defensiveness or frustration about feedback.

Harness and work with the tremendous energy of cynics.

Become a great coach – to identify assumptions or beliefs that are sabotaging a healthy culture.

Engage your leaders and everyone in the business - you cannot fix this alone!

SPOT CULTURE ISSUES - Watch out for signals that your culture, even in small pockets, is going awry. Best practice is to regularly gather feedback on all key stakeholders' experiences of your culture, often via internal/ external surveys and employee forums, remembering the integral role that line managers play in leading and checking in with team members.

- What do new starters tell you about their experience of joining you?
- What are established employees telling you it feels like to work here?
- What are managers telling you about how it feels to manage here?

Be alert to scenarios that indicate cultural challenges. We recently worked with a client reporting a lack of ownership across their business. Problems were being passed from one department to another without anyone taking ownership to resolve them, impacting customer service. An example of current culture getting in the way of business success.

ENCOUNTERING CULTURE CHALLENGES? - Be genuinely interested in the answers to these questions:

- Where does power sit in this organisation?
- What does the working environment say about our culture?
- What clues do our processes give us about culture?
- What team habits help or hinder the culture we seek?