

Organisational culture and the culture change process

A document by Blue Edge Consulting Ltd

Model of organisational culture

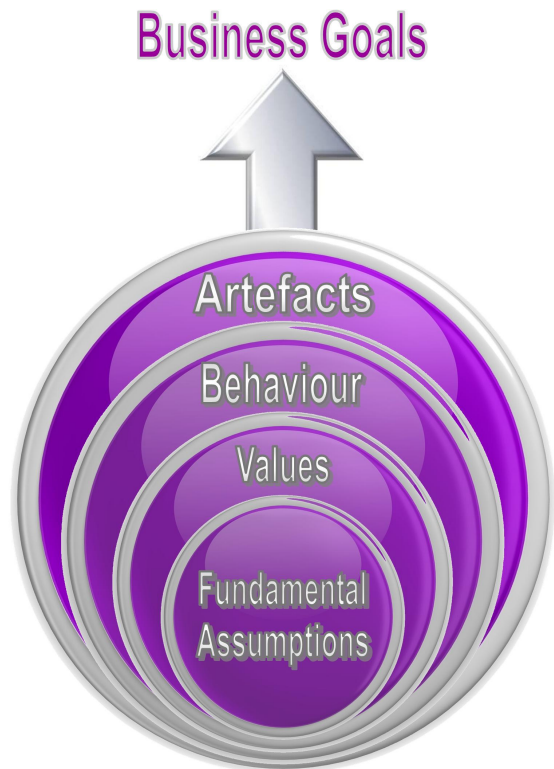
'Culture' is the DNA of your organisation and the teams within it. It defines how people behave, communicate, interact and how they perform in their jobs. It affects people's values, their beliefs about work and work roles.

Organisational culture has been defined variously by business leaders, management researchers, sociologists and psychologists. Some say that:

'Culture eats strategy for lunch'

At Blue Edge, we use the working model of culture shown to the right to illustrate culture to our clients. It shows that culture exists at a number of levels, from 'artefact' (tangible aspects of culture e.g. policies, processes, symbols), through behaviours and values, right down to the deepest 'assumptions' that employees make about their team and their organisation.

It is only when all levels are aligned and in tune with team and organisational goals that a 'high performance' culture can be created.



The culture change process

At its most strategic level, changing culture involves providing answers to the following questions:



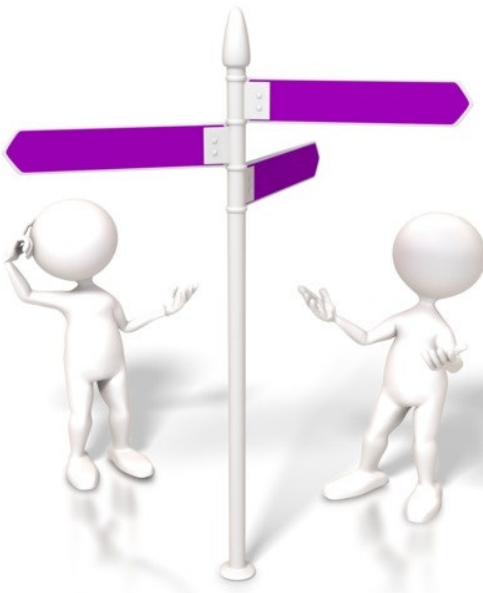
The success of cultural change depends in large part on the action plan or road map designed by the organisation to deliver and embed change. For this to work, our experience has shown that specific aspects of the organisation need to be addressed:

- Engage the leaders and enable them to model the new culture
- Organisational structure must support the culture
- Reward, recognition, promotion systems should support the culture
- HRM systems should be built on new values/competencies
- Selection systems must ensure right cultural fit
- People that don't buy in are exited, top first
- The new culture should be communicated through training.

Naturally, for each organisation, the steps taken to address each of the above areas will appear different; some elements will be higher priority than others; some will need to be addressed immediately, others later,



and others may need to be significantly modified. However, each element will need to be taken into consideration.



Models of culture change

At Blue Edge we use a range of models to overcome resistance and deliver successful culture change based on our experience of what works/doesn't work in similar organisations. Culture change models include:

- Kotter's eight stage process¹
- Head, Heart and Hands
- DREC curve (Denial, Resistance, Exploration & Commitment)²
- The psychology and neuroscience of change.

At Blue Edge we use Kotter's model mentioned above to underpin and to help us structure our change programmes. The model is based on the view that the reason many organisations fail in their attempts to change their culture is because they do not adopt a holistic approach and build the appropriate foundations. By addressing each of the stages below, organisations

are therefore more likely to be successful in embedding change in the long-term:

Stage 1: Create urgency

Building the business case for change and obtaining buy-in

Stage 2: Develop a 'guiding' coalition

Identify individuals with the ability to lead the change (change champions)

Stage 3: Create a vision for change

Create a clear vision of the change and agree strategies for achieving this

Stage 4: Communicate the vision

Use a variety of techniques to communicate the new vision and strategies

Stage 5: Empowering change

Put in place the structure to support change and address resistance

Stage 6: Create short-term wins

Agree short-term achievable targets and recognise/reward employee contributions

Stage 7: Build on the change

Continue improvements to build on quick wins and achieve long-term change

Stage 8: Embed the changes

Continue to put in place tools to support leaders in delivering the vision & communicate success stories.

Our models and approach to culture change had been informed by our experiences of bringing about successful culture change for clients such as the Police Service Northern Ireland and the Royal Air Force.

References

¹ Kotter, J.P. (1996): *Leading Change*, Harvard Business School Press

² Kübler-Ross, E (1973): *On Death and Dying*, Routledge

