

humanist

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The Culture Change Advantage

How to Make Organisational Change a Sustainable Reality

Dedication

Humanist dedicates this guide to people interested in organisational change, not for business value alone, but for the value change brings to people's lives and the business value that follows, as a result.

Humanist is a culture-change agency that helps transform people for business success.

Visit us at humanist.co.za

Introduction

Our intention in writing this guide is to contribute to a growing, global business narrative that puts people first.

We believe that this perspective – of seeing people, not merely as business assets or means of production, but as significantly and intrinsically valuable – is ushering in a new type of intelligence.

We see this intelligence taking shape in the world of work, and within it, in the workspace we occupy; that is, the field of human-centred culture change and organisational transformation.

We hope you find the contents of this guide insightful. To ensure that the subject matter is accessible, we've created a series of reader tools – from first-person perspective-takes, to quick recaps and pre-change check lists.

Think of it as your go-to guide in understanding and implementing workplace culture change centred around a new-found purpose: Of creating more human-centred organisations. And a more humane world.

Enjoy!

The Humanist team

A Guide to Making Culture Change Stick

In this guide, you'll learn how to:

- Enhance your culture in six simple steps
- Leverage your culture to sustain change
- Measure your culture change effectiveness

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Six Steps to Positive Culture Change

Chapter One



Step #1

Start Where You Are

Organisational Change: Start Small, Start Now

We Can Do This

'Start where you are' is advice given by many Buddhist meditation teachers. It's wise advice because, being human, we have a strong tendency to put off, well, pretty much anything that requires change. Corporate culture change is no exception.

More often than not, business leaders put off culture change because their focus is elsewhere. Ironically, and increasingly, the focus for CEOs is on business transformation.

It's ironic because business transformation – whether structural, strategic or technological – involves culture change. Executives underestimate how much business transformation depends on cultural alignment.

To go back to the meditation analogy, it's a bit like a person saying, 'When things fall into place, then I'll start meditating'. To which the wise teacher replies, 'Meditate and things will fall into place.'

So, commit to culture change, and start with a simple question:

Why do we want to change our culture?

A note of caution here; try not to fall for the obvious answers: 'To be more agile', or 'To be more innovative' or 'To become customer-centric'. These answers apply to every organisation.

But your organisation, and your organisational culture, is unique. Your reason for culture change should be, too.

What may be required is that you define your organisational purpose, first.

Step #1

Employee experience thought leader, Jacob Morgan, calls organisational purpose, a company's 'Reason for Being'. With a clear articulation of your company's purpose or 'Reason for Being', the impetus for your culture change will emerge with it.

Let's look at a good example.

South Africa-based multinational retail company, Woolworths defines its purpose as:

Adding Quality to Life

Exceptional quality in every product we sell and every experience we deliver, to our customers and our people.

If this is the group's purpose, it follows that we ask, 'What is the cultural impetus that supports this purpose?'

The answer, reading Woolworths' integrated report, is in the way it does business:

'We are customer obsessed, inspirational, responsible, collaborative and committed to quality.'

To reduce the Woolworths's learning to a simple take-out, we can see that:

The group's **purpose** (Reason for Being) is to add quality to life **by being** customer obsessed, inspirational, responsible, collaborative and committed to quality.

So, define your organisational purpose. Then, articulate a new way of being that will see your company achieve that purpose.

Believing in this 'new way' marks the beginning of true transformative change.



Step #2

Do One Thing Differently

It's the little things that make the difference

Let's Do This, Not That

With your organisational purpose defined, and your motivation for culture change clearly articulated, the next step is to make it happen.

The key here is to introduce ONE new behaviour that, when practiced by people throughout your organisation, will make a tangible impact.

Introduce too many new ways of doing things, and you stand the risk of overwhelming or even antagonising people. Also, trying to do too many new things at once makes it harder for people to do things differently, together.

The following Q&A is a great tool to help you arrive at your ONE all-important, new organisational behaviour.

Ask people, 'What are we doing now that limits our potential?' followed by, 'What should we do differently?'

Step #2

The answers to these questions produce deep insight into two key areas of culture change:

The first area is your company's current disablers and the second, the behaviours that will enable your business to achieve its new-found purpose.

Let's use an example. There's a company that provides big data processing, mostly for financial and insurance companies. Some time back, it was forced to tighten its service level agreements in order to comply with a bank client's regulatory requirements. The introduction of this red tape has impacted employees, manifesting as demotivation and disengagement. Also, innovation has all but disappeared from the company.

In answer to the question, 'What are we doing now that limits our potential?', people at this company have said, 'We don't take risks anymore'; 'We don't do anything new'; 'We used to collaborate and innovate, now we just follow rules.'

While the switch to becoming more process-focused and compliance-driven has satisfied the client, the cost of this bureaucracy is morale.

In answering the second question, 'What should we do differently?', respondents have made several suggestions, 'Let's decrease the number of meetings with the client, so we can free up time for team-building and brainstorms.' Another was, 'Let's get new business in, based on the condition that new clients won't tie us up with red tape.'

These suggestions point to a new way of doing things. Essentially, a new way of being. Distilled to a single, new behaviour change, it is this: 'Let's be intreprenurial.'

Not long after this behavioural shift was introduced, the company won a new account that makes for work that is more flexible, creative and developmental. Not surprisingly, employee engagement and morale are in an upswing.

So, the lesson here is simple: By introducing a single, new behaviour into your culture – one that people agree will make work better – you enable employees to think, act and perform differently.

Step #3

Start A Movement

Create a cause for culture change

The power of unity

It's a fact. A lot of culture change efforts fail. One of the key reasons for failure is that, while leaders may give the mandate to change, their commitment to, and involvement in the change process, is often absent. Typically, the culture change initiative is left in the hands of an internal team tasked with communicating management's desired, new norms or behaviours.

When buy-in and take-up of this new culture fails, it's not the fault of the communication campaign, nor of the team that produced it. It is a failure of leadership.

In a recent [McKinsey podcast](#), Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella tells interviewer, Simon London,



When I became CEO, we were already a 40-year-old company, and I felt that it was very important for us to make culture a first-class, explicit conversation so that we could then reinvent ourselves and invent new things.

Step #3

Wow. That's how it's done. Effective culture change doesn't have to originate from the CEO, but it must involve him or her, and they must be ready, willing and able to talk about it.

Talking about change is an important point for you to action. Successful culture change requires open and transparent communication. So, be sure to invite everyone to participate in your change conversation. Create a communication platform that is accessible to all; and on it share information, encourage feedback, and provide updates and insights, consistently.

From this conceptual material, a powerful change narrative will emerge, rich with the insights you need to build the case for your company's culture change; and to share it within your organisation, and beyond.



Remember, what starts with one can become a group, which can become a cause, which can become a movement. And movements have the power to change the world.

Step #4

Recruit Change Agents

Find Credible Support for Your Culture Change

Organisations don't change for the better, people do.

Every organisation has employees who have influence. Don't make the mistake of thinking that influencers all hold management positions. For, these individuals exert their influence, whether they are part of the management group, or not.

How can you identify your influencers?

Typically, they are people who are intrinsically motivated; they work with purpose and can easily self-manage, yet they make great collaborators, too. Almost always, they are people whom others look up to, as role models.

And that's precisely why you want to engage your influencers from the get-

go. Because they make great agents of change.

Influencers establish organic networks, both on a one-to-one basis, as well as with groups.

In fact, another characteristic of influencers is that they are able to engage with different groups of employees, with ease and effect. Look among your cross-functional teams, and you'll be sure to find several influencers.

Bring your influencers into your change program as early as you can. Apply their insights and follow their guidance; invariably your influencers are the people with their finger on the pulse of your organisational culture. Leverage that.

Step #4



To me, an ‘influencer’ is someone whom people can identify with. They’re approachable, accessible and trustworthy. If I can inspire someone in some way, I’m happy to do it.

Kifilwe Siphokazi, Call Centre Agent & Influencer

Beyond helping you to raise awareness of your change program, influencers actually propagate the narrative of change within their networks.

In this way, word spreads, both with authority and authenticity.

Also, you’ll receive valuable feedback from your influencers. Constant feedback at every phase of your culture change program is vital for long-term success. With their finger on the pulse of your change program, you can be managing the impact of change with immediacy and accuracy.

Final word: Find your influencers, and invoke their influence.

Show The Change

Change must be seen to be happening

Seeing is believing

A sure sign of a failed culture change effort is when nothing really changes. In design and in principle, it all looks great. Yet, in reality, change simply doesn't happen.

The way to overcome this trap, is to listen and learn from your people as your company's new purpose and behaviour set is introduced to them. Then, present the effects of these changes, no matter how small, as soon as they appear.

One of the most common mistakes companies make is that they lose sight of where change happens.

Transformation teams can become so focused on their change deliverables, as defined in the change plan and on the change roadmap, that they fail to look at people, where real behaviour change happens.

This is show-and-tell time, and every demonstration of positive culture change counts.

So, tell the stories and illustrate the instances – across multiple channels. Also, celebrate the success of small gains. Because culture change doesn't happen overnight. But it does happen. Just observe your people.

Step #5



We created a pledge wall in our company's reception area, on which we put up staff members' personal pledge cards to our company's transformation journey. It's a visible demonstration of our collective commitment."

**Lucy Brazier,
Key Account Manager**



Step #6

Keep Going

Culture as a living phenomenon

Take care to nurture your culture

We need to keep reminding ourselves that organisational culture is a living phenomenon; its origin, expression and evolution are all human.

At its most quintessential, culture is how we think, act and behave. It is the way of us.

So, of course, it changes. Constantly.

This is, arguably, the most contentious aspect of corporate culture change. For, what is the point of initiating corporate culture change, when the culture will change, anyway?

The answer is deceptively simple, when we bring it down to the human level.

We change because we seek to be better.

Change presents us with new ways to see ourselves; ways that free us up to do more, and be more.

So, invest the time, energy and effort to initiate a change of culture in your company. And know that it will take time. Keep going. Because the real reward arrives the day your company realises that change isn't about the destination, it's about the journey.

May your company, and its people, have a wonderful ride!



Quick recap

Culture Check

Want to enhance your culture
in 6 easy steps?

STEP

01

Start small, start now and start where you are.

STEP

02

**Do one thing differently:
Introduce one new behaviour.**

STEP

03

**Start a movement: Create a
cause for culture change.**

STEP

04

**Recruit change agents: Find
credible support for your
culture change.**

STEP

05

**Show the change: Change
must be seen to be happening.**

STEP

06

**Keep the momentum going: Take
care to nurture your culture.**



Leverage your Culture for Success

Chapter Two



Leverage your Culture for Success

How to sustain change and deliver results

Culture change is effective when it happens in alignment with, and in support of, your business purpose. We've spoken before about the importance of defining your company's purpose. Think of it as a statement of business intent, and your culture as the impetus driving that intent forward.

Creating synergy between your company's purpose and culture enables you to leverage culture towards other, specific business objectives.

These include things, such as attracting talent, enhancing stakeholder engagement, and differentiating your value proposition.

And what of your business strategy? There are many companies that are still separating culture, and even purpose, from strategy development. Even when mounting evidence suggests that a strong culture is more enabling of sustainable high performance than strategy.

Management thought leader, Peter Drucker, famously said, "Culture eats strategy for breakfast."

Given what we've learned about culture's role in shaping a company's ethos and approach to decision-making, it simply makes sense that culture is central to strategy. Why?

Because value is born, not of strategy, but of trust.

It's not a coincidence that the companies at the top of Fortune's *Best Companies To Work For* list, and here in South Africa, that the top employers, as certified by the Top Employers Institute, are companies that experience better financial performance.

So, turn your attention to your company's culture.

Ask yourself, 'Do we have the right culture to sustain success?'

If not, get to work on changing your culture. And, if your culture is fueling high performance, consider how you can leverage your culture for success.

Consider these three leverage strategies:

Recruit for culture-building

Increasingly, recruiters are being briefed to provide candidates who have the necessary skills AND personality types that will complement employers' cultures.

The addition of culture to recruitment criteria points to the fact that corporate culture is a distinct competitive advantage. So, take the time to develop your company's culture value proposition.

Then, every time you recruit, use this proposition to attract the kind of people who will benefit your culture. A note of caution here: Don't recruit people based on how well you think they will 'fit in'. Culture thrives on diversity. What you want are people who will benefit your culture by building it, simply by being who they are: agitators, innovators, introverts, extroverts, idealists, advocates and intrapreneurs. They're all welcome!

The results of a diverse, well developed culture speak for themselves: Higher engagement and retention, and enhanced performance.

Broadcast your culture

With desktop access to multi-media channels, there really is no reason why you can't be actively promoting your organisational culture to existing customers, channel partners and employees, as well as to other prospective stakeholders.

Going public with content created and curated by your organisation demonstrates transparency and pride in your culture.

Whether it's short-form video clips, webinars, blogs or social stories and posts, the returns on investment are considerable: You attract talent; you turn customers into brand fans; and you reinforce what a great place it is to work among your own employees.

Culture-stamp your products and services

Artisanal food is a huge trend right now. From baked loaves to jams and preserves, artisan-inspired foods trigger our sense of nostalgia and appeal to our love of tradition. Instinctively, we associate them with quality and authenticity.

Cue your corporate culture, and the products and services your company provides.

What could you be adding to your offering suite, either in its production or marketing, that will give it a mark of cultural originality and authenticity?

Remember, every touchpoint with a customer is an opportunity to share your company's unique way of doing things, as an expression of your culture. And that's eminently marketable.





Measure your Culture Change Effectiveness

Chapter Three

Measure your Culture Change Effectiveness

How to track the success of your corporate culture change

Measuring the way your company thinks, acts and behaves

There are many who say it can't be done. That corporate culture is too intangible to define, let alone measure. We disagree.

It's vital that you monitor and measure your company's cultural progression, so that you can demonstrate the effects of positive change as they happen, and redirect when they don't.

The culture change metrics we suggest are applicable, no matter where your company is in its journey of cultural change. At the start, in the middle, or at the end and redirecting, the following measures outline what to track, and why.



The metrics that matter

The big behaviour shift

We've addressed the importance of introducing a single, new behaviour that, when practiced by your people, will make a tangible impact. But how do you measure that impact?

Quite simply, it depends on what your new corporate behaviour is. Earlier in this guide, we used the example of a company introducing the behaviour of 'becoming more entrepreneurial'. To find out if this new way of thinking and behaving was taking hold in their organisation, the company looked for scenarios in which entrepreneurialism was being exhibited.

Sure enough, several situations were cited in which employees were showing signs of entrepreneurial behaviour; specifically, proactivity, creativity and opportunistic, customer-centric conduct.

Behaviour change is a measure of your culture change.

So, once you've communicated the value of your new way of doing things, look for signs of behavioural exhibition among your people.

Listen to your people

Questions, suggestions, opinions and ideas, they're all relevant to culture change. But first, employees must have a platform on which they are able to communicate their thoughts and feelings.

Ensure that you have provided multiple channels of communication for staff to participate in your company's change narrative.

From a measurement perspective, the content on this platform will provide deep insight into whether your change program is being taken up, or being abandoned.

Check your organisation's pulse

We are seeing a proliferation of software products that serve every facet of culture management, from assessment and diagnostics to planning and implementation.

For culture change to be effective, communication with, and among, your employees, is critical.

You can easily measure the impact of your culture change program using employee ‘pulse’ surveys.

These are regular, short surveys (they take less than two minutes to complete). Usually one-question surveys with a sliding answer scale, they can tell you, in rapid time, how happy, frustrated or cohesive your people are.

Ask your stakeholders

We can't emphasize it enough. When you are transparent about your company's culture change,

you invite participation from people across all areas of your business. This wide stakeholder engagement presents you with an opportunity to measure the effects of your culture change program, using customer and supplier surveys.

This kind of survey centres around a simple question, ‘Is our culture change visible?’

The data you receive from measuring your change program will enable you to take action – remedial, reinforcement or redirection. Whatever feedback you get, use it to make change stick.



Pre-change check list

You've Got This

Develop Your Change Capability & Confidence

Define your **organisational purpose**. Then, articulate **the new way of being** that will see your company achieve that purpose.

Introduce an all-important, **new behaviour** that, when practiced by people throughout your organisation, it will make a **tangible impact**.

Provide a **communication platform** that is accessible to all; and on it share information, encourage feedback, and provide updates and insights, consistently.

Identify and invite influencers into your change program as early as you can. Get their feedback, **apply their insights** and follow their guidance.

Build a change narrative; share the stories and illustrate the instances of your culture change across multiple channels.

Invest the time, energy and effort to initiate a change of culture in your company. Finally, build your organisation's ability to adapt to **continuous change**.

For more insights, visit us at humanist.co.za
or email us at info@humanist.co.za

