



**Brand and Culture
Alignment Toolkit®**
ALIGN AND INSPIRE

Culture Talk vs. Culture Do.



Culture Talk vs. Culture Do.

Every day someone has a word to say about culture in their organization. Most of the time it revolves around whether the business has a good culture, a bad culture, a can-do culture or even a culture like one of the top brands that consumers recognize.

Why are people constantly talking about culture? What is culture? How do we change culture or even build a culture in our organization? Here is one definition of culture. “Culture is the collective programming of the human mind that distinguishes the members of one human group from those of another. Culture in this sense is a system of collectively held values.”
—Geert Hofstede (Hofstede, 1991)

There is a wide array of cultural types and differences in organizations, much like our own interpersonal relationships, family culture, regional, national, and international cultures. But how do we determine and shape our culture in our organization? What do you make of this notion of collective programming of the human mind? Let’s explore this a bit more.

The Gallup organization has been conducting surveys over the last two plus decades on employee engagement or company culture and the numbers have been steady. Just about 31% of the population are engaged in their work despite corporate executives throwing billions of dollars at this problem, it hasn't moved the needle at all. What do they resort to? Pizza parties, ping pong tables in the break room, paintball getaways, major sporting events, etc. But again, nothing ever changes. People have fun! We are not here to tell you to refrain from engaging in activities like that however you cannot expect sustainable changes to take place in your organization after these events are over.



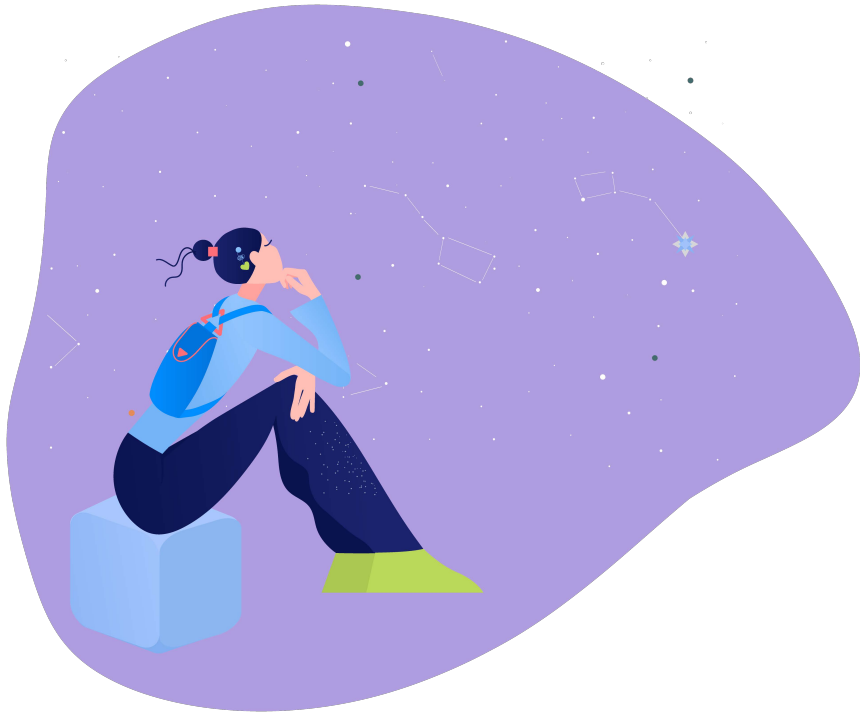
There are also surveys that everyone has heard about and have probably taken over the last several years including but not limited to; Hogan, Myers Briggs, DISC model, predictive index, and many others. This is all part of the culture talk that we hear like a drum beat every day, but what is really done about changing the culture in an organization? Individual surveys and assessments are useful to better understand how we process information and interact with one another, but they do little to form a collective purpose. What we are trying to become is a better version of ourselves which will help build the pathway for the collective team to become a better version of itself.

How do we begin? In our world, it starts with the incorporating question: Imagine this for a minute; Visualize your entire organization as though it were a single person, doing its best work on its best day. What does that virtual person look like, sound like, behave like? What common attributes do you think of when you imagine this virtual person? Do they pay close attention to detail, do they treat everyone with kindness, respect and fairly, or are they a person who focuses on deadlines or perhaps they may be a person who is entertaining and creative? Remember, these words are positive affirmations when describing this virtual person.

By holding a positive word in your mind, you stimulate frontal hemisphere activity. This area includes specific language centers that connect directly to the motor cortex responsible for moving you into action and changing or stimulating behavior.

As research has shown, the longer you concentrate on positive words, the more you begin to affect and impact other areas of the brain. Functions in the parietal lobe start to change, which changes the perception you have of yourself and the people you interact with. A positive view of yourself will bias you toward seeing the good in others, whereas a negative self-image will include you toward suspicion and doubt.

When we begin to share the common attributes that come to mind when describing our organization as though it were a single person, we start to form a “role target” or “north star” that everyone in the organization can begin to follow. Individuals begin to ask themselves, what would this person do if they were in this situation?



Once we come up with a series of “aligned inspirations”, we can start to make daily, observable behavioral changes that align closer to the organization’s role target. Day by day, these changes become habit-forming and allows everyone to bring the culture closer to the organizational brand promise. Basically, we do what we promise to do.

Behavioral change is not easy for most of us. It is however, gratifying to watch individuals within the organization become a better version of themselves every day. There is a subculture of accountability for each person participating in this process and a way for each person to self-check whether they are making the necessary behavioral changes that they promised to make. In a way, it serves as a governor for each person to think consciously about the way they behave in the organization they work in. It's like building a family. You need to stand for something and make sure that you are living up to the promise you stand for. Unfortunately, in most organizations there is no real purpose to what they do each day. They tend to incorporate and immediately get into silos and perform specific duties without much thought to the overall purpose of the organization. When you strive for a collective best self, you feel as though you are there pulling for one another and there for a higher purpose.

There is a big difference between Culture TALK and Culture DO. Culture TALK is interesting for discussions around the water cooler and the coffee table but doesn't do much to change how people behave within the organization and toward one another. On the other hand, Culture DO is about making measurable and observable changes in your daily behavior that help deliver on the brand promise you make to all stakeholders.



Exercises;

#1: The Incorporating Question

Everyone's a part of some Team, and many of us are members of several. Think about a Team that you're a part of and ask yourself the Incorporating Question:

Visualize your Team as though it were a single person doing its best work on its best day to keep all its promises and achieve all its goals.

What would that ideal virtual person be like?

Write down the positive attributes that come to mind about this ideal "Role Target" for your Team.

Exercises;

Extra Credit: ask one or two of your Teammates to do this, too. Everyone should work alone on this, without talking or comparing notes until everyone's list is finished.

Get together afterward and compare your lists. Did you all "see" the same person, or different people?

What do you think the differences, if any, say about the level of alignment among the members of your Team?

Exercises;

#2: Mining the Good in Others

Bring to mind a co-worker that you personally don't like. Think about all the things she/he does that might "irk" you. Take a quick inventory of all the deficits you recognize in him/her.

Now, take out a pen and a sheet of paper and write down three or four positives about them: things they do well, in their work, or in the way they work with others.

It's hard to see positives in people we don't like, so you might have to make a point of sitting down with her/him to get to know them better.