

# KNOWING CULTURE

- ▲ An effective culture measurement tool is indispensable for transformation
- ▲ Good tools provide both a current culture assessment and an ideal one
- ▲ Undergirds all strategic discussions, informs Mission, Vision, Values, Purpose



*"Until I came to IBM, I probably would have told you that culture was just one among several important elements in any organization's makeup and success — along with vision, strategy, marketing, financials, and the like... I came to see, in my time at IBM, that culture isn't just one aspect of the game, it is the game. In the end, an organization is nothing more than the collective capacity of its people to create value."*

– Lou Gerstner

*"Employees who believe that management is concerned about them as a whole person — not just an employee — are more productive, more satisfied, more fulfilled."*

***Satisfied employees mean satisfied customers, which leads to profitability."***

– Anne Mulcahy

*"This is not about fuzzy, holding hands around a campfire, kumbaya stuff. That's not what values and culture and mission is about. This is about building an organization for success. This is about winning. This is about doing the tactical things to make sure your organization and your people are aligned around the same thing."*

– Justin Moore

# When I first began my consulting practice in 1990, very few people discussed organizational culture. Fewer still had any idea how to measure it.

Now, corporate culture is not only appreciated, but also recognized as vital in the operation of effective enterprises. **Highly evolved organizations devote substantial time and energy to ensure that their culture is optimized.**

What good leaders have come to understand is that culture is not only fundamental to the operation of the organization, but it also underpins its brand as well. A brand represents the promise the company has made and rightly sets expectations for users. **However, it is the culture that produces what the customer actually experiences. It follows, then, that culture and brand are bound together, two sides of the same corporate coin.**

Given the amount of time, energy, and resources devoted to its establishment, it is easy to appreciate the importance that a company's brand represents. Why not apply similar measurements to culture? **Obtaining a quantitative description of the thoughts, actions, and behaviors that team members are implicitly expected to display in order to fit in enables an enterprise to properly match brand to culture and thus ensure successful product delivery consistency.** In addition, it enables the leadership to fine-tune levels of satisfaction and productivity that then lead to retention, talent acquisition, overhead reduction, and overall profitability.

A good assessment tool is a collective expression of the way in which team members believe that they should act, on the "me," "we," and "us" aspects of work. This means how one is expected to perform on an individual basis, how to approach their work as a team and how the enterprise operates in connection with each other as well as with larger external considerations. Good tools have two primary components: a current assessment and an ideal one. **The ideal anchors the members in the desired culture to work toward while the current provides an accurate picture of the situation at the moment.** It is the gap between the two that enables leaders to generate the energy and drive to continuously improve the culture. This process is vital to transformation efforts undertaken to advance performance, profitability, and individual and group satisfaction. Because cultures change slowly over time, organizations should measure repeatedly to ensure the proper movement toward the ideal.

The results of the culture assessments inform the establishment of and support for the organization's Mission, Vision, Values, and Purpose. Leaders are responsible for helping shape the culture in a way that supports those as well as the strategic pillars that have been developed within the PlayBook™. **The proper culture also supports the development and execution of the annual milestones and objectives, and the ways team members will invent solutions to attain them.** It is the internal checkup that supports and facilitates the formal outcomes that the organization expects to produce.

With this in place, it becomes important to understand the leaders' accountability in the existence of the behaviors described in the culture assessment. We will tackle that issue next.

