



Changing our Team Culture – Part Two

Organisational – and team – culture is described as ‘the way things are done around here’.

This month I’m writing about Team Culture and last week in my [first article](#) I outlined the three things you need clarity on if you want to change the culture in your team. Read [this article](#) first if you haven’t already done so.

The **first thing** you need clarity on before you start changing anything is your team’s **current** culture. Respect and recognise its history before trying to change the world.

Think about the things that are ‘accepted’ in your team. These are often what you might think of as ‘small’ things such as:

- Turning up late to meetings – because the last one over-ran;
- Sending emails or texting during meetings;
- ‘Not having time’ to complete the actions you agreed at your last meeting;
- Poor performance not dealt with – or dealt with immediately;
- Working from home on Fridays;
- Constant busyness;
- 1-1s frequently cancelled because we’re ‘too busy’;
- ‘Being available’ over the weekend and whilst on holiday;
- Treating customers or other stakeholders in a certain way;
- Copying everybody in on email;
- Dress codes (or none).

None of these things is written down anywhere as ‘good’ or ‘bad’ but they have become accepted ways of behaving and nobody questions them.

When you join an organisation or team you will notice its ‘culture’ particularly if things are done differently from what you have experienced before. It is often said that organisational culture is something you stop noticing once you have been there for around six months – when you become part of ‘the system’!

Step One – Define your Current Culture

Here are some sample questions you might ask yourself **and your team** – *because if you want them to change you need to involve them in the conversation and ‘co-create’ your new culture together.*

- What is the common purpose of this team – what do we exist to do and why do we exist to do it?
- What behaviour gets rewarded in this team? (Formally or informally)
- How is performance measured?
- How are differences of opinion dealt with?
- What are the unwritten 'rules' in this team?
- What do we avoid talking about in this team?
- How is leadership demonstrated – and by whom?
- How would you describe your team/organisation to a friend who was thinking of working for you? What would you tell that same friend about how to succeed in the team?
- How do our customers/stakeholders describe our team? (Ask them!)
- How would we describe the team metaphorically (a well-oiled machine? A clapped out Ford Fiesta?)
- If you have any new team members, it is worth asking them what first struck them when they joined the team?

This exercise is not about judging, blaming or finger-pointing. It is simply an opportunity to identify where you are now culturally.

The first question on this list is key. Is your culture helping you to achieve your common purpose?

If yes, great.

If not – what do you want to change?

More on that next time.