

Five Inescapable Truths of Organisational Culture

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- Our organisations always have a culture, and as leaders we are interested in it, concerned about it. If we're going to have one (and we are), then it might as well be a good one.
- "Culture" is not all that mysterious. Defined:
"The set of unwritten Rules that determine how people in an organisation act, react, communicate, problem-solve, treat each other. It includes attitudes, values, beliefs, standards, expectations and prejudices. All are there within the organisation.
- Culture is like the 'personality' of the organisation. It is **BROADER** than values. It is the style and 'way we do things here.'
- Culture affects people's ability to **HEAR** the vision, to **RESPOND** to the vision, and to do their jobs.

Truth #1: Leaders Shape the Organisational Culture Whether they Intend to or Not.

- Whoever is in charge shapes the culture of the organisation more than any other person.
- Once you have settled in as leader you will either adapt to the culture (thus making it invisible), OR begin to shape the culture.
- From "Thriving on Chaos" by Tom Peters: A critical skill for the leaders is to discover the 'Driving Force' beneath the things that people really like about their organisation.
- You have limited time to do this, and start shaping culture constructively - to nurture and maintain the healthy stuff in your group culture.
- If you are confused or ignorant of that driving force, then the changes you make can disrupt momentum, or limit something that is really valuable to the organisation.
- Something to do: discover that force by asking: "Why do people like working here?"
- Discovered it? Build a fence around it, and actively work to encourage it as you work.

Truth #2: Time In Erodes Awareness of...the Culture.

- The longer a leader is in a place, their awareness of what's good, bad, healthy or unhealthy, decreases. You're less aware of 'where you are.'
- You will not see many cultural attributes around you, because after you're experienced around here you don't have fresh eyes.
- Something to do: build into your Organisation's work life a few deliberate mechanisms to discover what's healthy, unhealthy, driving people along around here. It's purely a rhythmic way to elicit data from fish eyes.
- Northpointe Church Example: every new staff member that joins the team is sent by Andy a questionnaire at the 3month and 6month mark to collect their honest observations.

Truth #3: Healthy Cultures Attract & Keep Healthy People.

- Healthy people are known for being intolerant of unhealthy environments - often leaving them at first opportunity they get.
- If you leave an unhealthy culture in place, you allow any of the unhealthy in your ranks to settle in and be comfortable.
- In organisations, the same is true. Your healthiest people thrive when they are not connected into gossiping, jealousy, bad attitude poor work ethic. They will leave if they're forced to avoid those issues, walk on eggshells etc. then you won't keep them.
- What Signs of an Unhealthy Culture can be seen? Drama in daily work life; Sense of being Self-Focussed; Sideways Energy - big activity level that progresses little.
- Something to do: Concentrate and honestly identify 1-2 areas/ departments existing in your church organisation with signs of an unhealthy culture. Choose some steps you could take to transition those teams to healthier/collaborative approaches.

Truth #4: The Culture of an Organisation Impacts the long-term Productivity of that Organisation.

- Corporate culture experts have unearthed findings - the success and output of an organisation is clearly tied to the shape of its org. culture.
- If its important that we be fruitful and productive, then culture must be important to us too.
- Reasons why: the culture's quality and shape affect some of the key drivers of your productivity, like: Transparency; How accessible information is; Ability for members to have unfiltered debate; Communication processes. These issues will act as bottlenecks for your people's productivity. In a healthy culture PEOPLE COLLABORATE.
- In an unhealthy one, the processes of communicating are very Top-Down, Red-Taped, Buttoned-Up. (often accompanied by Silos, and Territoriality.)
- We want a church organisation about which staff members say, "I love working here." By which they mean, they love the culture here.
- Something to do: invite two people underneath you in the organizational structure, to collaborate without you present, to achieve something.

Truth #5: Unhealthy Cultures are Slow to Adapt to Change

- Healthy church cultures differ from unhealthy ones, by outcomes - according to which key marketplace their culture is focussed on.
- The unhealthy - nearly always focus on the church members themselves - and so have their back to the marketplace.
- The inward focus builds an unreadiness for a new opportunity with the marketplace, so that when it appears it would be too disruptive and the group will RESIST it. For the sake of resisting CHANGE.
- Something to do: Increase the nimbleness of your organisations, through the right discussions about changing culture we've inherited.