

Culture Change in High Risk/High Scrutiny Environments

Recent revelations within the health service, care community and the criminal justice sector have led for calls to change the culture that allowed these incidents to happen. Failings at a systemic level have been blamed and investigations reveal an environment that at best was blind to and at worst colluded with these failings. An outsider may ask – *just what is it in these organisations that makes these behaviours OK?* The reaction to an incident that is often then highlighted in the media, is quite rightly to investigate.

Unfortunately, what then occurs is often predicated on a rapid response to the symptom, rather than a response to the deeper issue, prevalent within the culture of the organisation itself. It can lead to more scrutiny, more checks and procedures - demoralising those very people who may be instrumental in making positive change. At worst, a response to an incident may lead to micro-management, paralysis and mistrust from those already tasked with achieving a difficult job (and currently facing an environment of increasing demand and reducing resource). There are two aspects to consider:

- Organisational Change
- Organisational Culture

Organisational Change

High risk, highly regulated environments can by their very nature be change resistant. The systems that are in place ensuring governance, compliance and to address and mitigate risk may potentially lead to a hierarchical culture of top down control and at worst learned helplessness. Change initiatives are often themselves highly structured, potentially utilising project management protocols. There is a prevalence of focus on quadrant 4 within the overall change framework and hopefully an appreciation of quadrant 2 with an intent to shift behaviours*.

Predominantly the focus is on the external aspects – what can be seen and what can be measured which makes perfect sense given our predilection for control and certainty. ** There is no 'right' way to lead change; but there is a need to balance both the external and the internal aspects of the organisational shift. Absolutely there should be total focus on governance and compliance to the non-negotiable aspects of respect and human decency. But change is not achieved by regulation alone – actions are prefaced by behaviours, behaviours are prefaced by thought.

THE FOUR QUADRANTS OF CHANGE



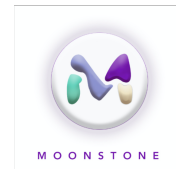
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Quadrant 1 is the individual/internal aspect of change - the interior reality of people. It is the area of cognitive and psychological development. The need is to engage with and create meaning for individuals – giving them a sense of shared purpose.

Quadrant 2 relates to the individual/external aspects of change. This quadrant is where leaders pay attention to developing peoples' skills and supporting the physical and psychological ingredients that spark motivation and peak performance.

Quadrant 3 deals with the collective/internal aspects of change - the domain of culture. This is the domain of myth, story, unwritten rules, and beliefs; we need to pay attention to the deeper meanings of symbols, purpose, vision and values. This is not so much written, framed, statements, but the subtle messages encoded in our day-to-day interactions.

Quadrant 4 relates to the collective/external aspects of change. It is the quadrant of organisational design, technology workflow, policies, and procedures. This quadrant reminds leaders that system design determines performance and that if we want to get the system to perform at a substantively higher level, we must design for it.

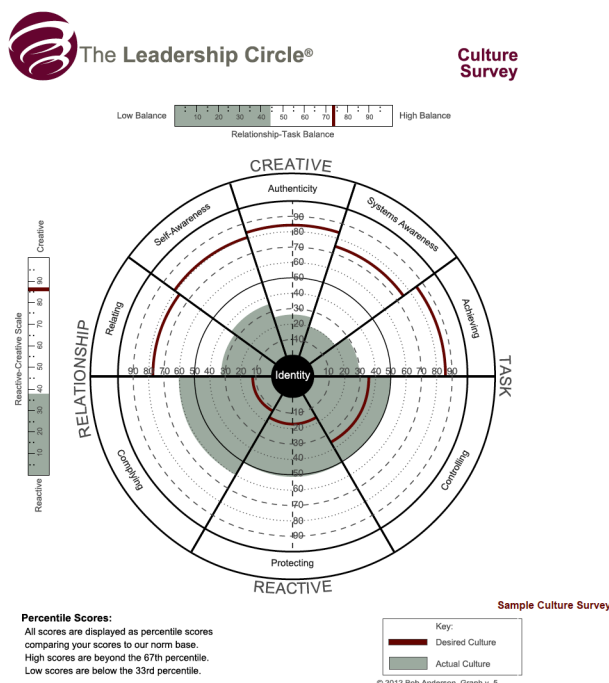


The internal aspects of change i.e. quadrants 1 & 3 can both be thought of as symbolising the culture, at an individual, team and organisational level. The role models, unwritten stories and ‘feel’ of an organisation that leads to an environment of personal leadership, integrity and compassion. There must be at least as much focus on the overall culture (quadrant 3) and creating meaning and purpose for individuals (quadrant 1) – the **internal** aspects of change as there is on those external aspects.

Organisational Culture

The culture will arise from those perceived as leaders, whether recognised formally within the organisational structure or not. There are numerous frameworks, models and systems for diagnosing and managing culture change. Some focus on behaviour and values, yet many default back to designing structures and systems rather than the need to create and sustain meaning/purpose for those in the organisation. There is a need for a diagnostic tool and for benchmarking and tracking progress made – but one that explicitly recognises that the culture will be set by those perceived as senior in the organisation and the values that they themselves hold.

A framework such the Leadership Culture Survey can give an invaluable insight into both the existing and desired leadership culture. Comparing results from different levels/groups within an organisation gives the opportunity to robust discussion and individual reflection on the role every member of the senior team plays in both defining and potentially shifting the overall culture.



Culture...the bottom line for leaders is that if they do not become conscious of the cultures in which they are embedded, those cultures will manage them. Cultural understanding is desirable for all of us, but it is essential to leaders if they are to lead... Schein E

Culture...it represents “how things are around here.” It reflects the prevailing ideology that people carry inside their heads. It conveys a sense of identity to employees, provides unwritten and often un-spoken guidelines for how to get along in the organization... Cameron K S & Quinn R F

* acknowledgement to The Leadership Circle™ and accompanying works of Ken Wilber
 **this aspect is reviewed further in the accompanying paper on creating Safe Uncertainty in organisations