





How Culture drives engagement and organisational effectiveness



Whether or not the term 'new normal' resonates, what is clear is that the way we all work and interact has fundamentally shifted. How have changes to the way we work impacted organisational culture? If we work from home all or part of the time, is there even such a thing as organisational culture anymore?

Organisational culture is "how we do things around here." However, that simple statement is underpinned by a complex dance of a myriad of tangible and intangible factors that shape and reinforce expectations of behaviour.

Culture is:

-  **Shared** – culture is a group phenomenon, residing in the shared norms, expectations, behaviours, values and assumptions of group members
-  **Implicit** – people are effectively hardwired to recognise and respond to culture. It acts as a kind of silent language. The ability to sense and respond to culture is universal and is an evolutionary feature of humans, enabling social cohesion¹
-  **Pervasive** – culture exists at multiple levels in an organisation. It isn't necessarily written down – and what is written down may not reflect reality! Culture is manifest in the collective behaviours, physical environments, group rituals, symbols, stories and legends, unspoken assumptions, and mental models of how to interpret and respond to the world around us²
-  **Enduring** – culture directs group members' behaviour long term. People are drawn to organisations with similar characteristics to their own, and organisations are more likely to select people who "fit in". Over time, those who do not fit, either mould their behaviours to fit in with the group or tend to leave.

Why is Culture important – and even more so now?

So why focus on culture now? Peter Drucker famously said that "Culture eats strategy for breakfast." Culture is the tacit social order of an organisation. It shapes attitudes and behaviours.

Cultural norms define what behaviours are accepted, valued and encouraged as well as what behaviours are discouraged and rejected. When properly aligned with personal values, drivers and needs, culture can be a powerful force for good, unleashing positive energy and performance. Companies with healthy cultures provide 3x greater total returns to shareholders³. However, when culture is mismanaged, or is misaligned with personal values, it can result in unintentional – or even dysfunctional – outcomes.

When your team members are working from their homes in different locations, many of the artefacts (systems, symbols, unwritten rules) that have traditionally shaped an organisation's culture, are absent. If this is true for long serving employees, imagine the impact on new joiners. A growing number of employees have joined organisations during the pandemic and have never set foot in an office building or met with their colleagues face-to-face. All of these factors can result in a loss of culture.

How organisations support employees and reinforce culture will be key to their organisational success and competitive advantage going forwards.

1 Shalom Schwartz & EO Wilson 2 Edgar Schein 3 McKinsey and Company

How to build culture in a distributed workforce



Over the last year, we've had the privilege of working alongside some great employers, large and small, who are going the extra mile to nurture their culture, despite (or because of) remote working.

Here at Peachy Mondays, we assess culture through a range of instruments that focus on leadership, values and behaviours (both espoused behaviours and the reality of work day-to-day).

Here are the lessons we've learned ...

#1 Take a moment to re-assess the culture you aspire to, whilst honouring the past.

Appreciative enquiry can help you to understand what employees value about your culture - and should be protected - as well as identifying opportunities to evolve ways of working to reflect new hybrid models of work

#2 Be intentional about your culture.

Every organisation (and group) has a culture – and our advice would be not to leave that culture to chance, take ownership of it. Create new symbolism and rituals aligned to your employer brand. How do you want employees to experience work? What is the new dress code? Should your adopted collaboration tools be branded? Are daily huddles and check-ins a thing? How do we recognise success and celebrate special occasions? When – if ever – are face-to-face meetings important?

#3 Undertake employee listening regularly to assess culture.

Regular employee listening can help you to spot any misalignment between an organisation's aspired culture and values and the reality of the employee experience. Undertaking employee listening at different levels and strata of the organisation can pinpoint any areas of the business where culture is fractured.

#4 Build a strong induction.

Successfully onboarding new recruits into a virtual environment requires disciplined attention. What welcome can they expect from their manager and new

colleagues? How will they learn about your organisational culture, purpose and values? Would a peer buddy help them to settle in? Employee listening can help organisations to understand how satisfied recent recruits are with the onboarding they receive. What went well? What was missing? Anonymity will encourage more honest and constructive feedback from employees who may have concerns about voicing any dissatisfaction with their experience of work so early in their careers.

#5 Connect teams to purpose and values - and one another.

Help employees to find what really matters to them and find purpose in what they do. Whilst communication within teams has generally increased during the pandemic – many of us have been welcomed virtually into colleagues' homes, meeting family members and pets – communication across teams has declined. Finding ways to encourage collaboration and innovation (purposeful and serendipitous) across different groups will be a competitive advantage.

We're here to help you Listen better, Act faster, and Drive engagement & effectiveness. If you'd like to learn more about how Peachy Mondays can work with you to understand the culture you have and – crucially – develop the culture that you aspire to, **get in touch.**

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