

Javier Bajer

Can culture really have strategy for breakfast?

Yes, it can, but unfortunately it often does not. The reason most organisations struggle to change cultures is that their approach is superficial, only skimming the surface and producing no real change.

Why? There are three reasons why this happens:

1. *Lack of true understanding of human behaviour*: There is a widespread belief that people change because we tell them to. Or even worse, that they will change behaviours if we use the right sticks and carrots. Telling, measuring, punishing and rewarding behaviours are all based on psychological models that became popular in the industrial era. These models ignore the advances we have seen in recent years in the fields of Behavioural Economics, Neurosciences and Social Psychology.
2. *Fear of dealing with difficult decisions*: Sometimes changing culture can be uncomfortable. Stopping rituals, disarming power games and increasing transparency can cause turmoil in organisations. To avoid this, many will opt for cosmetic-type interventions making sure nothing really changes.
3. *Belief that people do not change*: Some believe that humans cannot and would not change. They describe people as belonging to neat categories and blame recruitment for their bad luck. Of course, these people will live in a very predictable world, where culture is just an afterthought.

In this issue of *Strategic HR Review*, we are sharing a few examples of colleagues who are changing the cultures of their organisations. It is my hope that they inspire you in a variety of ways:

- In *Creating a Growth Mindset*, Ian Johnston examines how HR professionals can take ownership of their organizations' cultural space and help to instill a "growth mindset" open to change.
- In *Listening to Drive Culture Change*, Philipp Schramm shows how his company turned around its fractured culture by igniting a cultural revolution fueled by listening and employee engagement.
- In *Culture: A Key Ingredient in Business Success*, Kevin Silva explains how his company leveraged a culture change initiative to support a major organizational spinoff and re-branding.
- And in *Unlocking the Value of HR to Drive a Change-Ready Culture*, Campbell Macpherson presents lessons learned while transforming his "fragmented, ineffective" HR department through an organization-wide culture change program.

Culture Change is a serious matter for business and we should continue to develop the necessary skills within HR to be able to drive true organisational values through people.

Whatever Culture you end up with, it will still have Strategy for Breakfast. Beware, box-ticking interventions might leave you hungry for change and even cause some organisational indigestion.

Enjoy the reading,

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