

Building a Culture for Innovation / Whitepaper



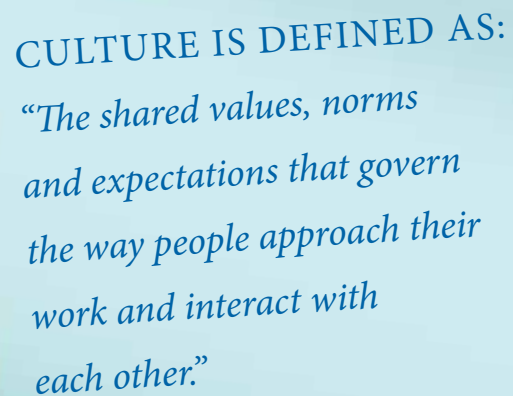
Changing the World –
One Organisation at a Time™

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“Culture eats strategy for breakfast!”

Peter Drucker

In this famous line, Drucker is obviously not downplaying the importance of strategy. What he is saying however, is that regardless of what the organisation’s strategy is, it can only be successfully executed if the organisation’s culture supports the execution of that strategy.



CULTURE IS DEFINED AS:
“The shared values, norms and expectations that govern the way people approach their work and interact with each other.”

What is Culture?

There are several parts of this definition – each highlighting an important aspect of organisational culture:

Values

Values dictate what is important in any group. What has ‘value’ gets done. Whilst most organisations have a set of stated values, these are often not reflected in what is really ‘valued’ in the organisation.

Norms

Norms are the written and unwritten rules about how people should behave. Every group has norms – at the societal level, at the family level, at the organisational level and at the team level.

Expectations

Expectations reflect what messages people get about how they should behave. From these messages they make conclusions about how they should behave from observing how their managers behave and seeing what gets rewarded and punished.

Governs

These values, norms and expectations do not lead to a conscious choice that people make. They ‘govern’ the way people behave – exercising a guiding and restricting influence over how people should behave. Often individuals will not want to behave that way, but the culture dictates that they must, so they feel that they have no choice.

Approach their work

How people go about solving problems, making decisions, achieving goals, responding to deadlines, processing ideas and information, meeting compliance, safety and quality requirements etc.

Interact with each other

For example when people need to work in teams, build relationships, work cross-functionally, share ideas and information, lead, follow and communicate etc.

Innovation and Organisational Culture

Innovation is an idea – culture turns ideas into reality.

All too often we talk about innovation as something that needs to be 'done'. "We need to be more innovative" is a common catchcry in today's fast paced environment. But the risk with this approach is that we don't recognise that innovation is an outcome. Innovation is the result of doing certain things right.

So rather than saying "we need to be more innovative" we really should be saying "we need to be better at....., so we can be more innovative".

For organisations, innovation is about being responsive to change, proactively anticipating change and adapting to changes in the external environment. Be it new technology, changing customer needs, new product creation and delivery processes, or new opportunities, innovation is about better solutions for existing and new needs.

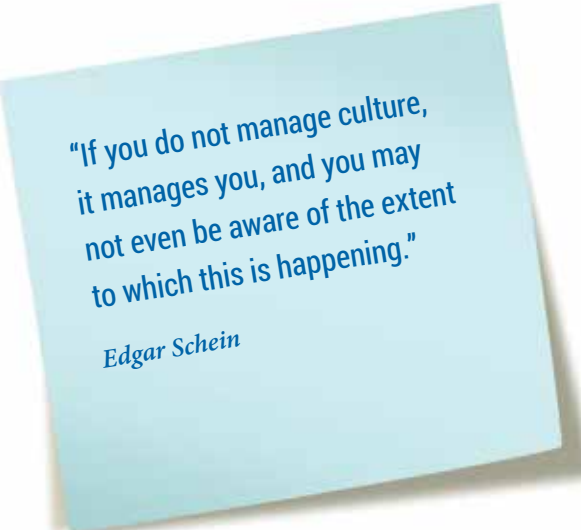
Organisations don't innovate – people in organisations innovate.

For that to happen, people need to be able to do certain things – they need to be able to contribute ideas, they need to be on top of what's happening, they need to be talking with people in other parts of the organisation to avoid repetition and increase coordination, they need to feed off and build on each other's ideas, they need to be committed to the advancement of the organisation and they need to feel they have a stake in the business.

In other words they need to be working within a culture that encourages and supports people being able to do this.

Your culture either works for you or against you. Your culture either enables people or limits people. It either encourages people to think about the organisation or think about themselves. It either encourages people to strive for excellence or it encourages people to play it safe and keep out of trouble.

Your organisation's culture either promotes innovation or limits innovation.



**"If you do not manage culture,
it manages you, and you may
not even be aware of the extent
to which this is happening."**

Edgar Schein



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How Culture Limits Innovation

A real life example of how an inhibiting culture plays itself out.

In an effort to ensure quality and consistency of output, over time, management make a number of decisions, both consciously and unconsciously, to structure the organisation in a way that centralises much of the influence and authority into specialist groups and head office, away from remote locations and lower level employees.

Management also implement technologies that streamline operations and over the years, jobs are defined more and more narrowly, allowing for specialisation, standardisation and compartmentalisation, further ensuring control of output through processes and procedures.

Human resources practices are then built around adherence to these procedures. People are rewarded for 'doing their job well' and mistakes are highlighted as examples of not adhering to the proper procedure. Managers and leaders are encouraged to ensure that their people follow the procedures and in many respects the main role of the manager is a 'controller' rather than a 'facilitator'.

So over time . . .

The centralised structure ultimately leads to reduced involvement and commitment from lower levels (often front line) employees who work away from the centre.

The move towards specialisation leads to disconnected units throughout the organisation with a focus on business unit rather than 'whole of organisation' performance and metrics, leading to silos and lack of communication across the organisation.

Whilst the technologies create efficiency of operation and implementation, they also 'dumb down' jobs in ways that people are encouraged to simply follow the process rather than use their initiative. Over time the procedures become almost biblical in their reverence and meaning and effort is expended in making sure that the employees 'follow the procedures'.

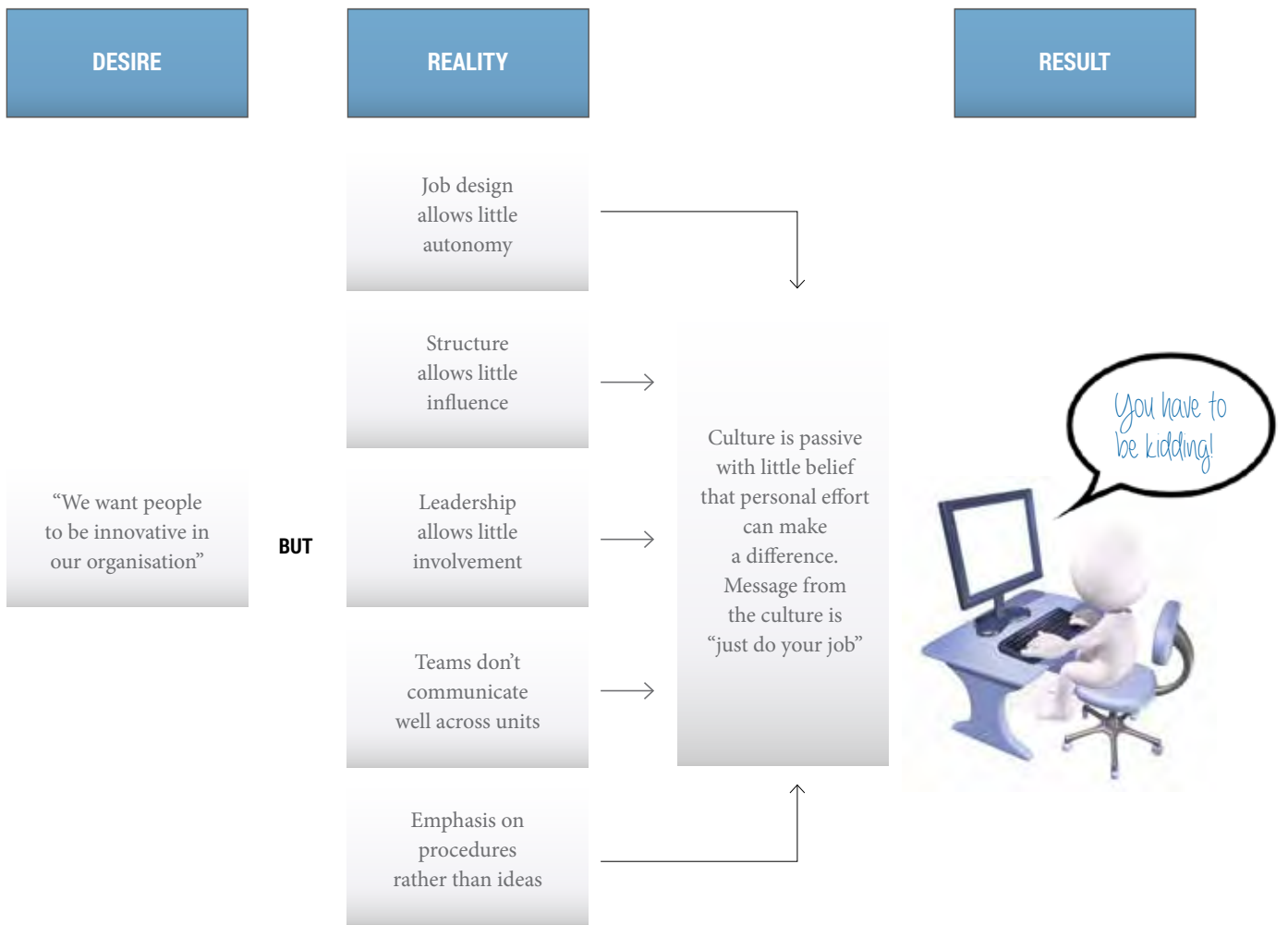
Such emphasis on process and systems leads managers to primarily focus on managing the task, not the people. And HR practices such as the annual performance review becomes the only real opportunity for managers to discuss performance with their people. However, this is only done once a year.

The result is . . .

A culture that reinforces simply 'doing your job', 'keeping your boss happy', 'following orders even if you think they're wrong', 'following the rules', 'seeking approval before acting', 'avoiding blame', 'not rocking the boat', 'treating rules as more important than ideas', 'pushing decision upwards', 'never make a mistake'.

And then . . .

Management complains that people lack accountability, lack initiative and won't take responsibility!



Based on the How Culture Works Model from Robert A Cooke, Ph.D., and Janet L. Szumal, Ph.D., Organizational Culture Inventory® Organizational Effectiveness Inventory™ (OCI)(OEI) Feedback report, Human Synergistics International, Plymouth MI. Copyright © 1987– 2015

Organisational requirements for innovation to happen

A review of the literature on innovation shows remarkable consistency in opinion, observations and research. For an organisation to be innovative it must have all of the following variables in place:

1. Organisational culture	A culture that makes innovation able to happen.
2. Mission & vision	A sense of meaning and importance to what people do.
3. Organisational structure	Structures that allow people to have influence and involvement.
4. Human resources practices	Selection and training that supports flexibility and ambiguity.
5. Reinforcement systems	Reward for 'risk taking' and how the organisation handles mistakes.
6. Job design	Autonomy, variety and identity at the individual job level.
7. Communication	Effective communication up and down the organisation in order to facilitate learning.
8. Leadership	Leadership that increases the sense of power in people.
9. Teamwork	Collective effort.
10. Cross-functional coordination	Coordinating what's happening in different parts of the organisation.
11. Motivation	Committed people, willingness to try.
12. Satisfaction	Emotional attachment with the organisation.

As Opposed to . . .

Organisational requirements for innovation **NOT** to happen

A review of the literature on innovation shows remarkable consistency in opinion, observations and research. For an organisation to be innovative it must have all of the following variables in place:

1. Organisational culture	A culture that reinforces the status quo.
2. Mission & vision	Staff are disconnected from the mission, values are seen as 'not real'.
3. Organisational structure	Structures that create hierarchical and centralised influence.
4. Human resources practices	Selection and training that is subjective and not transparent.
5. Reinforcement systems	Little reward for effort, but mistakes are punished.
6. Job design	Specialisation, standardisation and compartmentalisation in jobs.
7. Communication	Communication is filtered and is largely about facts and figures, not learnings.
8. Leadership	Leadership that is designed to control people.
9. Teamwork	Silos.
10. Cross-functional coordination	Internal competition and contesting for resources.
11. Motivation	Boring unchallenging, unfulfilling jobs.
12. Satisfaction	Disengaged.

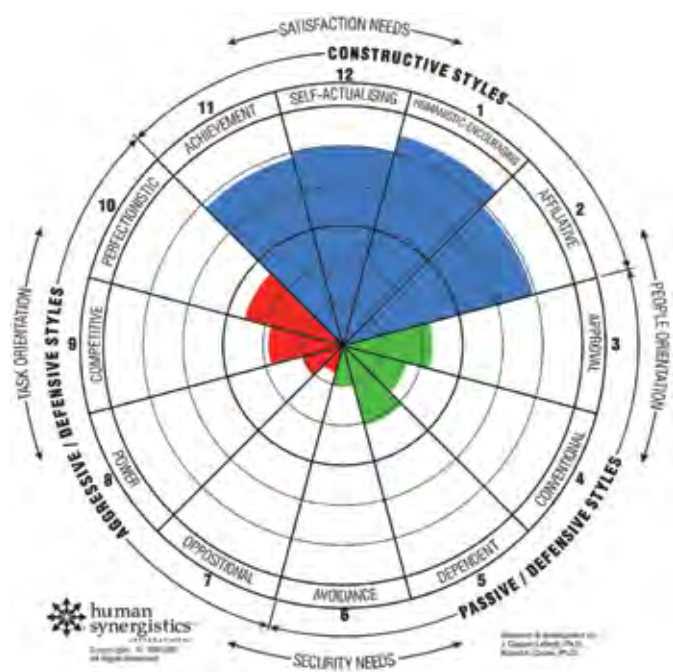
What a culture that enables innovation looks like

Actual organisational culture profile of an Australian company recognised for its innovative approach.

An organisational culture that enables innovation builds behavioural norms and expectations of its members to behave in Constructive ways:

- Set challenging goals and develop plans to meet these goals. Strive for excellence and explore alternatives before acting. Think in terms of cause and effect and take on challenging tasks and use good problem solving skills. *This is plotted at 11 in the circumplex – Achievement.*
- Value creativity and quality over quantity. Learn and grow and take on new and interesting tasks. Enjoy your work. Do even simple tasks well and put your unique stamp on the job. *This is plotted at 12 in the circumplex – Self-Actualizing.*
- Be supportive of others, encourage others to learn and grow. Help others think for themselves. Be open to the influence of others and resolve conflicts constructively. *This is plotted at 1 in the circumplex – Humanistic-Encouraging.*
- Build strong relationships. Be friendly, approachable and open with others. Show concern for people, cooperate with others and treat people as more important than things. Think about the team's needs. *This is plotted at 2 in the circumplex – Affiliative.*

Along with these Constructive behavioural norms, there are minimum requirements to behave in ways that reflect either the Passive/Defensive or Aggressive/Defensive behavioural norms.



Human Synergetics Circumplex by Robert A. Cooke, Ph.D., and J. Clayton Lafferty, Ph. D.

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What a culture that inhibits innovation looks like

Actual organisational culture profile of an Australian company struggling to keep itself relevant.

An organisational culture that inhibits innovation builds behavioural norms and expectations of its members to behave in Passive/Defensive and or Aggressive/Defensive ways:

Passive/Defensive:

- Avoid conflict and keep relationships superficially pleasant. Be liked by others and gain approval before acting. *This is plotted at 3 in the circumplex* – **Approval.**
- Follow rules, conform and don't 'rock the boat'. Make a good impression and always follow policies and procedures. *This is plotted at 4 in the circumplex* – **Conventional.**
- Clear all decisions with superiors, please those in positions of authority and ask everyone what they think before acting. *This is plotted at 5 in the circumplex* – **Dependent.**
- Avoid blame and shift responsibilities to others. Push decision upwards, take few chances and lay low when things get tough. *This is plotted at 6 in the circumplex* – **Avoidance.**

Aggressive/Defensive:

- Gain influence by being critical and oppose the ideas of others. Find fault and focus on why ideas won't work. *This is plotted at 7 in the circumplex* – **Oppositional.**
- Take charge and be controlling (managers). Act forceful and tough and play politics to gain influence. *This is plotted at 8 in the circumplex* – **Power.**
- Compete rather than cooperate. Turn the job into a contest and out-perform your peers. *This is plotted at 9 in the circumplex* – **Competitive.**
- Avoid all mistakes and work long hard hours to pursue narrowly defined objectives and do things perfectly. *This is plotted at 10 in the circumplex* – **Perfectionistic.**

Along with these Constructive behavioural norms, there are minimum requirements to behave in ways that reflect either the Passive/Defensive or Aggressive/Defensive behavioural norms.



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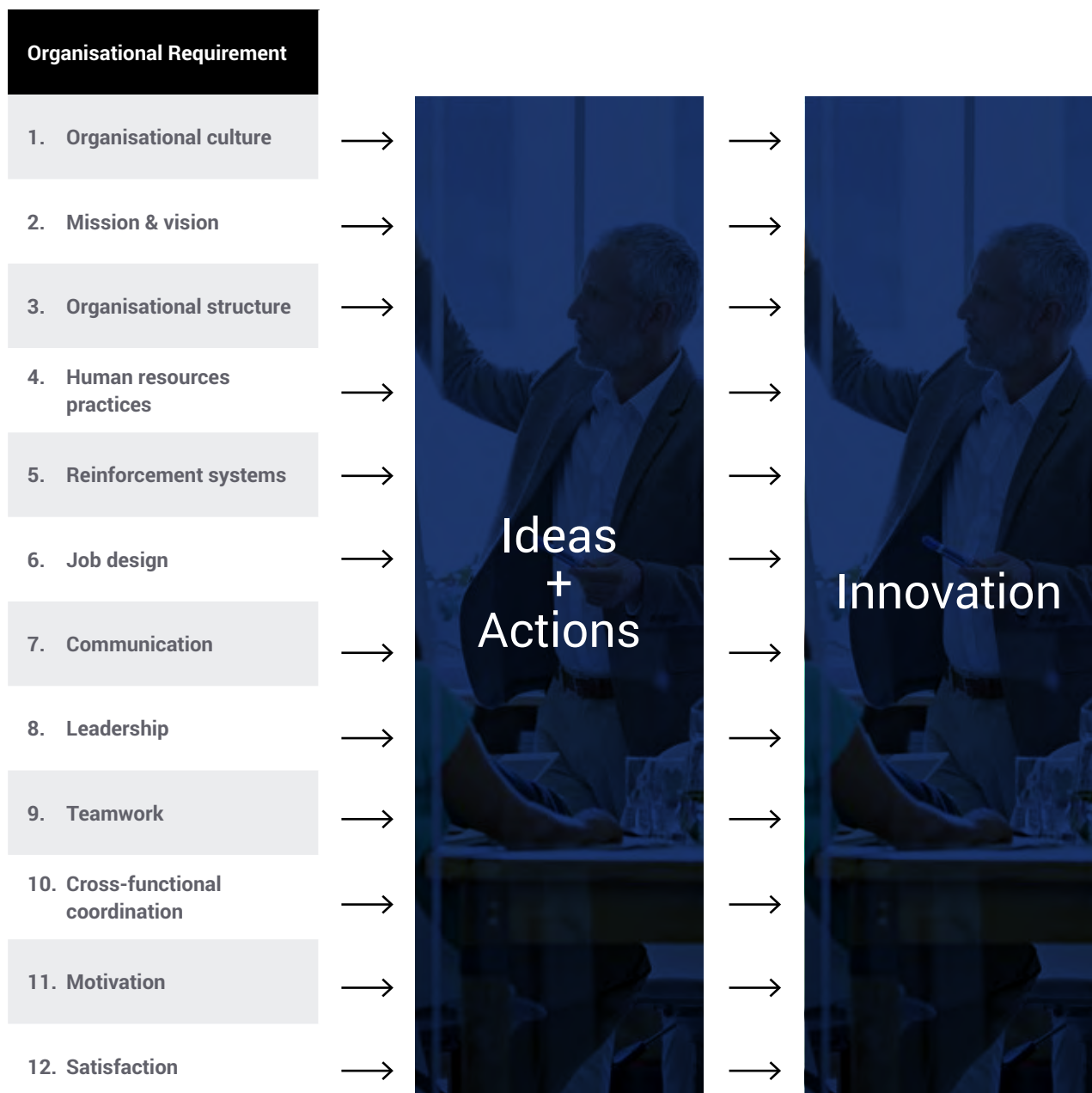
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A framework for understanding culture and innovation

As highlighted earlier, innovation needs to be seen as an outcome. Innovation is not something that we do – it is a question of whether or not innovation is something the organisation is **capable** of doing.

Cause \longrightarrow Effect



Seeing this in terms of cause and effect is vital to building this capability in you organisation.

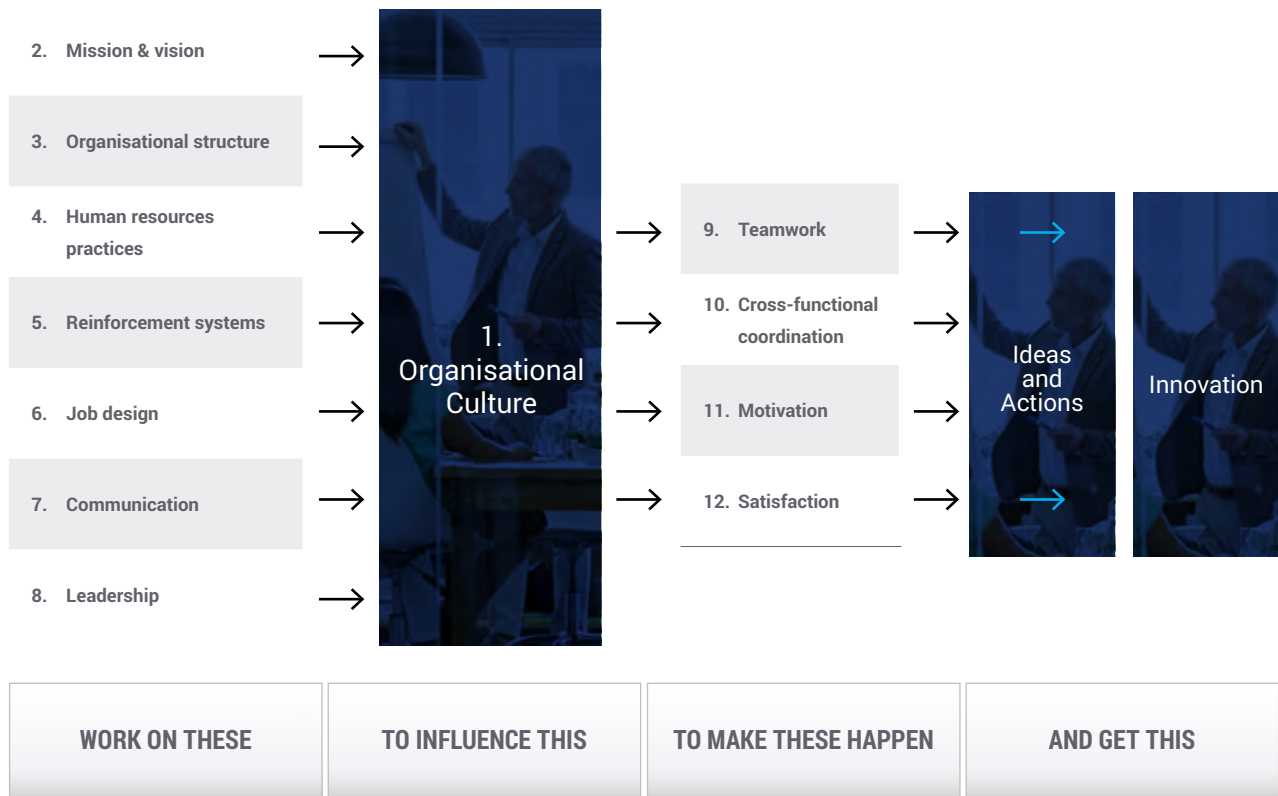
We can then restructure this even further in terms of cause and effect so we focus on what research shows to really make a difference.

20 years of research into organisational culture led Dr Robert A. Cooke to develop his 'How Culture Works' Model. This model identifies the organisational variables that cause culture and in turn what the outcomes of culture are. So we can now restructure the model above on the basis of:

Causal Factors – Organisational Culture – Outcomes of Culture

How we do things around here	What's expected around here	How we're doing here	Impact of how we're doing
Causal factors	Operating Culture	Outcomes of Culture	Innovative Behaviour

Cause → Effect



Through structuring our thinking with this mode, we now know that we need to focus on 7 key factors to build a culture that results in teamwork etc and enable the organisation to be innovative.

How to build a culture for innovation

Build shared meaning - mission and vision

For people to be interested enough in the future of the organisation to seek and find new solutions for old and new opportunities, they need to feel that what they do is important. People need to feel that their effort is making a difference. They need to feel that what they do is worthwhile.

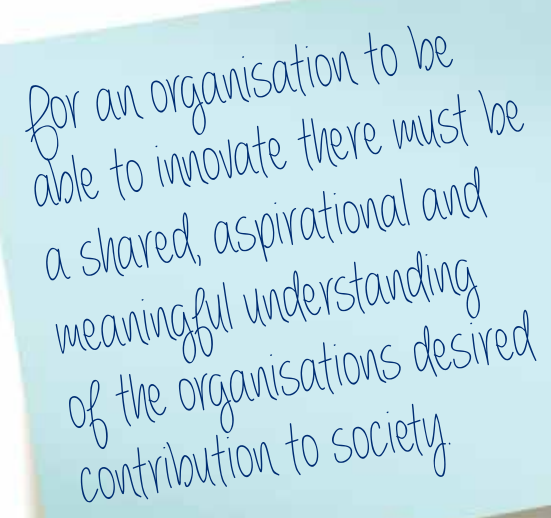
Clearly articulating the organisation's mission, vision, philosophy and/or values gives the organisation a unique opportunity to communicate to its members what the organisation sees as being important, what its priorities are, what role it plays in the wider society and what its contribution is.

This means much more than a slick advertising type slogan – it has to have genuine meaning – it has to resonate with the people – it has to capture the very essence of the organisation's reason for existence.

What's more it then has to be translated into action – the decisions made by the organisation need to be aligned with these statements. People are very quick to detect lack of authenticity when they see it. Having articulated the organisation's meaning, purpose, what its values are and its contribution to society, senior executives must now use these as guidelines for decision making.

Articulation of mission is measured in the Human Synergistics Organisational Effectiveness Inventory™. Data from an analysis of 740 Australian/New Zealand organisations, selected from the local database show:

- Overall 65% of our local organisations score below the global average
- Only 9% score above the global high performing benchmark
- Organisations that do this well, have constructive cultures that lead to:
 - 28% better teamwork
 - 81% better cross functional coordination
 - Staff are 60% more motivated
 - They are 28% more satisfied, and
 - The organisation is rated as being 55% more adaptable to changes in its external environment (innovation)



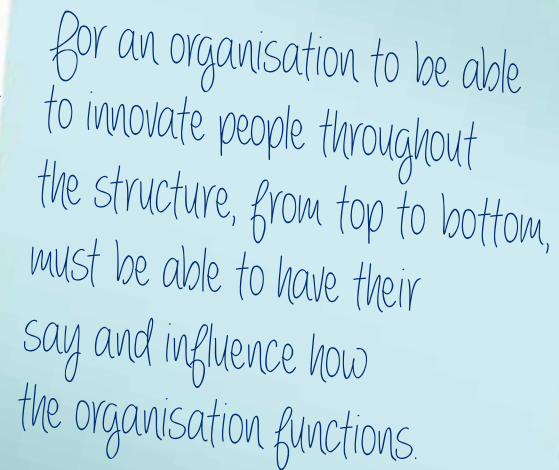
For an organisation to be able to innovate there must be a shared, aspirational and meaningful understanding of the organisation's desired contribution to society.

Allow people to get involved - organisational structure

The formal lines of the organisational 'wire diagram' are less important than how the structure actually operates. The structure represents the division of functions and roles. What we are more concerned with is how these functions and roles interrelate and coordinate to create a whole and how the structure facilitates or inhibits opportunities for people to influence what happens and the extent to which they are involved in helping the organisation improve the way it operates.

It is much more complex than the centralisation versus decentralisation debate. Some functions clearly need to be centralised, but centralisation need not lead to lack of involvement and influence away from the centralised core. Whilst some decision making may be centralised that does not mean that staff members outside of the centralised function cannot be given the opportunity to provide input to the decision making process.

Innovation is based on ideas. Ideas are created by people. For ideas to flourish, people need to believe that they can challenge the status quo and that their voices will be listened to. They have to see that they have permission to step back from day-to-day operations and take time to think about the organisation and ways of improving it.



For an organisation to be able to innovate people throughout the structure, from top to bottom, must be able to have their say and influence how the organisation functions.

The level of influence and involvement allowed by the structure is measured in the Human Synergistics Organisational Effectiveness Inventory™. Data from an analysis of 740 Australian/New Zealand organisations, selected from the local database show:

- Overall 61% of our local organisations score below the global average
- Only 9% score above the global high performing benchmark
- Organisations that do this well, have constructive cultures that lead to:
 - 26% better teamwork
 - 93% better cross-functional coordination
 - Staff are 69% more motivated
 - They are 37% more satisfied, and
 - The organisation is rated as being 57% more adaptable to changes in its external environment (innovation)

Turn the shared meaning into everyday reality - human resources practices

Human resource systems such as selection and placement, training and development and performance appraisal, send signals to organisational members about what is important, what behaviour gets rewarded and what people need to do to be 'successful' in the organisation.

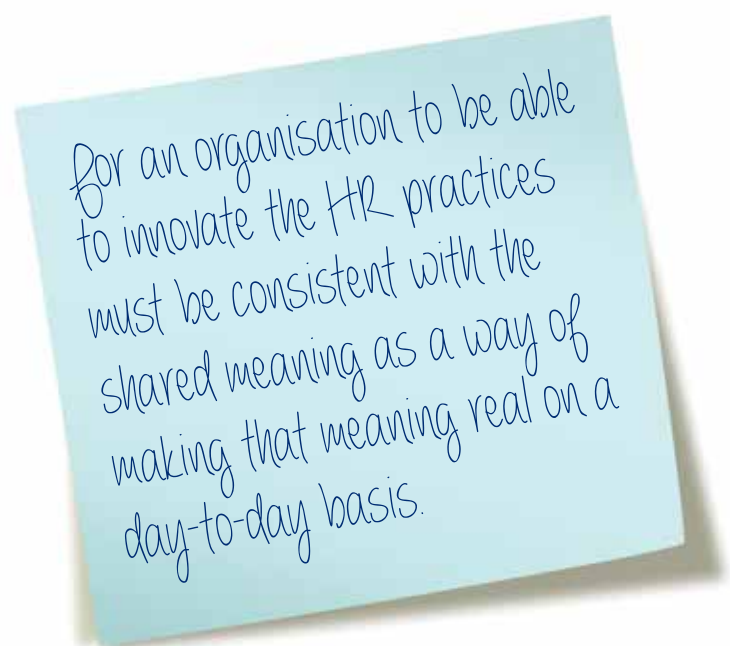
Organisational members make judgements about 'how to get ahead' in the organisation, from how people get appointed, how people get promoted and how people get onto training programs.

The degree to which people are treated fairly and equitably is also an important precursor for innovation. Flexibility, adaptability and a lack of pre-conceived judgement (gender, ethnicity, age etc) create a sense of openness to new experiences around the organisation. Flexibility in employment practices breeds flexibility in thinking. Flexibility in thinking breeds innovation.

Whatever forms the basis of the performance appraisal process identifies what is really important to the organisation. Whilst the old adage "what gets measured, gets managed" may be true, it's also a case of "what gets measured must be what's important". Organisations need to be careful to ensure that what gets measured is reflective of its mission, vision and values, otherwise people conclude that this is a meaningless rhetoric. If people are measured and appraised on numbers that do not reflect these broader goals, they get a clear message that these numbers are actually what's important, not the espoused mission, vision and values.

The effectiveness of HR practices is measured in the Human Synergistics Organisational Effectiveness Inventory™. Data from an analysis of 740 Australian/New Zealand organisations, selected from the local database show:

- Overall 53% of our local organisations score below the global average
- Only 9% score above the global high performing benchmark
- Organisations that do this well, have constructive cultures that lead to:
 - 25% better teamwork
 - 98% better cross-functional coordination
 - Staff are 75% more motivated
 - They are 38% more satisfied, and
 - The organisation is rated as being 63% more adaptable to changes in its external environment (innovation)



For an organisation to be able to innovate the HR practices must be consistent with the shared meaning as a way of making that meaning real on a day-to-day basis.

Reward the behaviours you want - reinforcement systems

Everyone knows the basic tenet of psychology – behaviour that gets rewarded gets repeated. But surprisingly very few managers are good at praising good performance!

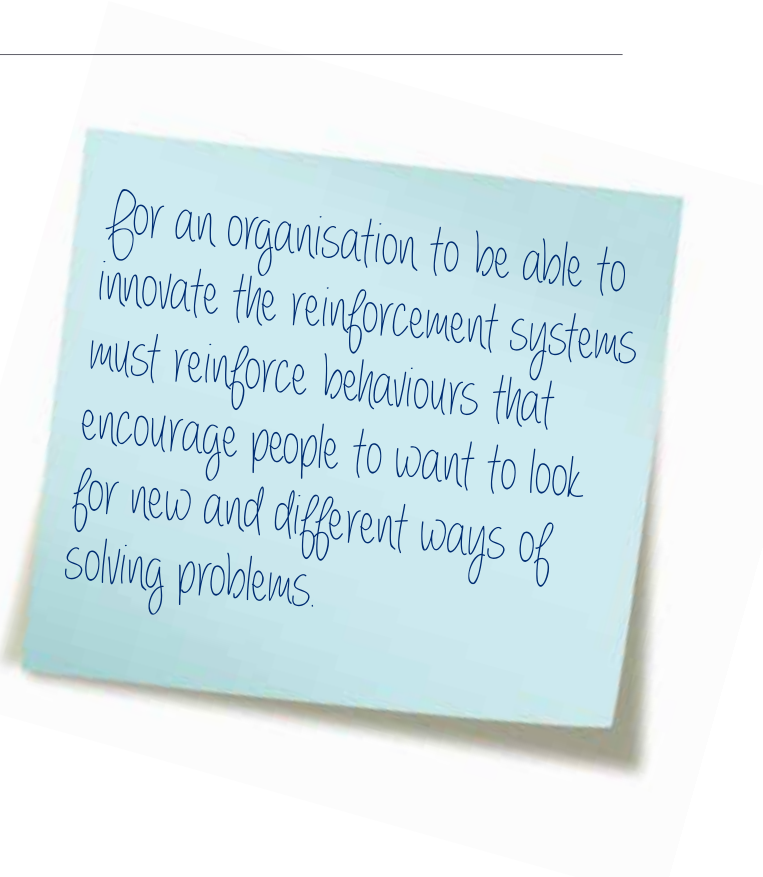
But most are very quick to criticise mistakes.

The relationship between reward and punishment is a complex one. Reward good performance and you will get motivation to strive. Ignore good performance and you will get motivation to do nothing. Punish mistakes and you will get motivation to avoid blame.

Avoidance of blame is far too prevalent in too many of our organisations. When organisations fail to recognise good performance but are quick to point out mistakes, the result is general passivity in the culture with people thinking more about avoiding blame than striving to excel. It's not about ignoring mistakes, it's about how the circumstance of the mistake are dealt with. Is the focus on blame or improvement? Are people given help to improve their performance?

And keep in mind that the word 'reward' probably doesn't mean money. Again, everyone knows that intrinsic rewards are more satisfying than extrinsic rewards, so why do organisations rely so much on extrinsic rewards? Assuming certain economic needs are being met, intrinsic reward, such as the sense of a job done well is much more motivating.

Management by excellence (a focus on what is done well) is much more effective than management by exception (a focus on what needs to improve).



For an organisation to be able to innovate the reinforcement systems must reinforce behaviours that encourage people to want to look for new and different ways of solving problems.

The effectiveness of reinforcement system is measured in the Human Synergistics Organisational Effectiveness Inventory™. Data from an analysis of 740 Australian/ New Zealand organisations, selected from the local database show:

- Overall 63% of our local organisations score below the global average
- Only 8% score above the global high performing benchmark
- Organisations that do this well, have constructive cultures that lead to:
 - 26% better teamwork
 - 76% better cross-functional coordination
 - Staff are 70% more motivated
 - They are 34% more satisfied, and
 - The organisation is rated as being 46% more adaptable to changes in its external environment (innovation)

Give people lots of autonomy in their jobs - job design

The motivational potential of any job can be determined by the level of:

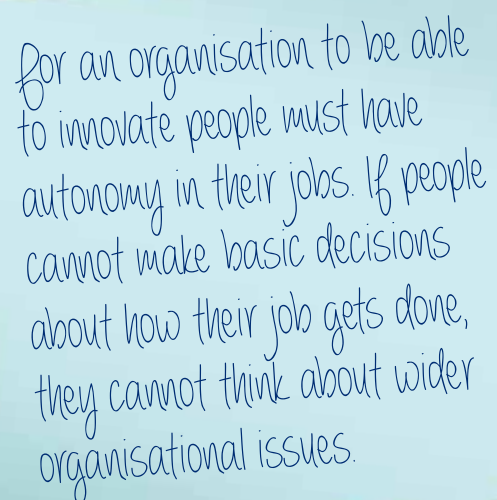
- **Autonomy** – the extent to which the job holder has discretion over how to go about certain aspects of his/her job.
- **Variety** – the extent to which the job holder has the opportunity to use a wide range of skills and abilities.
- **Identity** – the extent to which the job holder carries out a clearly identifiable (beginning to end) task.
- **Significance** – the extent to which the job holder views his/her job as having an important impact on other people.
- **Feedback** – the extent to which the job holder gets feedback about performance simply by doing the job.

The more these are present, the higher the potential for motivation. If they are not present to a reasonable level, people are just not intrinsically motivated by their jobs.

More importantly, if these are low, then the message people receive from this is that they are not required to think, they are not required to put their unique stamp on the job, and instead they are simply expected to 'just do the job'. Expecting people to be innovative when they can't even make basic decisions about how their job gets done is a classic example of rhetoric crashing up against reality.

The level of autonomy, variety, identity, significance and feedback is measured in the Human Synergetics Organisational Effectiveness Inventory™. Data from an analysis of 740 Australian/New Zealand organisations, selected from the local database show:

- Overall 74% of our local organisations score below the global average
- Only 9% score above the global high performing benchmark
- Organisations that do this well, have constructive cultures that lead to:
 - 27% better teamwork
 - 41% better cross-functional coordination
 - Staff are 54% more motivated
 - They are 28% more satisfied, and
 - The organisation is rated as being 28% more adaptable to changes in its external environment (innovation)



For an organisation to be able to innovate people must have autonomy in their jobs. If people cannot make basic decisions about how their job gets done, they cannot think about wider organisational issues.

Communicate in ways that promote learning – Communication

What management communicates and how it communicates are significant influencers of organisational culture. Both send signals to organisational members about what is important and what people should be interested in.

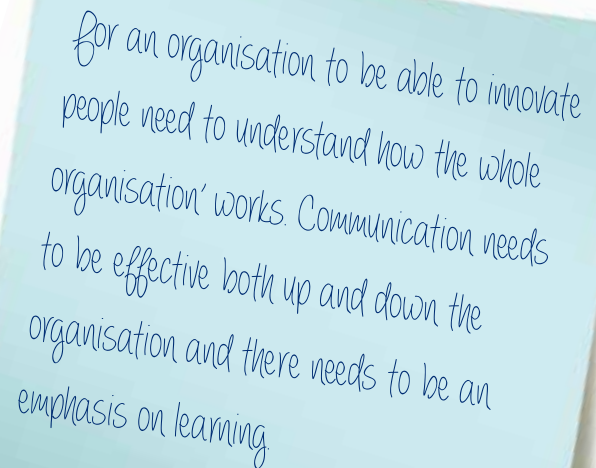
But it's not just about management communicating – communication is also about how the organisation handles the opinions and ideas of those inside the organisation.

To build a culture that creates innovation, people need to know what is happening in the broader organisation, not just their business unit, as this widens their perspective beyond their day-to-day jobs. It also needs to emphasise interdependencies and how the organisation functions as a whole. Communication that is only about their part of the organisation limits the ability to innovate.

Communication downwards needs to be timely, complete, credible, consistent and not superficial. It needs to promote the big picture and in itself promote discussion, not just communicating decisions and facts and figures.

Communicating upwards needs to be not censored, what needs to be said (as opposed to what people think management want to hear) and be accepted, understood and acted upon.

There also needs to be an emphasis on communication as a learning tool – learning from mistakes, learning from opportunities and learning from unique examples of desired behaviours (eg customer service).



For an organisation to be able to innovate people need to understand how the whole organisation works. Communication needs to be effective both up and down the organisation and there needs to be an emphasis on learning.

The effectiveness of the organisations communication processes is measured in the Human Synergistics Organisational Effectiveness Inventory™. Data from an analysis of 740 Australian/New Zealand organisations, selected from the local database show:

- Overall 5% of our local organisations score below the global average
- Only 11% score above the global high performing benchmark
- Organisations that do this well, have constructive cultures that lead to:
 - 24% better teamwork
 - 86% better cross-functional coordination
 - Staff are 64% more motivated
 - They are 32% more satisfied, and
 - The organisation is rated as being 54% more adaptable to changes in its external environment (innovation)

Give people great leaders and managers at all levels – leadership

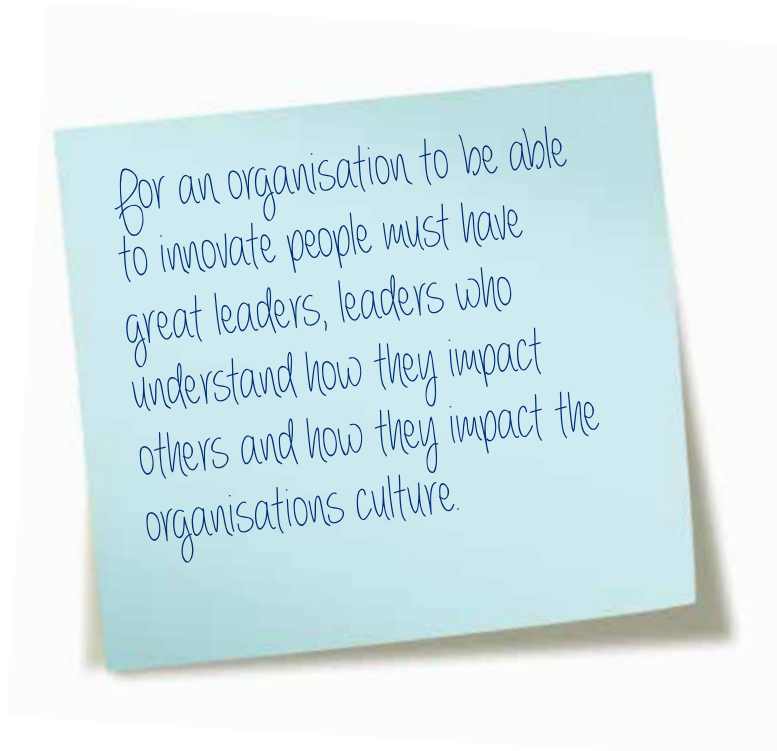
Leaders have both a direct and indirect impact on organisational culture.

Their direct impact comes through their own personal styles, the choices they make about approaches to leadership and management and how they apply the various skills of managing and leading.

Their indirect impact comes through the decisions they make about structure, systems, application of the organisations HR systems, goal setting systems, job design and how to use communication as a tool for development.

Leaders at all levels contribute to the development of the organisations culture. We are all clear on the importance of top level leadership, but many organisations fail to invest in their front line leaders. These are the individuals who build the culture at the front line – often where most of the people in the organisation work and often where the information most relevant for new opportunities in the marketplace occur.

Our experience has been that all too often the front line leader is consumed by managing task related activities with little time left to manage the people related issues. They are often promoted into these jobs as they are the best at doing the jobs, and then it's only natural to seek comfort in the 'doing' rather than the 'managing'.



The effectiveness of the organisations leadership is measured in the Human Synergistics Organisational Effectiveness Inventory™. Data from an analysis of 740 Australian/New Zealand organisations, selected from the local database show:

- Overall 73% of our local organisations score below the global average
- Only 8% score above the global high performing benchmark
- Organisations that do this well, have constructive cultures that lead to:
 - 27% better teamwork
 - 68% better cross-functional coordination
 - Staff are 76% more motivated
 - They are 35% more satisfied, and
 - The organisation is rated as being 45% more adaptable to changes in its external environment (innovation)

If you do these well you will get the outcomes essential for innovation

Teamwork

For an organisation to be innovative people must work well in teams. Teams need to work well together to solve problems, identify issues, building on each other's ideas in a way that allows creativity and diverse opinions to flourish.

This can only happen in a culture that encourages such constructive behaviour. Such a culture is developed through the causal factors presented in this paper.

Cross-functional coordination

For an organisation to be innovative the left hand must know what the right hand is doing. In organisational terms, this means effective cooperation and coordination across departments and units throughout the organisation.

This too can only happen in a culture that encourages such constructive behaviour. Such a culture is developed through the causal factors presented in this paper.

Motivation

For an organisation to be innovative people must be motivated to want the organisation to perform at a high level. People need to be inspired to do better, they need to feel that they have a personal stake in the future of the business.

This also can only happen in a culture that encourages such constructive behaviour. Such a culture is developed through the causal factors presented in this paper.

Satisfaction

For an organisation to be innovative people must be satisfied with their job, like working in the organisation and feel emotionally engaged with the organisation. For them to want the organisation to succeed, they have to want to be in the organisation and they need to want to stay with the organisation.

Once again, satisfaction can only happen in a culture that encourages such constructive behaviour. Such a culture is developed through the causal factors presented in this paper.

From the same data on 740 Australian/New Zealand organisations, referenced in each of the earlier pages on the causal factors, those organisations that used mission, structure, systems, job design, communication and leadership effectively, had significantly more constructive cultures and on average scored:

- 29% better **teamwork**
- 88% better **cross-functional coordination**
- Staff are 76% more **motivated**
- They are 39% more **satisfied**, and
- The organisation is rated as being 59% more **adaptable** to changes in its external environment (innovation)

Tools to help you

Human Synergistics aim to make the intangible tangible. To take concepts such as organisational culture and make them visible, tangible and real. Our survey measurement and feedback tools are designed to help you:

Identify your ideal culture

What behaviours will help your organisation achieve its goals and excel at what you do?

Identify your current culture

What behaviours are currently being reinforced and how do people believe they are expected to behave? Is it helping or hindering?

Identify what causes your current culture

How effective are your current organisational practices and how do they impact your culture?

The impact your culture has on individuals, groups and your organisation

What impact is your current culture having on your organisations ability to achieve excellence?

A research based process of change management – scientifically proven steps in the change process – applying knowledge expertise and support for senior leadership and change agents





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