



Developing an enabling organisational culture

“Oh no – don't talk to me about culture change programmes. They don't work. Anyway, it all sounds like another of those psycho-babble topics that are beloved of academics, but that are of little significance to real-world business people.” This is a common and understandable reaction. We agree - culture change programmes don't work, but we do believe that organisational culture is important, and this is why.

Organisational culture is critically important because it is organisational culture that drives behaviour; and it is behaviour of one kind or another that is the only thing that drives performance. Thus, if high performance is the aim, then an enabling organisational culture becomes vital.

So, if we don't offer culture change programmes, what do we do, and why is it different?

Firstly - the challenge ...

Part of the problem is the lack of a generally agreed definition of what is meant by organisational culture. Terms such as values and beliefs; behavioural norms; and organisational styles are bandied about with little clarity or explanation of why they are used and why they are important.

Another is that it is not possible to define the actual culture of an organisation – at least not objectively. How is it possible to measure a 'value'? Or a 'belief' for that matter?

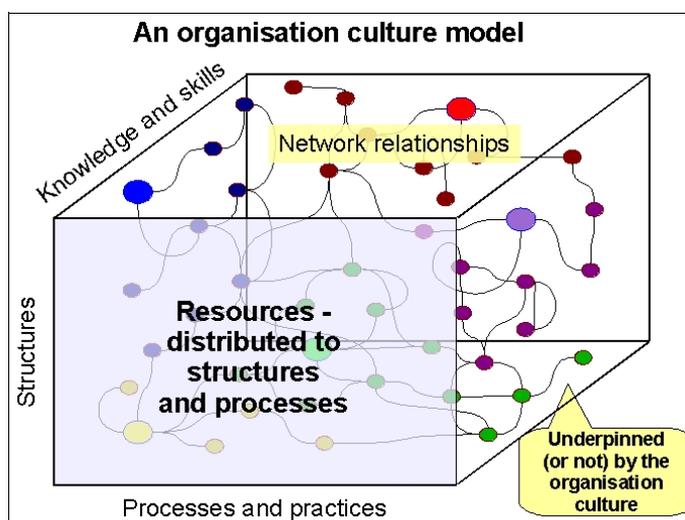
Moreover, research tells us that organisational culture cannot actually be designed and installed – it can only be discovered. This is because organisation cultures are very complex, (illustrated above), and they are the product of a highly complex, interconnected series of inputs. Hence they are beyond the reach of simple 'design and communicate' (exhortation) exercises to change them.

The complexity arises from the sources of organisational culture – that tell employees what is permissible and what is prohibited behaviour – that complex series of inputs. They include:

- Stories that are told about past events, peoples' actions and the consequences of them
- The decisions and actions of individual managers
- Symbolic messages contained in the designs of organisational structures and processes
- The design and content of artefacts around the place of work, including the workplace itself
- Marketing and other PR messages emanating from management

The track record of trying to change behaviour by shouting at people – popularly known as 'management by exhortation' or 'obsessive communications' - is dismal. Management exhortations are often simplistic and occasional events at best. They are mostly contradicted by the complex myriad of other messages coming from the work environment, thousands of times every day, and are drowned out in the cacophony of background noise. They scarcely get attention, and only rarely a positive, action-oriented response.

The only approach that makes sense, therefore, is to identify the sources of the messages that are the drivers of the organisational culture, and then change those that are producing an undesirable result.



A new solution

If you would like to have an organisation with the sort of characteristics depicted in the diagram to the right, Magus Networker is for you. Magus Networker enables you to engage with the people who are both the receivers of messages that create the organisational culture, and who are also sources of similar messages. The information generated enables them to focus on the drivers of organisational culture, and take actions that change them – to develop an enabling culture.

Magus Networker is part of a complete methodology for resolving organisational problems and for developing greater performance. It handles complex data sets with

ease, providing powerful insights into the nature of the problem, and its causes. It does this through graphical reports presented as network charts, that illuminate all the complex relationships, formal and informal, that actually drive organisational performance. The Magus Networker process enables many people to be engaged, through open dialogue, with their attention focused on the issues, causes and actions illuminated through the network charts.

Conventionally, Magus Networker is custom-configured by the user for each problem resolution / organisational development application. Now the developers of Magus Networker have designed an application specifically targeting the issue of organisational culture. This is in the form of a template that can, however, still be adapted to the specific needs of each organisation. The Magus Networker process includes front-end analysis to enable this adaptation, and the design of the sample to be used.

The design of the 'culture change' application uses extensive research into the sources of the messages that define organisational culture, that both support and limit the development of an enabling organisational culture. The question set reflects this research, and enable respondents to track down the sources of the existing culture, and identify actions to strengthen positive messages and modify negative.

As with all Magus Networker applications, the process is fast, requiring weeks, not months. Developmental action flows automatically from the analyses for cause. These actions include those taken by delegates to the Magus Networker workshops, and by the people in management roles who sponsored the process. By default, priorities are determined according to the goals agreed at the start of the process.

“But isn't that just another kind of change programme?” Actually no - Magus Networker applications facilitate change processes. They kick-start a process of ongoing change, enabling the organisation to adapt constantly to meet the needs of a changing environment.



For more information, please contact Magus Toolbox Limited at enquiries01@magus-toolbox.com