



## CULTURE QUIZ

6 questions for executives looking to strengthen their organization's culture.

By Scott Beckett and Guillaume Pajot

**A primary job of the CEO** should be to establish the organizational culture. The proper culture enables and empowers strategy execution like little else can or does. But how do you know if you are leading your culture in the right direction? Start by asking yourself six questions.

**1. Do you really understand what culture is?** Culture is not fluffy. It is not about perks. Culture comprises the (mostly) unarticulated rules for success inside the enterprise—whatever is reinforced and rewarded within the organization. It creates the organizational context that shapes and distorts the perceptions, thinking and actions of people within the company. In other words, it influences everything.

**2. Is the company executing on its strategy at the pace you would like?** If the answer is no, the first question to ask is, "What is our culture not providing that is needed for success?" You will not find the answer in employee surveys; they will tell you the symptoms, not the causes. Instead, talk to as many employees as possible in person. Look for the behaviors and attitudes that slow the company's strategic momentum and act as impediments to the intended culture being fully realized.

**3. Are your sleeves rolled up?** When it comes to organizational culture, you cannot "set it and forget it." Keeping your company on track requires constant attention to culture. Executives at truly competitive, modern companies regularly work on their culture in management meetings. They understand that culture is the air employees breathe.

**4. Are you mixing individual self-interests with company interests?** When building corporate culture, you cannot simply impose a bias of what should be onto the company. A vibrant and meaningful culture that aligns with strategy to support the right business outcomes is best built from the bottom up—and that means employees must be part of the construction process. Remember, people are most enrolled in what they help create!

**5. Are you operating in a way that demonstrates the culture you want?** Simply put, the fish rots from the head. Employees are watching for dissonance between espoused values and practiced values. "Walking the talk" is a mantra for good reason: People will follow you where you lead them. So be intentional about how you operate.

**6. Are you honing your culture as a competitive advantage?** Once you have defined the culture needed to fulfill on strategy, go a step further and build it as a distinctive competitive element: what clients, suppliers and stakeholders will experience when they interact with your organization. Investing in your culture is investing in your brand. **IQ**

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