The Breakthrough Strategy for Energizing Your Organization and Creating Accountability for Results!

CHANGE THE CULTURE,

CHANGE THE GAME

(Roger Connors 외/Portfolio Hardcover/
January 2011/240 Pages/$25.95)
MAIN IDEA

For every organization, culture – the way your people think and act – produces results. If you want to change your results, the only realistic and sustainable way to achieve that is by first changing your culture. Generate a Culture of Accountability and you will automatically create an organization which is filled with people who can and will produce genuine game-changing results.

So how do you create a Culture of Accountability? This is done by using the Results Pyramid to change your culture. In practical terms, the Results Pyramid states the results you achieve are the direct consequences of your people’s experiences, beliefs and actions.

Experiences foster beliefs, beliefs influence actions, and actions produce results.

To change your results, you first have to change your culture – that is, you have to change the experiences, beliefs and actions of your people.

About of Author

ROGER CONNORS and TOM SMITH are the principals and founders of Partners in Leadership, Inc., a leadership training and management consulting company. They are the coauthors of The Oz Principle, How Did That Happen? and Journey to the Emerald City. Both authors have been featured in numerous TV broadcasts and have jointly led major consulting projects in different countries. Roger Connors is a graduate of Brigham Young University. Tom Connors is a graduate of the University of California, Irvine and Brigham Young University.

Every company has a culture which has come about by chance or by deliberate design. Either you as a leader manage your culture proactively or it will manage you without any further input. To get the results you want your organization to achieve in the future, you have to change the way people think and act – in other words, you need to be proactive about creating a culture which will generate those thoughts and actions.

Culture is never a one-time event. Nor is it something you can delegate to a “Chief Cultural Officer.” Rather, it’s something you have to work at all the time and it is your responsibility to instill the right culture inside your organization. You have to ask:

- Will our existing culture produce and generate the results we’ve promised to deliver in the future?
- If not, what are we going to do about it? How are we going to grow the culture we need?

“There’s something of a cycle which crops up again and again. When you’re getting the results you want in the marketplace, the prevailing culture gets strengthened and enhanced. Whatever you’re know for – be it market dominance, sales growth,
best-in-class quality or whatever else – will become even better going forward.

That means if you subsequently define a new and different target, you then have to move quickly to build a different culture which will generate the kinds of experiences, beliefs and actions which will make that new strategy happen. In any organization, culture always drives the results achieved.

“Whether managers realize it or not, they are creating experiences every day that help shape their organizational culture. From promoting someone or implementing new policies to interacting in meetings or reacting to feedback, these experiences foster beliefs about ‘how we do things around here,’ and those beliefs, in turn, drive the actions people take. Collectively, their actions, with few exceptions, produce their results. It’s really that simple, and it happens every minute of every day. Whether your organization is a robust and healthy one or one that needs to change, learning how to make sure the culture is working for you will always result in creating greater competitive advantage. Always!”

– Roger Connors and Tom Smith

A Culture of Accountability is most effective

Simply put a Culture of Accountability is one in which people take responsibility to think and act in a manner which will deliver the desired organizational results. This kind of culture exists when people in your organization choose to take four steps:

1. See it – when everyone acknowledges reality and seeks the perspective of others
2. Own it – where everyone personally invests effort to proactively generate the desired results
3. Solve it – where people work together to remove obstacles standing in the way of results
4. Do it – where everyone gets out there and focuses on doing top priority items

If everyone in your organization takes these four steps, you move away from the blame game towards an approach where everyone stars in the solution which is coming together.

The Results Pyramid will accelerate the transition

The Results Pyramid is a conceptual tool which can be used to accelerate cultural change and the results your organization generates in the future. Using it will accelerate the transition from your current culture to a Culture of Accountability. The Results Pyramid will help you understand and then clearly communicate with others what needs
to change about your culture in order to achieve the results you’re after.

“The power and persistence of culture explains why the usual tactics that managers use to improve results often don’t work. Most of the usual fixes, from new people and new technology to new strategies and new structures, work only at the level of actions, when they work at all. Too often, leaders attempt to change the way people act without changing the way they think (i.e. their beliefs.) As a result, they get compliance, but not commitment; involvement, but not investment; and progress, but not lasting performance. Working with the bottom of the pyramid (beliefs and experiences) causes more significant, long-lasting change, but it also takes more effort. To accelerate cultural changes, leaders must work with both the top and the bottom of the pyramid.”

– Roger Connors and Tom Smith

“Creating the right culture is not an option; it is a business necessity.”

– Roger Connors and Tom Smith
To build a Culture of Accountability, start at the top of the pyramid – clearly state the organizational results you want to achieve in the future. Your new objective will drive much of the activity, energy and effort everyone in the company puts in so you must be careful to specify the result you’re really after.

A robust and worthwhile new-and-improved result for any organizational change effort will meet four criteria:

1. It will be difficult to realize – not only will it call for more effort but it will also require a significant organizational change to take place as well. It is making these changes which will generate your new culture.

2. It will signal a bold new direction to head – rather than doing more of the same, you’re going to need to enter new markets, apply new technology, implement new strategies, make acquisitions or all of the above to achieve it.

3. It will require large-scale deployment of resources – so an obvious change of the prevailing corporate culture will be required. Anytime resources move from one part of the organization to another that generates a shift in the way people act – a change in your culture. An audacious new objective always triggers a cultural shift because you have to shuffle resources around.

4. It will require the development of some new and additional capability or core competency – which again will require a major cultural shift as people change their mind-set and their work patterns.

Usually, time is of the essence when making a cultural change. You can accelerate the transition process to a new and better culture by following three steps:

1. Define the results you want to achieve clearly, concisely and unequivocally.

2. Make sure everyone in the organization focuses exclusively on achieving the new results.

3. Create widespread accountability for achieving the desired results.

1. Define the new results clearly – because nothing creates accountability and alignment faster than this. If your aims are murky, it will be no surprise when people go off on tangents. Get everyone on the same page to start with.

2. Spread knowledge and awareness of your new objectives right throughout your organization – get everyone focused on achieving the same thing. This is often hard to achieve in practice but it is vital.

3. Create accountability – by closing the gap between people doing their jobs and achieving the result. Get everyone to define their performance in terms of the results they need to achieve rather than by their job descriptions.

“Your culture produces your results. If you need a change in results, then you need a
change in culture. Your culture is always working, and it’s either working for you or against you. Enlightened leaders know that either you will manage your culture, or it will manage you.”

– Roger Connors and Tom Smith

Success in changing your culture requires that you get everyone to take new actions every day which will directly lead to the new results you’re after. This is more than merely getting people to act differently – you’ve got to get them doing the right thing at the right time in order to generate the new results you’re after.

Changing the way people within your organization act comes in three different levels:

■ Level 1 changes are only temporary – people try doing different things but then revert back to their established patterns and actions.

■ Level 2 changes are transitional – people make small, incremental modifications to their standard operating procedures and then continue to apply those changes.

■ Level 3 changes are profoundly and permanently transformational – people stop acting one way and start doing something different from here on out.

More often than not, you won’t see a change in culture unless you make a number of level 3 changes in the way your people think and act. So how do you achieve that? One good way to do this is by using a “Stop/Start/Continue Analysis” which looks something like this:
Bearing in mind the new results you’re going after and which you list at the top of your chart, there will be some actions which you currently do which will need to stop, other actions you will need to start and some existing actions you should continue to do. Figure out and list what you need to stop, start and continue.

As you put together this kind of Stop/Start/Continue analysis, there are a few classic mistakes worth avoiding:

- Instead of dictating what the Stop/Start/Continue chart looks like, involve everyone in making it. This will create ownership for what needs to happen in the future rather than resentment. Assume your people will come up with reasonable and creative approaches.

- You have to help people recognize the new types of behaviors when they see it, otherwise the early adopters will get a hard time from the rank-and-file. Champion those who blaze the trail for the rest of your organization.

- Don’t forget that even while you talk about the different actions which will be required, you still have to be working on the other levels of the pyramid at the same time. It won’t be enough just to change what people do – you also have to address how they think. Culture embraces what people think and what they do in equal measure. If you change the way people think, you inevitably change the way they act. You have to be working on their beliefs at the same time as you’re making a viable attempt to change the way they act. If you don’t do that, you won’t change the culture enough to make a change that sticks.

It’s very easy for managers to focus exclusively on changing people’s actions in order to influence the results achieved but the reality is if you can instead change people’s beliefs, you’ll generate a deeper, more lasting change in the way people act. Turning someone’s current beliefs into beliefs which are aligned precisely with the results you’re going after is a very powerful way to change the culture.

In just the same way as change comes in three levels, not all beliefs are equal. There are in fact three categories of beliefs:

1. Tentatively held
2. Strongly held
3. Deep rooted
Tentatively held beliefs don’t involve any degree of personal investment. As new information comes to hand, tentative beliefs can be changed.

Strongly held beliefs are those which have been reinforced by repeated experiences over a long time frame.

Deeply rooted beliefs are based on a person’s moral and ethical values. They won’t be abandoned unless something extraordinary happens.

Your current culture will be predominantly made up of a set of Category 1 and Category 2 beliefs which generate your current results. To generate your desired results, a different set of beliefs will be required. The best way to prioritize the shifts which will be required will be to capture them in a “Cultural Beliefs Statement” which articulates the new and updated set of beliefs that will be required for your new objectives.

A good Cultural Beliefs Statement will specify the various Category 1, Category 2 and Category 3 beliefs which will underpin the new culture which will be required to realize the company’s stated new objectives.

A Cultural Beliefs Statement will be organization specific because it will be addressing the beliefs which now exist in your organization and the set of beliefs which are desired. An example of a Cultural Beliefs Statement is:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Act Now</th>
<th>I will act with urgency to beat competitors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reach Out</td>
<td>I build partnerships to achieve results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own It</td>
<td>I take accountability for our results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Let’s Talk</td>
<td>I share ideas in an open exchange</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be Radical</td>
<td>I look for innovative ideas to implement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be Lean</td>
<td>I am leaner, faster and better every day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be Aligned</td>
<td>What I do leads to our corporate results</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A good Cultural Beliefs Statement should be assembled by the management with loads of input from rank-and-file employees. This is intended to be a practical tool for the creation of alignment and to produce results at every level of the organization so it’s vital broad input is taken into account when putting it together.

You can’t bring about a change in beliefs simply by asking people to do that – although this is a reasonable starting point. To genuinely foster the adoption of a new set of beliefs, you have to create experiences which will convince people to change their beliefs and think differently.

The more vibrant and dynamic these experiences are, the faster the cultural change will occur. Experiences come in four types:

- Type 1 experiences are based around a meaningful event and lead to immediate insights, no questions asked.
- Type 2 experiences need to be interpreted in order to form the desired beliefs.
- Type 3 experiences don’t impact on prevailing beliefs because they are viewed as being insignificant.
- Type 4 experiences are completely misunderstood and are always misinterpreted no matter how hard you try.

The simple dynamic at work here is experiences create beliefs that drive actions which, in turn, produce results. To get your organization to generate different results from those achieved in the past, you’ve got to change the experiences people are having. That will then have a flow-on effect on everyone’s beliefs and subsequent actions.

The four steps involved in ensuring that people have different experiences which will lead to them changing their beliefs and subsequently their actions are:
1. **Plan the experience** — figure out in advance the experience you need to provide and why. This will be audience specific, scheduled to be delivered at an opportune moment and tailored to the needs and preferences of the people in your organization. Maximize your chances of success by planning thoroughly.

2. **Next follow your plan and deliver the experience** — which might require a bit of practice to pull off seamlessly and smoothly. As you provide the experience, gauge how people are reacting. Try and make the experience as engaging as possible whether it be one-on-one or a virtual experience delivered to a large audience simultaneously.

3. **Once you’ve delivered the experience, encourage reflection and interpretation** — by asking people about what they’ve just experienced. This is a critical step which often gets overlooked in the hustle and bustle of the day’s demands. If you don’t check, you won’t know whether you’ve hit the mark or not. You’ve got to get feedback by asking people about the experience and what it taught them.

4. **Interpret the experience in helpful ways** — in other words take the feedback you’ve received and then add in any extra steps which are necessary so everyone will interpret the experience you’ve provided in ways which generate the new beliefs which will be required. Interpreting is a matter of telling, explaining, clarifying and answering any questions that crop up.

Never forget cultural changes occur one person at a time. It takes effort and deliberate planning to bring this about but be assured the results are worth it. Invariably, the best approach is to start with the management team first and then work outwards from there. Give the management team experiences which change their own team culture first. Once you’ve instilled the new beliefs within the management team, you can then plan out the best way to spread those same beliefs elsewhere throughout the entire organization. Make sure you and everyone else in the management team model the beliefs you’re trying to instill in others first. Doing this will also enhance your credibility as a leader.
If you aspire to generate lasting change within an organization, the place to start the journey is to ensure you have alignment at every stage of the process. Long-term results will come when everyone’s actions, beliefs and experiences are aligned from person to person and across units and functions within the company. The more aligned everyone is, the faster the desired cultural change will occur.

Maintaining that alignment is a process rather than a one-time event. There are all kinds of forces which can push you out of alignment if given half a chance to take root. The warning signs of a lack of alignment are:

• People will remain silent and fear to voice their opinions.
• You will keep being surprised by the actions of some.
• You won’t see any tangible progress being made.
• In meetings, people will keep revisiting old issues.
• Everyone will have lots of excuses and blame others.
• There will be a general lack of ownership and enthusiasm.

A familiar business concept is to make change stick, you’ve first got to create a critical mass for the desired cultural chain reaction to keep going on its own steam. That critical mass comes about only when sufficient people step up and take ownership of the change process and buy in to the merits of the emerging culture.

To initiate this cultural chain reaction and bring about critical mass conditions, you must
make a compelling case for change. The best practices which apply in this area are:

- Make the change real.
- Make what’s required applicable to your audience.
- Make everything simple and repeatable.
- Make the need for change compelling.
- Present the case for change as a dialogue, not a monologue.

Even if you apply all of these best practices, nothing worthwhile will really happen unless and until you have created genuine alignment between the leaders of your organization. There are six steps involved in the leadership alignment process when it comes to changing your culture for the better:

1. **Participation** – you must get the appropriate people involved. Ask yourself: “Whom do we need to hear from in order to make the right decisions?” and then get those people in the loop. Also include those who will take accountability for implementing key decisions.

2. **Accountability** – understand who will make the final decision and how they will make that decision. Accountability works best when it is leader-led rather than consensus-driven so if you identify the key decision maker in advance, that’s where you can focus.

3. **Discussion** – to create alignment an ongoing dialogue about the culture change will be required. This will only happen if you encourage people to say what they think. Leaders need help to make the right decisions and alignment is enhanced when everyone feels like their voices are being heard.

4. **Ownership** – once a decision has been made, everyone has to own it if there is to be alignment. It’s not enough to leave driving the change up to a champion or two – for your culture to permanently change for the better, everyone has to share a sense of urgency to make it happen.
5. Communicate – alignment comes about when a consistent message comes across and when leaders “talk the talk” and mean it. Those inside the organization who have witnessed previous failed attempts to change the culture may be a bit jaded so leaders need to be able to communicate why change is desirable and then stay on message.

6. Follow-up – cultural change never happens overnight. Nor will a change effort succeed if managers and leaders don’t follow through and take accountability to do what they said they would do. To ensure everything is moving forward, you should check in and test for alignment on a regular basis. Ensure everyone understands the urgency and has become aligned around the new cultural beliefs, experiences and actions.

“Alignment is a process, not an event. It is something you must constantly work to achieve. Alignment is a leadership capability everyone must learn and master. Improving your own ability to sense when alignment does not exist and then to create and maintain it will pay dividends, not only during the cultural transition but also in each and every aspect of your leadership.”

– Roger Connors and Tom Smith

There are three cultural management tools that can help accelerate your organization’s transition from its existing culture to the new culture which will deliver the results you’re after:

1. The Focused Feedback tool – where you provide people with appreciative and constructive feedback whenever they act in ways which are consistent with the new culture you’re attempting to establish. This type of feedback also includes positive and candid suggestions about situations where the person has acted in ways which align with the new Cultural Beliefs Statement you’ve developed. You point out where and when people acted in helpful ways. Make sure your feedback is accurate, unbiased and highly pertinent in order to maximize its impact.

2. The Focused Storytelling tool – where you tell stories that exemplify the new cultural beliefs you’re trying to seed. Compelling and engaging stories are highly motivational because they add an emotional element. When you tell stories which are focused on the new cultural beliefs, you teach what the desired behaviors look like. The right stories show what living the brand looks like and feels like in a memorable way.

3. The Focused Recognition tool – where you publicly hand out a recognition card which notes whenever someone has been living the new cultural beliefs. Focused recognition is intended to pick up on everyone who “walks the talk”. It’s a way to
provide positive reinforcement of what's already happening in a motivational way. Focused recognition also clarifies for everyone the linkages between actions and the results those actions produce.

![RECOGNITION CARD](image)

“In our experience, everyone who uses Focused Recognition, Focused Storytelling, and Focused Feedback to manage cultural change finds these tools both powerful and simple to use. These tools provide clear direction to all individuals about what the new culture looks like and what they must do, and keep doing, to create the new culture.”

– Roger Connors and Tom Smith

There are three leadership skills which really come to the fore during a time of cultural change. To make the change happen faster, help your leaders develop these key skills:

1. The skill to lead the change – which is important because cultural change has to be led by someone. It won't happen in and of itself. Leaders must own the change process, set realistic priorities and preplan every step of the transition. Proficient leaders will be good at three disciplines:
   ■ Training people so they learn the essential business models, tools and skills required within the new culture.
   ■ Planning what needs to happen and preparing what needs to be delivered to others.
   ■ Coaching others so they can produce game-changing results.

2. The skill to respond to feedback constructively – particularly when people point out you've slipped back into old habits yourself. To keep the change to the new culture moving forward, savvy leaders use these slip-ups as teaching moments in this way:
   ■ Identify the existing belief you need to change.
   ■ Explain clearly and concisely what new belief should replace that old one.
Describe the experience you’re going to provide which will help them gain the new belief.
- Ask them to keep providing ongoing feedback as they have the planned experience.
- Invite them to keep giving you feedback on your own progress in gaining that new belief yourself.

3. The skill to be facilitative – identify what else you can be doing to move things forward.
   In practice, you will become more facilitative if you get into the habit of asking three questions over and over:
   • What do you think?
   • Why do you think that?
   • What would you do?
   Naturally you have to listen carefully to the answers people give and act on them to be truly facilitative but the point is listening with empathy is a key leadership skill. What you learn from what people are telling you and then what you do with that information will dictate the amount of momentum for cultural change which exists going forward into the future.

“Leadership of a cultural transition requires leaders to do more than just expect everyone to change; leaders must help people make the change. Successfully changing the culture is one of the most personally rewarding leadership endeavors anyone can participate in.”

– Roger Connors and Tom Smith

Getting a cultural transition under way is one challenge. Making sure those changes stick is another. Not only do you have to implement the changes in culture which will be required but you also have to fully integrate them into all of your organization’s systems and processes if they are to endure.

So what’s the best way to sustain those changes? You have to build into what you do – all your organizational processes – consistent and frequent reminders about the cultural changes which are required. You also have to integrate best practices of your new culture into the daily routines of your organization. This usually involves three steps:

1. Identify opportunities in meetings – look at all the various meetings which your organization currently holds and select the very best opportunities for integration which can be harnessed. Figure out which meetings hold the greatest potential for you to push the new cultural themes you want to emerge.

2. Identify opportunities in systems – follows a similar strategy. You look at your existing organizational systems and figure out which should be changed first in order to deliver
the most bang-for-your-buck in terms of making the cultural change real and permanent. These key systems are where you should focus on starting first. You can then make the other flow-on changes which will need to be made. Eventually, change will probably filter through most of your systems company wide.

3. Develop your integration plan – map out exactly what you’re going to do to integrate the best practices of your new culture into the meetings and systems you’ve identified. Your plan will be specific to your organization but some of the activities you will probably include here would be:

• Integrate more recognition moments into regular meetings.
• Include Cultural Belief stories on an ongoing basis.
• Hold more Town Hall and other training meetings.
• Get other people to share their success stories.
• Have a monthly progress report meeting.
• Use existing newsletters to share success stories.
• Have leaders carry out special development visits.
• Hold “daily shift huddles” where workers get trained.
• Acknowledge people who are doing the right stuff.

“Integration is not about convening additional meetings, creating a longer list of things to do, or lengthening the workday. Integration means integrating the tools into the current organizational processes, procedures, and systems. When done correctly, integration weaves the cultural transition process seamlessly into the way things are done in the organization.”

– Roger Connors and Tom Smith

Enroll the entire organization in the change

“We have learned that, when it comes to cultural change, as with most things in life, experience truly is the best teacher. Cultural change always aims to create an environment in which people take accountability to think and act in the manner necessary to achieve desired organizational results. In order to achieve this transformational change, you will need to adopt the right process for enrolling everyone in the organization in the change effort.”

– Roger Connors and Tom Smith

The five principles of building full employee engagement in the change are:

1. Start with accountability
2. Get people ready to change
3. Start at the top and with intact teams
4. Establish a process control and keep it honest
5. Design for maximum involvement and creativity
1. Start with accountability – get everyone up to speed with the essential See-It/Own-It/Solve-It/Do-It mind-set. Everything about a culture change builds on a foundation of accountability so this will always be the logical starting point of any change process.

2. Get people ready to change – on the basis changing a culture is never a spectator sport. You have to get your people to buy-in to the need for the change by persuading them of the merits of the change and then by giving them hands-on involvement in the change process itself. Get people to invest emotionally in the change.

3. Start at the top and with reasonably intact teams – because cultural change is always leader-led. In a similar vein, changing a culture is also a team sport. That’s why you start with intact teams and spread from there. The people in the team will strengthen each other’s resolve to create the new culture and work together to help each other.

4. Establish a process control which is transparent and honest – so you can establish milestones which will reflect progress in implementing and integrating the cultural change. Process controls can take many formats – online assessment tools, progress tracking tools, change dashboards and more. Don’t overdo this but do put in place consistent measurement tools which everyone understands and uses.

5. Design your change program for maximum involvement and creativity – make it inclusive and collaborative rather than limited to an elite group. It’s not feasible to simply “roll out” a cultural transition. Instead, everyone has to become engaged in making the desired change in the organization’s culture happen. Plan how you can get everyone involved in the change. The more people there are involved, the greater the chances are fresh creative ideas will be generated as you go along. Take full advantage of those ideas.

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