

Dear Editor

I'm really confused about the importance of business culture. If everyone knows that culture is so important, why aren't they doing this properly?

Brett Qi

Hi Brett

That's a great question, and it's a really common question. That's why we put together our piece "What leaders are telling us about corporate culture". Please read ahead for a detailed discussion about this problem.

Dear Editor

I'd like to learn more about how culture can be more important than strategy. This is not at all the approach that is used in my workplace, so I'm looking for a nice simple explanation that will make sense to people who aren't currently managed this way.

April

Hi April

This is a really common question. Culture is still not universally valued above strategy but there is a very simple explanation you can use for your colleagues to help them understand the value of culture.

There is a great saying that "culture eats strategy for breakfast". The idea is that you can have a "perfect" strategy but it will be useless without good culture. If your culture is poor your workforce will be demotivated, there will be higher turnover, there might well be poor alignment between employee and organisational goals, and there is likely to be tensions within, and between teams. All of these factors are likely to impact on the performance of the organisation.

The leaders might feel like they have a group of difficult employees but what they have instead is a combination of cultural issues. For example, hiring the best technically trained individual may or may not get you someone

whose goals align with the goals of the company, and that's a missed opportunity. Promoting someone to management who doesn't understand the importance of keeping their team informed, will breed a culture of confusion, disengagement and possibly distrust. Use these simple examples to explain to your colleagues how culture really does eat strategy for breakfast.

Dear Editor

I hold a senior management position in a medium sized company in Melbourne. After a recent promotion I've started thinking about, and looking at our culture more, and I don't particularly like what I see. It's not horrible but it could be much better. Where on earth so I start?

Beth

Dear Beth

This is a common problem. I recommend you start with some background reading like this following [link](#). Speaking to the line manager and/or senior management is always the first starting point. Culture is what comes down from the top (in fact the Board's responsibility). The Board is responsible for setting the culture and tone of the organisation. HR is definitely a supporting function by advising and "coaching" senior leaders but the culture is in their (the leadership's) hands. A good HR team will have ideas and tools to help – but will be successful only if they have respect and assistance from leadership to do so.

Once you are better informed you will be in a position to work out what next. Keep reading on this topic to stay informed and good luck.

LETTERS TO THE EDITORS