

The 12-Question Culture Challenge



Take the 12-Question Culture Challenge

How will you or your CEO know if your approach to assessing and changing or evolving culture is sound? It is especially challenging with the tremendous growth in awareness about culture. It seems as though everyone is talking about culture these days—describing what culture is, what it isn't, why it's important, offering advice, top tips, and so on with little consistency even amongst “culture experts.” Confusion about culture is common and leaders often feel lost when it comes to understanding this critical topic.

Answer the following 12 questions to understand if your current approach is covering basic culture assessment and change best practices. (Share these with your CEO or manager if you do not know the answers.)

1. Do you have strong internal culture expertise or, if not, are you obtaining adequate support in some form (education, coaching or consulting, assessment) from an external thought partner with extensive culture experience? Yes No
You cannot replace decades of experience, but you can learn from it.
2. Have you defined values and expected behaviors so it is clear what you stand for and expect from all team members? Yes No
3. Do you currently assess your culture (e.g., values and norms) and climate (e.g., perceptions of systems, structures, job design, leadership skills and qualities) at defined periods? Yes No
Most engagement, great workplace, satisfaction, and so-called “culture assessments” only measure the work *climate*. Confirm that you are measuring some dimensions of *culture*: beliefs, values, and behavioral norms.
4. Does your culture assessment approach include a combination of thorough quantitative (survey) and qualitative (interviews, focus groups, or other approaches) methods? Yes No
Leading culture authority Edgar Schein said, “It is vital that organizations understand deeply what culture is, what it does, and how to analyze it as they change and develop. To do this effectively requires both a qualitative and a quantitative approach to managing the culture change process.”
5. Do you utilize a valid and reliable culture and climate survey? Yes No
Other survey considerations include the presence of extensive third-party research, global application, and the use of a diverse research data set for comparison instead of client data.
6. Does your culture assessment approach include the identification of beliefs and assumptions driving the patterns of behavior or norms you see (especially any negative or challenging behaviors or norms you identify)? Yes No
Just a few examples from the *Organizational Culture Inventory*[®]: Why do team members believe they are expected or implicitly required to not “rock the boat,” avoid confrontation, never challenge superiors, and/or accept the status quo?

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7. If not included in responses to question #6, does your culture assessment approach include the identification of organizational factors or forces that area reinforcing the beliefs or assumptions uncovered in question #6? Yes
 No
- Robert Cooke and Janet Szumal propose that there are often specific aspects of the work climate (systems, structures, leadership approaches, etc.) reinforcing basic beliefs like “I have to go along with this, even though I disagree,” “it’s not my job” or “they won’t do anything about what I say.”
8. Does your culture-related improvement planning process include a clear connection to solving problems and improving outcomes (results) for individuals (e.g., satisfaction, motivation, stress) and the organization (e.g., growth, adaptability, quality, service)? Yes
 No
- Many organizations see only marginal results from generic “culture plans” lacking a clear connection to specific outcomes or results.
9. Do you openly share the results of culture assessments internally and engage the broader organization in the process to adjust major strategies and improvement plans based on what you learn? Yes
 No
- This approach is far more strategic and impactful than common survey and action planning approaches.
10. Do you share the status of improvement plans (referenced in question #8) and re-engage the broader organization to provide feedback on what’s working, what’s not, and related results/outcomes? Yes
 No
- This approach supports shared learning and a clear connection to results or outcomes.
11. Do you connect the definition of any desired shift or change in the culture to the assessment and development efforts of individuals, including underlying mindsets, and teams (starting with the top leadership team)? Yes
 No
12. Can you state with confidence that you are an active participant in your organization’s approach to understanding and, where needed, intentionally evolving its culture? Yes
 No

Next Steps

If you answered “YES” to all questions, you are well on your way to growing a strong culture assessment and development approach. It is likely having a positive impact on individuals, teams, your organization, and the local community or society in many ways that go beyond what you realize. Don’t stop your learning journey. Openly share what you have learned with others and reach out to culture experts to continue your learning journey.

If you said “NO” to any of these questions, you should revisit your approach or the guidance you have been given (see question #1). There may be an opportunity to improve your management and change strategies as well as related outcomes or results. Don’t wait—the only “good” time to improve the understanding of your culture and how it is driving results is now. Substantial progress can be made in less than 90 days if you follow a proven approach. Check out our Culture Quick-Start Program at <https://www.humansynergistics.com/change-solutions/culture-quick-start/> as well as our other culture solutions.



Ultimate Culture and Performance: 90-Day Quick-Start Program



Organizational Culture Inventory®/
Organizational Effectiveness Inventory® (OCI®/OEI)



The Culture Journey Learning Map® Educational Experience

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