



guidedinsights

Tips for defining, maintaining culture in a hybrid workplace

Create a shared definition of “culture”

Make sure everyone's on the same page. People are likely to have different definitions.

- For example, you might define culture as a reflection of the shared values, beliefs, customs, practices, and social behaviors of its members
- Someone else may say that culture is the *personality* of the organization and defines how things are done within the company
- Elements may include values, beliefs and principles, norms, customs, symbols, language and shared assumptions
- The elements that can't easily be seen tend to be the ones that say the most about an organization

Assess the current perception vs. “ideal culture”

Don't assume that everyone sees the organization's current culture in a positive light, or that they have any real impression of the culture at all. Do the work to find out how people perceive your organizational culture, if they have any perception at all.

- Identify important stakeholders whose view of your organization's culture is especially important, including employees, managers, partners, customers and others
- Use a combination of methods to assess current perceptions, such as focus groups, online conversations and 1:1 or small-group interviews. Probe for values, behavior, attitudes, policies and other manifestations of the current culture
- Ask what values, behavior, attitudes, policies, etc. people see as the “ideal culture”
- Probe for “must-have” elements vs. “nice to have”
- Consider asking job candidates to describe the culture of an ideal employer

Identify the gaps

- Dive into the areas where the differences are greatest between what people see as your organization's culture today and their version of an “ideal culture”
- Go first for the “must-have” or make-or-break elements
- For example, stakeholders who place trust high on the list of “ideal culture” attributes may describe your current culture as low-trust. Those who see today's constant state of burnout as antithetical to a culture that encourages a reasonable work-life balance

Brainstorm actionable steps

- First, clarify definitions and meanings for the must-have elements. *Trust* might mean one thing to one person or group and something completely different to another. This might be best done in small-group interviews, in addition to an online conference area. Probe for attitudes, behaviors, actions, policies, etc. that demonstrate trust, or a lack thereof.
- Consider what steps your organization, leaders and employees can take to cultivate and demonstrate this behavior. For example, a perceived lack of trust might be rooted in management behavior, company policies or performance measurement system.
- Determine how best to close the gap, whether through leadership training and coaching, modifying processes or policies, revising metrics, establishing management accountabilities, and clear and compelling communications
- Go for a combination of initiatives that will have a high impact and can be done relatively quickly, and longer-term actions that may take longer to implement and absorb

Brand your culture

Communicate the organization's values, mission, and goals to make sure that everyone understands how their actions and behaviors contribute to the shared culture. Use a variety of channels, including:

- Leadership and employee training
- Employment interviews, job offers
- New hire orientation
- Town Hall meetings
- Company website (internal and external)
- Corporate “look and feel” – PPT templates, logo, slogan, colors, typeface, design, marketing, advertising, sales mechanisms, etc.
- At external gatherings, including conferences, industry events and seminars

Continuously evaluate and adapt the culture

- Ensure the culture remains relevant, compelling, accurate and attractive to all key stakeholders
- Encourage employees and others to give honest feedback and suggestions, and incorporate their ideas into the process

Repeat the process as needed

Repeat the assessment process and compare results. What behavioral or attitudinal shifts have they noticed? How would they assess the current culture today?