

WHY LEADERS DON'T WANT TO CHANGE THE CULTURE

When it comes to workplace culture, we think there's a water-tight case. Here's the logic as we see it:

- Workplace culture is probably the most important driver of organisational performance
- Companies need to agree on the kind of culture they need in place to ensure their future success
- To the extent this cultural profile is not being 'lived', leaders need to actively work on re-aligning the culture

When we undertake UGRs (unwritten ground rules) Stock Takes in organisations, we often find aspects of the culture that are working against performance. These are often critical aspects of the culture. Interestingly, some leaders choose to pay lip service to changing the culture, even in the face of this evidence of a counter-productive culture. Which begs the question... Why?

We think there are a number of factors that contribute to leader inaction on the culture-front. These include:

I don't know where to start - sometimes leaders come to realise that their culture is poor on a number of fronts. So on some occasions, leaders feel overwhelmed by the scope of the required change. Our recommendation? Get everyone involved (yes everyone!) and start with the 'low hanging fruit' - that is, tackle easier issues that people will notice. Doing this can often be a 'circuit breaker' to the existing culture and can create momentum.

People who report to me don't have the leadership capacity to lead the change, but these same people have technical and operational knowledge and skills that are impossible to replace - in these cases, the technical skills of leaders (and probably staff) are valued more than their people skills.





My power and influence will be compromised - some leaders believe they are the only people capable of leading their team. If that's the case, then the team or organisation is at risk if they delegate some of their power. These leaders, perhaps sub-consciously, believe that the organisation is at risk without their leadership wisdom!

I have to change too much - more often than not, getting a real understanding of the current culture presents leaders with some surprises. The bottom line is that the vast majority of leaders do not want their culture to be less than positive. Leaders probably have been trying to create a positive, productive culture. Faced with evidence that their efforts have not worked as well as they'd hoped, some leaders believe that effecting the required change will be too much of challenge for them personally.

If you are a leader, it may well be worth some self-analysis on each of the above...

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