

# Cultured

By [Sindiswa Masuta](#), issued by [Grey Africa](#)

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As the renowned management consultant Peter Drucker said, "Culture eats strategy for breakfast." No matter how well designed your strategic plan for your business is, it will fall flat without the platform of a solid company culture shared by the team who need to implement the strategic plan.



Sindiswa Masuta

Research backs up Drucker's assertion, showing that culture drives performance. One study found that companies that proactively manage culture demonstrate revenue growth over a 10-year period that's 516% higher than those that don't. Another study found that companies that actively manage their culture have 30% higher levels of innovation and 40% higher levels of staff retention. The benefits of a culture that has been specially designed and nurtured are plainly evident across industry sectors and geographies.

## Managing culture

Culture is the set of operating principles and common behaviours that an organisation either possesses or chooses to adopt, and it's imperative that the organisation and people working in it have a shared mindset around those principles and values, putting them into practice operationally and reinforcing that mindset with rituals that create meaning.

Clearly, if the shared mindset we call culture and the corporate strategy are not aligned, the strategy will be met with resistance, be poorly implemented or executed and fail to garner the support necessary for it to succeed.

What follows is a series of tips on how to get the culture you desire to take root and flourish and thus ensure greater chances of success for your corporate strategy.

Very important to note is that the principles created are simple to understand and follow - if these principles are to dictate

behaviour, any confusion about the precise meaning of the principles will only make it harder for employees to behave in the way required. Vagueness is the enemy here. Whereas principles that are easily understood can be easily adopted, giving people a greater sense of belonging, ownership and responsibility in the success of the company. As humans, we value feeling like we are part of something bigger, being respected and needed, thus, incorporating it in this way shows them how much they are valued by the company.

## Cultivating a culture movement

Mandates and directives no longer inspire change in today's organisational culture. Instead, cultivating a culture movement is key. Start by matching your business strategy with your culture, ensuring that you have the right people to implement it in line with the organisation's principles.

Focus on critical shifts in behaviour that stir emotions and drive action. Actions, not just new mission statements, drive culture change. Identify influencers who can mobilise others and demonstrate quick wins to gain momentum.

Leverage existing culture strengths. Your current culture likely has hidden strengths that can be harnessed. Identify and leverage these strengths to support your desired cultural changes. Implement formal and informal interventions, but be mindful not to impose new rules and processes. Instead, encourage influencers within the organisation to bring others along, generating support and buy-in. Measure and monitor cultural evolution to identify progress and address any backsliding.

While cultivating the culture movement, an important element to consider is to communicate, communicate, communicate - often. With better two-way communication between employees and leaders and more transparency from leaders, more trust and freedom can be achieved. George Bernard Shaw once said, "The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place." Two-way communication empowers employees to share their perspectives, allowing them to take ownership of the culture being created. Establish team norms that encourage collaboration and create an environment where everyone is motivated to contribute to the organisation's success.

In today's competitive landscape, a strong company culture is the backbone of an organisation's success. By aligning strategy and culture, fostering understanding, and creating a culture movement, organisations can unlock the full potential of their workforce. By treating employees as valued custodians and promoting effective communication, organisations can harness the power of culture to drive business performance, attract talent, and achieve sustainable growth. Cultivate a culture that inspires and empowers, and success will follow.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sindiswa Masuta is the strategy business director at Grey South Africa.

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