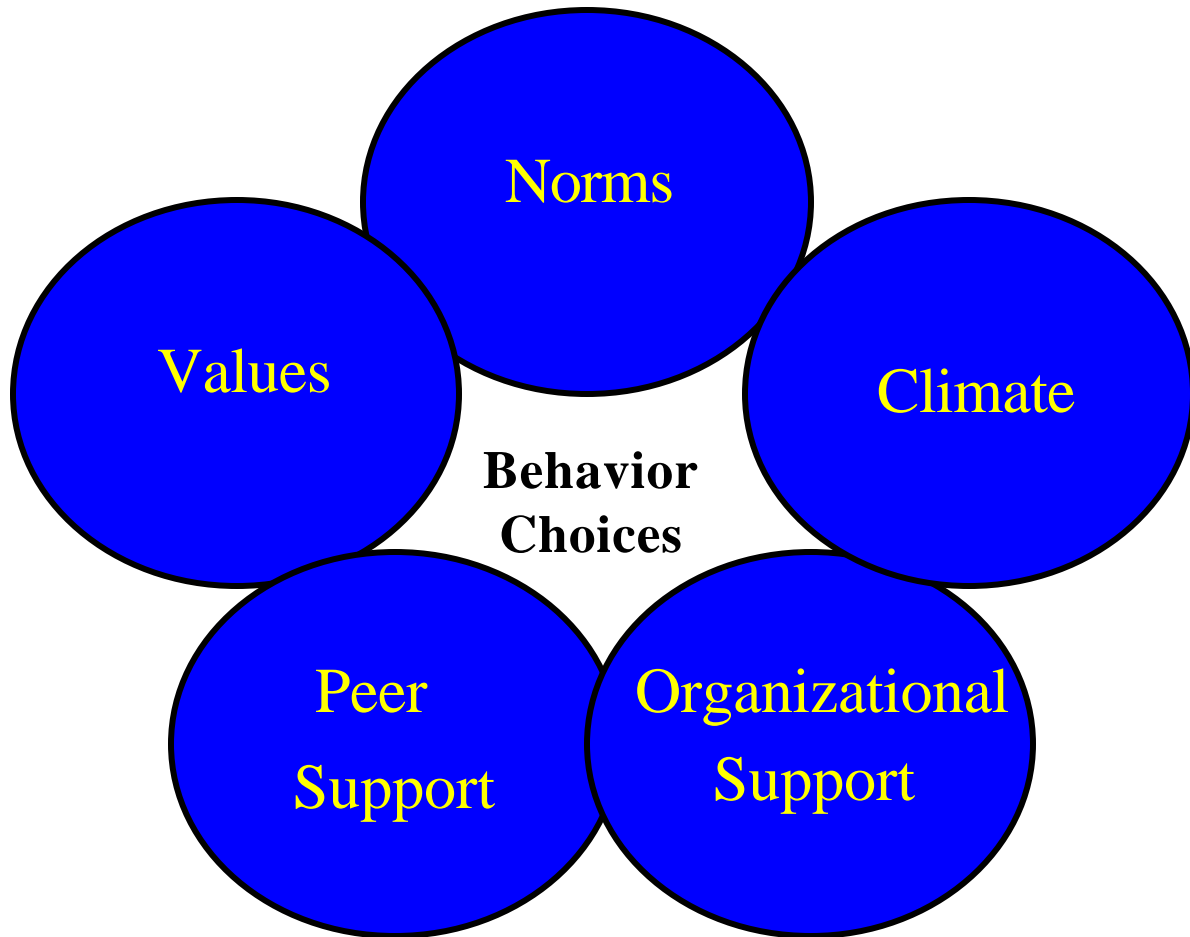


The Culture Change Planner



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human resources institute[®]

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Culture Change Planner

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PREFACE

This manual provides a framework for the challenging task of modifying culture. It offers an overview of the Normative Systems Culture Change Process and an introduction to the fundamental features of project development and implementation. It is designed to provide a road map for building supportive cultural environments, and will be useful in creating long-term solutions to complex organizational and community problems. The manual is intended for both professional behavioral scientists and the general public: all those with a vision for healthier, more caring and more productive relationships and social institutions.

Most of the ideas expressed in this manual originated in works by the late Dr. Robert F. Allen.

WHAT WE ARE AS MEMBERS OF CULTURES

Whenever two or more people come together with a shared purpose, they form a culture with its own written and unwritten rules for behavior. Our families, workplaces and communities all have cultures. These cultures have a tremendous, though rarely recognized, impact upon our behavior as individuals.

Each cultural environment provides a somewhat unique set of standards to which we must adapt. Our behavioral patterns change dramatically from cultural context to cultural context. For example, on the job we are expected to behave in accordance with certain social standards. Expectations about behaviors at work usually differ from what is expected of us in our kitchens and in our bedrooms.

We may not choose to behave in accordance with our cultures, but if we choose not to go along, we must be prepared for ongoing consequences. When we select goals for ourselves that violate the culture, we must either change the culture or endure a never-ending struggle.

Changes initiated in unsupportive cultural environments tend to last less than one year. In contrast, changes that are supported by the culture are likely to stick. In addition, both the desire to attempt change and the likelihood of long-term success are positively related to cultural support.

In order to achieve sustained results, goals must be linked with the creation of more supportive cultural contexts. This is true whether our goal is to exercise regularly, to increase organizational productivity, or to reduce drunk driving. The culture influences our choices and determines the effectiveness of our individual initiatives. Almost invariably, the long-term individual solution must also be a cultural solution. This fundamental understanding is expressed in a simple equation:

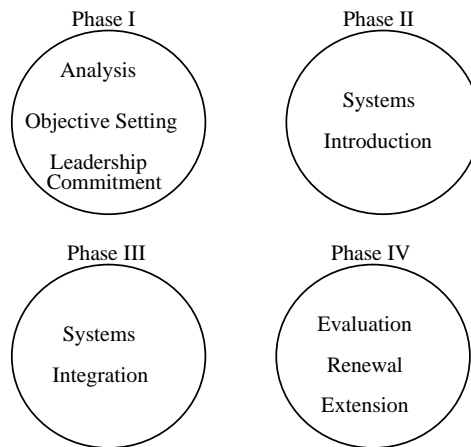
$$\text{LASTING SUCCESS} = \text{INDIVIDUAL INITIATIVE} + \text{CULTURAL SUPPORT}$$

Individual initiative is a necessary ingredient to successful change. In order to achieve sustained results, some of this individual initiative must be channeled into building more supportive cultural environments. To achieve long-term success, the good ideas and hard work of individuals must be linked to cultural norms, values and support systems. The Normative Systems Culture Change Process is designed specifically to assist individuals and groups in their efforts to build supportive cultural environments for lasting change.

THE PROCESS OF CULTURE CHANGE: A FRAMEWORK

Anyone working to bring about lasting culture change will attest to the enormity of the task. Without a framework, culture change appears hopelessly complex. The four-phase Normative Systems Culture Change Process was developed in order to organize such efforts into meaningful steps.

**Normative Systems
Culture Change Process**



Changing culture in many ways parallels farming. The first phase, Analysis and Objective Setting, is dedicated to analyzing and preparing the soil. Phase II, Systems Introduction, plants the seed of change. The third phase, Systems Integration, is the cultural equivalent of adding fertilizer and water so that the plant takes root and flourishes. And the fourth phase, Evaluation, Renewal and Extension, is similar to harvesting the crop and gathering new seed for the next planting.

Although some overlap exists, each phase in the process emphasizes a different aspect of culture change. The remainder of this manual discusses some of the tools used in each of the four phases of the Normative Systems Culture Change Process.

Phase I: Analysis, Objective Setting and Leadership Commitment

The first phase of project development establishes a clear picture of the current situation, sets specific measurable objectives and commits leaders to a vision for change. These activities serve to tailor the change process to the problem and setting. Phase I activities provide the groundwork for the broad-scale introduction and integration of the change process. The analysis covers three broad categories of information--performance, programmatic and cultural.

Performance Analysis

Performance data encompass bottom-line financial and behavioral measures.

Performance Analysis: Strategic Design Questions

What are the human and economic costs of current behavior?

What new behaviors are likely to produce the largest human benefit and economic returns?

How will the economic and human impact be measured?

How will behavior be measured?

Programmatic Analysis

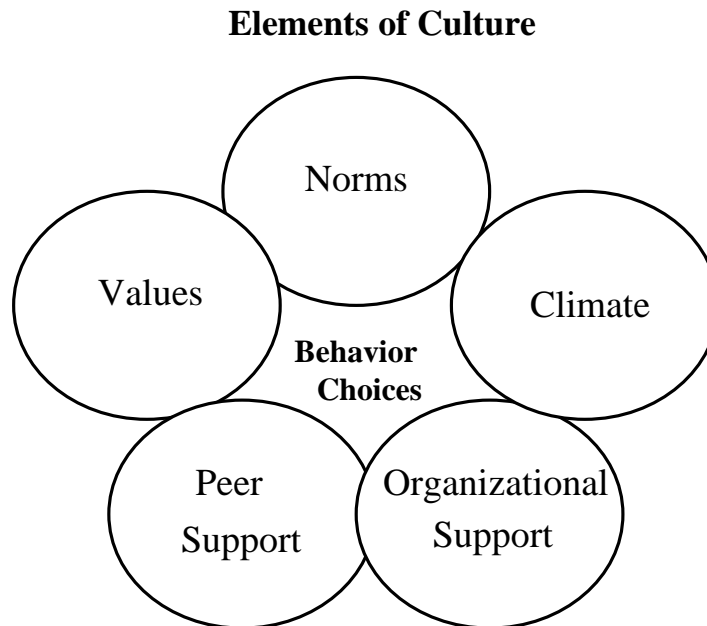
Every setting and group handles change a little bit differently. Some groups need change to occur at a rapid pace, while others call for a more deliberate approach. In some settings, those in power need to lead the change process, while in other settings, change works only when those at the bottom of the power hierarchy demand change. Programmatic analysis examines how change efforts should be organized to maximize the likelihood of success.

Programmatic Analysis: Strategic Design Questions

- How will the past influence the change process?
- Who will need to be involved in the change process?
- Who should play a leadership role in steering the change process?
- What should the structure, composition and purposes of committees and/or task forces be?
- What is the best strategy for introducing the change process?
- What is the best timeline for project development?

Cultural Analysis

Cultural analysis is broken down into five component parts.



Values

Values are heartfelt beliefs about the appropriate way to behave. Values constitute the shoulds and shouldn'ts of individual and cultural life. While the concept is most familiar on an individual level, groups, organizations and communities also adopt values. For example, the value theme of "lean and mean" was popular in the 1980s. And an emphasis on quality was a strongly held corporate value in the early 1990s.

Values: Strategic Design Questions

- What are the current core values or belief systems that are related to project goals?
- How might current value systems get in the way of adopting cultural solutions?
- What core project values (or themes) might inspire collective action?
- What differences exist in the ways subcultures view potential project values?
- How strongly do future program participants value the changes now being contemplated?

Norms

A norm is an expected and accepted behavior: "It's the way we do things around here." These social standards of behavior may or may not be consistent with individual or cultural values. For example, an individual may value low-fat diets, and it probably is a norm in his or her culture to eat high-fat foods.

Norms: Strategic Design Questions

- What norms stand in the way of project goals?
- What norms support project goals?
- How well do current norms reflect individual and cultural values?

Organizational Support Systems

There are a variety of mechanisms that define and perpetuate the culture. Formal structures such as laws, rules and policies play an important role. And informal structures such as the "grapevine" are also powerful. Information about organizational support can be organized into the following 10 broad categories: (1) modeling; (2) recruitment and selection; (3) orientation; (4) training; (5) rewards and recognition; (6) confrontation; (7) communication systems; (8) relationships and interactions; (9) symbols, myths and rituals; and (10) allocation of resources. Strengths and opportunities for improvement are identified for each of the 10 organizational support systems. When planning culture change, it can be helpful to utilize those aspects of existing organizational support systems that foster desired behavior. The planning process must also be directed at changing those organizational support systems that work against project goals.

Organizational Support: Strategic Design Questions

- How are project-related behaviors being modeled? What can be done to increase the modeling of desired behavior and/or to reduce the modeling of behaviors that run counter to program goals?
- Are key behaviors rewarded and recognized? What will increase the positive impact of rewards and recognition?
- How are inappropriate behaviors being rewarded and recognized? How can these rewards and recognition systems be modified?
- How are behaviors that run counter to program goals being confronted? How could inappropriate behavior be more effectively confronted?
- How are behaviors that are consistent with program goals mistakenly being confronted? What opportunities exist for reducing such activity?

- What is being said about project-related behaviors? What opportunities exist for increasing constructive dialogue through formal and informal measurement and communication channels?
- How does the development of relationships such as friendships influence project behavior? How can desired behavior be linked with improved family, friend and coworker relationships?
- What does the current use of time and financial resources say about project-related behavior? Are there better ways to demonstrate a commitment to desired behavior?
- How are rituals, myths and symbols linked to project-related behavior? Are there ways in which desired project-related behavior can be integrated into cultural myths, symbols and rituals?

Peer Support

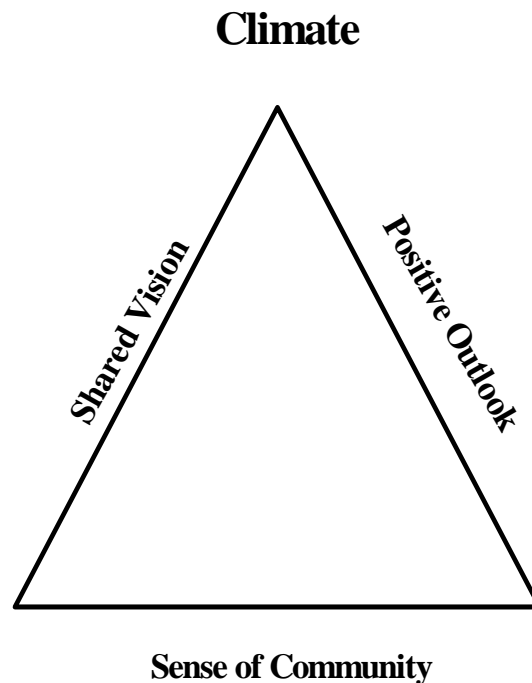
Family, friends and coworkers assist one another in a variety of ways. When most people think of peer support, they think about listening and advice giving. In its negative form such advice is sometimes called nagging. Other forms of peer support include modeling, eliminating barriers to change and celebrating success. Such support can be essential when people attempt to modify their personal behavior. For this reason, the assessment of peer support systems is an important aspect of project planning.

Peer Support: Strategic Design Questions

- Who will support change (e.g., family, friends, coworkers, boss, etc.)?
- What forms of support are given (e.g., help with goal setting, modeling, eliminating barriers, locating supportive environments, working through relapse, and celebrating success)? What gaps exist?
- Are members of the culture receptive to support being offered?
- Do members of the culture ask for the support needed to accomplish project goals?

Climate

Some cultures embrace needed change while other cultures are highly resistant. Three attributes seem to determine a culture's receptivity to change--sense of community, shared vision and positive outlook.



A sense of community is present when people feel as if they belong and trust one another. This sense of belonging includes an awareness that others "care" and that the individual, in turn, has a responsibility to care for others. With a sense of community people are not viewed exclusively in terms of performing a single role or function. Instead, individuals are seen as unique, complex and evolving; complete with hopes, dreams and personal history.

Sense of Community: Strategic Design Questions

- Do members of the culture really get to know one another (i.e., dreams, special interests, history, etc.)?
- Do people come through for one another in times of need?
- Do people feel as if they belong and are welcomed?

A shared vision exists when people recognize that they hold similar value systems. With a shared vision, members of the culture are enthusiastic about cultural goals and the processes by which they will be achieved. A shared vision implies a sense of inclusion: members of the culture are not being left behind.

Shared Vision: Strategic Design Questions

- Do people recognize that they share common values (or at the very least can be enthusiastic about one another's values)?
- Can people describe shared goals and strategies for achieving those goals?
- Do people find their shared goals and strategies inspirational?

With a **positive outlook**, people look for opportunities rather than obstacles and for strengths rather than weaknesses in one another. It is not so much that the need for change is overlooked, but rather there is a general recognition that cultural and individual strengths will make it possible to improve upon current conditions.

Positive Outlook: Strategic Design Questions

- Do people have faith that constructive change is possible?
- Do people recognize individual and organizational strengths or do they focus on what is wrong?
- Do people view needed change as an opportunity for improvement, or do they view change as a problem?
- Do people make use of individual and organizational strengths in addressing needed change?
- Do people view individual, group, organizational and/or community goals as being in conflict with each other?

Leadership Commitment

Obtaining leadership commitment is a key element in Phase I of Normative Systems. Some level of leadership commitment is often apparent before the cultural analysis begins. It is not uncommon, for example, for community or organizational leaders to finance the initial analysis. It is also frequently true that deeper levels of leadership commitment are necessary to move the project beyond contemplation.

Leadership Commitment: Strategic Design Questions

- How should leaders call attention to the economic and human costs of the current culture?
- How should leaders state the intended benefits of the culture change effort?
- What is the best strategy for reviewing past failed approaches to change? How will leaders recognize the role of culture in those failed efforts?

- How will leaders get an opportunity to experience the desired culture? Will this happen at a retreat or through field visits to other cultures?
- How will leaders commit to a specific timeline and cost structure for project development?
- How will leaders help identify benchmarks of success?
- What is the best way to teach leaders skills and concepts that will make them useful in the culture change process?
- How will leaders link their personal values and vision to the project?

Phase II: Systems Introduction

The second Normative Systems phase introduces members of the culture to the project vision and invites participation in the change process. Phase II efforts also teach skills in creating a climate that supports change--i.e., one with a sense of community, a shared vision, and a positive outlook.

Although printed materials and visual media can be useful in getting the word out, Phase II efforts tend to be organized around a workshop. The workshop provides a forum for relating project goals to personal values and experiences. Most introductory workshops are designed to enable participants to visualize and to experience the desired culture. Introductory workshops tend to cover three broad subject areas--understanding, identifying and changing. Discussions of these subjects follow.

Understanding

Members of the culture should become familiar with the key lessons of the Analysis and Objective Setting phase. Frequently such lessons include the current human and economic costs of the existing culture. Such costs are presented in terms of their impact on individuals as well as their impact on the organization, community and society.

It is also useful to review the history of past change attempts that did not succeed. What were their strengths and why did they fall short? Perhaps these attempts failed because they focused on a single factor (e.g., laws in the alcohol prohibition movement), or because they did not adequately involve people (e.g., a memo from management), or because they were unsystematic (e.g., they relied on a campaign or on a single seminar experience).

Participants would also benefit from an understanding of the power of culture. This issue is sometimes addressed by discussing the impact of cultural norms. Most norms go unexamined. As a result, it is eye-opening to see how our own behavior is managed through norms. Such an understanding is useful in reducing the likelihood of finger pointing and individual blame placing. The discussion can also be instrumental in helping people to realize that they will need to work together to bring about meaningful results.

Finally, it can be beneficial to develop an understanding of the building blocks of culture-- values, norms, organizational support systems, peer support and climate. Feedback from the cultural analysis helps build such a conceptual framework. A conceptual framework grounded in current realities empowers participants to plan their participation in the culture change process. A discussion of strategic design questions useful for helping people to develop an understanding of the current problem follows.

Understanding: Strategic Design Questions

- How will the economic and human costs of the current culture be explained? What will be said about the impact on the individual? What will be said about the impact on the group, organization or society?
- How will past change attempts be explained? What lessons about culture change can be integrated into this explanation?
- What is the best mechanism to teach about the power of culture? Will some cultural norms reveal this power? Can the discussion of culture be summarized in such a way that people will understand the futility of negative blame-placing and realize the importance of joining together in finding a lasting solution?

What is the best strategy for sharing about core values, norms, peer support, organizational support and climate? How will people develop an appreciation of the process of culture change?

Identifying

Project participants need to identify meaningful goals. Such goal-setting activity should be done at both individual and collective levels. Some sort of individual behavioral assessment is often useful. Once this is accomplished, groups set joint goals. Leaders share their vision for program outcomes. Goals may be organized by short- and long-term objectives and/or around the degree of difficulty.

Identifying: Strategic Design Questions

- How will participants assess their own behavior?
- How will individual goals be set? Will they be organized around degree of difficulty? Will they be organized around a timeline?
- How will groups be given feedback on current behavior?
- How will groups establish behavioral goals? Will these goals be organized around degree of difficulty? Will they be organized around a timeline?

Changing

Members of the culture should be given an opportunity to develop a change plan. In order to facilitate this planning process, participants are made aware of what is being done to bring about sustained change. Frequently, this information is presented in a menu of follow-up and volunteer activities. New ideas are also generated.

Changing: Strategic Design Questions

- What format will individual action plans take? Will specific action steps be recommended?
- What format will group level action plans take? Will specific action steps be recommended?
- How will people be informed about the availability of support programs and materials?
- Will people be invited to participate in committees and task forces? If so, how will this be handled?
- How will new ideas and suggested changes in current plans be shared? How will this information be integrated into the change process?

Phase III: Systems Integration

To assure success, change takes place on multiple levels. The Systems Integration phase focuses on individual self-help, peer support, organizational support and leadership development.

Individual-Level Integration

Working with the individual, sometimes called self-help, is the primary change strategy in many Western cultures. Self-help activities include individual therapy, attending seminars, watching videos, reading books and pamphlets, and, more recently, using computer programs. Most self-help activities combine some form of personal assessment with an action plan. They emphasize insight, inspiration, and willpower.

Typical self-help efforts adopt a therapeutic model of change. Problem behavior is addressed by focusing attention on the needs, history and skills of the individual. Traditional therapeutic approaches examine childhood experiences. Cognitive behavior therapies teach skills in managing internal dialogues and belief systems. Pleasure-based approaches focus on satisfying biological needs and on examining inner feelings and motivations.

Individual focused change initiatives play an important role in culture change projects. For example, such activities can help people develop social skills needed to work with others. Clarity about personal goals and values makes it easier to commit to organizational and community goals. Increased awareness about personal strengths and styles can foster individual initiative and creativity.

Self-help initiatives also present special challenges to culture change projects. Individual initiative is sometimes viewed as competing with culture change. For example, some participants in self-help programs take special pride in their abilities to succeed on their own or in spite of adverse cultures. Such an attitude can lead to isolationism and a false belief that culture change is unnecessary.

The most effective self-help programs engage people in developing their own individual initiative while finding or building supportive environments. Self-help materials and programs must frequently be revised to reestablish the link between personal and cultural change. For example, a self-help program could suggest that participants assess those aspects of their cultural environments that stand in the way of personal success.

Individual Level Integration: Strategic Design Questions

- What format(s) should self-help material and support take (e.g., counseling, videos, pamphlets, newsletter, etc.)?
- How will those involved in self-help activities be given opportunities to share their experiences?
- How will self-help programs include a role for cultural support?

Peer-Level Integration

People often think of peer support in terms of special cause-centered groups (e.g., Alcoholics Anonymous, Weight Watchers). Support group members share their common experiences with a given problem behavior or experience. Such groups play important roles in supporting individuals through difficult personal changes.

Peer-level integration efforts also address the needs of ongoing social networks such as work teams, families and friends. Unlike support groups, which tend to be time limited, "natural" social networks continue to provide support for years and sometimes for a lifetime.

Peer integration efforts are designed to increase the quantity and improve the quality of support. For example, family, friends, and coworkers may be taught skills in being effective role models, working through relapse or celebrating success.

Peer-Level Integration: Strategic Design Questions

- What support groups, if any, should be organized? How long and how often will they meet?
- How will friends be involved in the change process? What training might friends receive?
- How will family members or housemates be involved in the change process? What training might these people receive?
- How will coworkers support each other? How often should co-workers discuss their change efforts? What training in peer support will coworkers need?

Organization-Level Integration

Organizational support systems are composed of formal and informal policies and procedures. Although organizational supports take many forms, they can be organized into the following eight broad and overlapping categories: (1) recruitment and selection; (2) orientation; (3) training; (4) rewards and recognition; (5) confrontation; (6) communication systems; (7) symbols, myths and rituals; and (8) allocation of resources. Frequently changes in organizational support systems are carried out by task forces, through leadership mandate, or, in the case of government, through a legislative process. Advocacy groups also play roles in shaping organizational support systems.

In business settings, managing organizational support systems tends to be the responsibility of the human resource department. During culture change projects, those responsible for implementing organizational changes are often overwhelmed by the breadth and scope of the changes being contemplated. Additional resources are frequently required to implement a sufficient amount of structural change at a pace that maintains project momentum.

Organizational Integration: Strategic Design Questions

- Who will lead changes in recruitment, selection and orientation processes? What support will be needed to bring about such changes?
- Who will lead changes in rewards and recognition (e.g., awards, promotions, pay, work team bonuses)? What support will be needed to bring about such changes?
- Who will lead changes in training (e.g., courses organized, mentoring, internships)? What support will be needed to bring about such changes?
- Who will lead changes in confrontation processes (e.g., reprimands, demotions, pay cuts, firings)? What support will be needed to bring about such changes?
- Who will lead changes in communication systems (e.g., newsletters, computer bulletin boards, survey feedback, sharing of financial and customer satisfaction data)? What support will be needed to bring about such changes?
- Who will lead changes in the allocation of resources (e.g., money, time, information)? What support will be needed to bring about such changes?
- Who will lead changes in the decision-making processes (delegation of authority, formation of task forces, work team self-management)? What support will be needed to bring about such changes?
- Who will change group membership (e.g., restructuring, reporting relationships)? What support will be needed to bring about such changes?
- Who will lead changes in myths, rituals and symbols (e.g., organizational stories, celebrations, rites-of-passage)? What support will be needed to bring about such changes?

Leadership Development

Leaders play important roles in consistently articulating a vision of success. Leaders are also instrumental in inspiring commitment, recognizing contributions, delegating needed resources and making sure that plans are followed through to completion.

Many people in leadership positions lack sufficient leadership skills to bring about sustained change. As a result, most culture change programs provide leadership training and help to develop new leadership roles. In a health promotion program, for example, a company chief executive might receive weekly lifestyle mentoring so that he or she can better model healthy lifestyle choices. Task force chairpeople might be given special training in how to create work teams, hold successful meetings, and measure program impact. Leadership development frequently involves teaching skills for fostering a healthy climate--one that has a sense of community, shared vision and positive outlook.

Leadership Level Integration: Strategic Design Questions

- What skills will leaders need in order to successfully model their commitment to desired change?
- What new leadership roles might be necessary to bring about desired change? How will these new leaders be trained?
- How will leaders foster a climate that supports change?

Phase IV: Ongoing Evaluation, Renewal and Extension

The fourth phase of project development is both an ending and a beginning. An ending because Phase I performance, programmatic and cultural measures are repeated for evaluation purposes. And an ending because successes are celebrated. Phase IV also represents a beginning in that new performance, programmatic and cultural objectives are established.

Phase IV efforts must provide sufficient opportunity to celebrate accomplishments. There is a tendency in many cultures to focus on what has not been achieved. Such celebration efforts should avoid discounting successes. Celebration should combine internal recognition with external public acclaim. Frequently, Phase IV activities include the publication of project findings.

Project extension plays an important role in culture change. The very process of teaching others renews commitment. Perhaps most importantly, such extension efforts help establish support in the broader culture. Such change in the broader culture makes it easier to maintain local progress. And assisting others generates new ideas for the home front.

Effective evaluation and renewal can reduce the likelihood that the change effort will create bureaucracy. Sometimes, given a lack of results or very high standards, the entire four-phase process should be repeated. More often, however, members of the culture are ready to move on to other pressing cultural concerns.

Evaluation, Renewal and Extension: Strategic Design Questions

- What performance, programmatic and cultural goals were achieved?
- What new goals, if any, should be set?
- How will accomplishments be celebrated?
- What steps need to be taken to maintain and deepen cultural change?
- How can lessons from this experience be shared with other groups, organizations or communities?
- How can lessons from this experience be applied to other cultural problems?

LEARNING FROM CULTURE CHANGE APPLICATIONS

Since the Normative Systems Culture Change Process was first developed in the 1960s, there have been over 1,000 project applications in a wide range of settings. Information about many of these projects is can be found in more than 100 books, journal reprints, videos and other resource materials available from the Human Resources Institute. Perhaps the best way to take advantage of past project experience is to visit the Human Resources Institute web site at www.healthyculture.com.

The Human Resources Institute is continually updating its culture change project database. Your project experience may prove valuable to those planning and evaluating their culture change efforts. Please send information about your culture change efforts to the address below.

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