

PSYCHOLOGY AND PSYCHIATRY

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CREATING AND MANAGING A HIGH-PERFORMING CULTURE

***Abstract.** Each organisation has its own unique set of culture, however, a cohort of organisations are distinguished from others due to their distinctive yet similarly classifiable high-performing nature. This paper introduces the idea of high-performing cultures and elucidates tools to achieve and manage one. It also briefly discusses the challenges that come along the journey of attaining and maintaining a high-performance culture stature and the benefits that an organisation might reap if it effectively manages these impasses.*

***Keywords:** organisational culture, high-performing culture, employee engagement, employee development, performance management.*

“Organisational culture is a living creature and employees are the ones who feed it” (Rick, 2017). Thus, it can be said that organisational culture thrives on the energy, intent, and motivation of its employees. However, a reciprocal relationship amongst the two is also very probable, wherein, the employees tend to feed off, uplift their standards, and become more engaged with their work as a result of the organisational culture they are operating in. Hence, organisational culture becomes a very salient feature to the performance of the employees within the organisation, and in rough measure, it becomes a crucial factor for the overall performance and achievement of the organisation. But it is very apparent not all organisations have a similar culture. Moreover, a single framework for the development of an

organisation's culture cannot exist as different cultures are suited to different organisations. Furthermore, each successful organisation, needs a unique and a tailor-made culture for it to suit its distinctive requirements/needs.

However, it must be noted, that although these cultures within various organisations might differ in a plethora of ways, most successful, high-performing, organisations tend to have the similar tenets and mores at the crux of their cultures. This piece of work will analyse these high-performing cultures and will provide tools to create and manage one.

A high-performing culture is one which supports the employees and gives them tools to work optimally and produce superior results. Such cultures are very well aligned with the vision and mission of the organisation, and such cultures not only promote the vision and mission of the organisation but also prove to be a bolster and pillar to support the achievement of these goals. Moreover, such cultures are very actively engaged in investing in their employees, technology, and organisational operations to continually improve their functioning, and thus, foster an environment for growth.

A research and advisory firm, Gartner Glossary (n.d.), explains high-performing culture as a physical or virtual environment developed to make the employees as effective as possible in supporting the organisational goals and providing value for the company. Philip Lew, the CEO of C9 Staff in regard to high-performing cultures said, "It's more a combination of a number of elements that include upper management; management style and strategy; task distribution and assignment; and systems of accountability, cooperation and help, and support among others" (Tansey, 2021).

As aforementioned, each organisation has a unique culture, however, what separates organisations with high-performing cultures from organisations with suboptimal-performing cultures, is the heavy reliance of high-performing organisations on building a culture on universally accepted behaviours which have a history of negligible unintended consequences and that are aligned with the natural behaviours and virtues of the organisation's leaders.

The key to creating a high-performing culture is to pivot the organisation's

attempts from inculcating the espoused values of the organisation in the employees, to inculcating a set of actionable virtues that the organisation desires that embody and reflect the values that are aspired. Thus, it is important to understand the difference between values and virtues. In rudimentary yet easy to understand terms, values are what you believe in, but virtues are what you do. Thus, virtues are actionable, and by inculcating actionable norms and guidelines in an organisation, one can ensure he/she gives his/her employees a tangible way to exercise the required beliefs/principles, rather than vague and abstract sentences about the company values.

This idea of values vs virtues is elucidated in detail with examples by Ben Horowitz (2019) in his book “What you do is who you are”, wherein, he argues that corporate values are worthless because they are just set of beliefs, however, corporate virtues are the ones that actually define the culture of the organisation.

Thus, to create a high performing culture, it is incumbent on the leaders to communicate the company’s vision, mission, and virtues to the employees with clarity and brevity. It is also important for the leaders to reinforce the right kind of behaviour in the organisation, for example, if the organisation’s vision is to create the best customer service, but the reinforcements (rewards) are provided to employees for just selling more of their products than the competitors, this reinforcement shall not promote the required virtues and behaviours in the organisation.

There must be open communication in the organisation, where the leaders are aware and connected to the employees in the lower rungs of the organisation as well as the upper rungs of the organisation, and it must be made sure that these divisions are also connected amongst each other for a smooth and transparent flow of information and communication from top to bottom and vice versa.

Once an organisation has achieved a high-performing culture, it needs to be on top of certain aspects to sustain and manage this culture for it to grow and develop further. As much as it is the responsibility of the organisation’s leaders to create and build a high performing culture, they are equally responsible for sustaining it as well. If a leader tends to stray away from his/her initial code of conduct/virtues in a

manner that is not strategically planned and is not in the good faith of the organisation, the culture is the first element to suffer. Thus, leaders must be cognizant of their behaviours and actions to reinforce the right message within the company. Further, to maintain a high-performance culture, it is necessary to always keep the employees' bowls full of little kibbles of learning and relearning training programs with their daily work.

As we live in an era where knowledge about each field substantially changes in a matter of months and few years, it is important to keep the employees up to date with these changes through training programs, and as the saying goes the faintest of inks is better than the human memory, it is essential that employees are retrained in certain fields that the company might feel the need to do better in.

Moreover, it is necessary for organisations with high-performance cultures to realise that they must be focussing more on the development of strengths of their employees and the utilization of the already existing strengths of these employees for their advantage as it is the reason they have reached the stature of a high performing culture.

It is important to keep this in mind as when a substantial amount of time passes by, it is common for managers and supervisors to berate and focus their attention on the flaws and weakness of their employees rather than their strengths and their utilization. Weakness must be acknowledged and resources to overcome them shall be provided to the employee, however, if the organisation excessively begins to focus on these flaws, it might reduce the employee engagement levels, and the effectiveness and incorporation levels of feedback will also decrease within the company.

The aforementioned ideas must give some sense of the various challenges that are a part and parcel of creating and managing a high-performing culture in an organisation. This section will briefly mention these challenges and benefits that an organisation achieves by overcoming them. Lack of trust is a very big factor that affects the culture of an organisation and its effects translate into a myriad of deleterious effects. If an organisation is not able to create and foster trust amongst its employees and the management, its quality, performance, and finances all take a hit.

One more intrinsically connected aspect to the lack of trust in an organisation is the interpersonal relationship problems amongst the employees. If employees have poor relationships amongst one another, they will always prioritise their individual wellbeing over the wellbeing of their team and department, which in most cases leads to disastrous results. As mentioned previously, the company needs clear set of virtues for an optimal functioning, however, if a company's core set of virtues/principles/beliefs themselves are poorly/unthoughtfully designed, that organisation's culture tends to grow like unkempt weed in a lawn, which is rarely a good case. Organisational politics and ambiguity are also a challenge, as organisational politics if monitored and supervised can be a catapulting factor, however, when this politics is mixed with ambiguity, some employees might begin to take advantage of it, thus clarity and transparency is of utmost necessity in a high-performing organisation.

If an organisation is able to overcome these barriers and challenges in a systematic and strategized manner, it can create an efficient and well-designed high-performing culture for their organisation. This culture will not only allow for increased productivity and profitability in an organisation but will enhance the organisation's focus on execution of various strategies, improve their customer loyalty, increase employee satisfactions/engagement, and will promote greater commitment and personal accountability towards the short comings of work.

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