



# Organizational Culture Is Best Left to a Specialist

Organizations, like people, can get quickly out of shape. It takes an intentional focus, a proven process and the right experts, to shape cultures for the demands of the future.



**senn delaney**  
the culture-shaping firm

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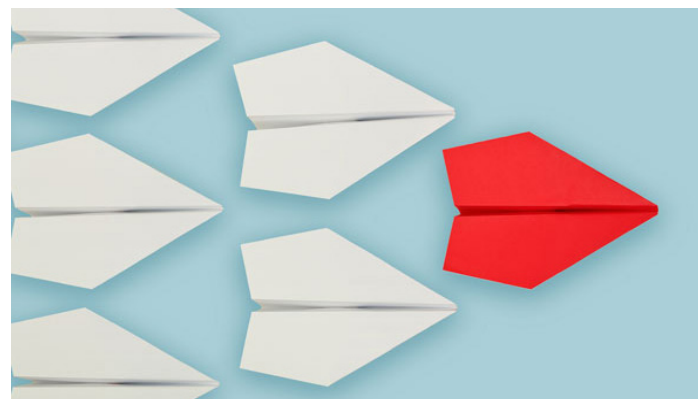
HEIDRICK & STRUGGLES

# Successful culture shaping is a process that involves four key principles that we have defined and refined over decades of work

Edgar H. Schein, Ph.D., professor emeritus at the Sloan School of Management, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, dates 1978 as the year that roles, norms, and values were identified as the components of organizational culture, as outlined in *The Social Psychology of Organizations*. That year also happened to mark the founding of Senn Delaney, the culture-shaping firm of Heidrick & Struggles. Coincidence is often the sire of irony.

Up to then, corporate culture existed, of course, but it was generally not seen as a critical part of any organization's strategies or success. The "Tees": tools, technology, and traditional training held sway. And when they failed to live up to their providers' lofty promises, few pointed to organizational culture as the culprit. But among those few, one firm identified a concept that cultures, like people, can get quickly out of shape. Or they may be in great shape, but only for competing in the past, rather than the future. Hence the idea of culture shaping for the challenges of tomorrow.

There has been a great deal of research and deep dives into organizational culture since 1978. We've learned how to measure cultures and assess their fitness for the way forward. We've learned that often subtle changes can reap positive, and not-so subtle, results. We've developed methods to intentionally transform cultures, large and small. To be sure, we've



learned that organizational culture is immensely greater than the sum of its parts.

No one denies the importance of organizational culture today. The question is whether organizations (and their leaders) will shape their cultures or whether cultures will shape the organizations. The latter often leads to failure. The impact of intentionally shaping organizational culture is a basic tenet of culture work today. Preserving the best of culture, while shaping new elements to address shifts in strategy, structure, and the marketplace, is a process that we think of as "culture shaping."

Foundational principles of culture shaping were developed, and have been continually refined over decades of successful, transformational work:

- **Purposeful leadership** is key. Senior leaders must own and lead the culture to become a part of their shadows.
- **Personal change** is at the heart of organizational change. Individuals unfreeze habits and adopt personal, positive-behavior change. Stakeholders across the enterprise must understand the purpose for shaping a culture at a personal level and need to understand the "from-to" of the culture journey.
- **Broad leader-led engagement** across the enterprise is required for a shift to occur. The faster the whole organization engages in the process, the higher the probability the culture will evolve successfully.
- **Systemic alignment and reinforcement** at the individual, team, and organizational levels are essential. Institutional practices, systems, performance drivers, and capabilities are aligned to drive the desired culture.

Given the irrefutable impact of organizational culture understood by CEOs today, strategy and manage-

ment consulting firms have picked up the mantle of addressing culture through processes and systems that are compatible with their methodologies. While building the right processes and systems, establishing key initiatives and work streams, and defining communication strategies and interventions are important aspects of addressing organizational culture, the essence of an organization's culture rests in the hearts and minds of its people. The art and science of shaping a culture to achieve the desired impact on stakeholders, shareholders, and bottom-line results requires the capabilities to inspire a shift in mindset that drives measurable and sustainable behavioral change one leader, one employee, at a time.

Just as an organization's culture and business performance are inextricably linked, so are the art and science of culture shaping. Supporting personal change and purposeful leadership with precise, strategic diagnostics, reinforcement, application, and measurement reflects Senn Delaney's methodology to blend both the art and the science of culture shaping.

Initiating an effort to address your organization's culture requires leadership commitment, strategic consideration, and a thorough understanding of how it affects business performance. Selecting a partner to guide your cultural journey is the most important first step in the process. You've done your research—and the results are confusing. Consulting firms of



all sizes and stripes describe themselves as organizational culture experts. Peel back the onion and you will find that most offer not true culture change but a mix of strategy consulting, culture surveys, how-to guides, online learning modules, or traditional executive coaching and leadership training. There are some important considerations in making your selection.

### Ten considerations for selecting a culture partner:

1. Does the firm focus on culture, or is it simply one of many of its offerings?
2. Does the consulting firm have a track record of proven success?
3. Can the firm shift mindsets and behaviors of people?
4. Can the firm scale the culture across thousands of employees at all levels?
5. Can they deliver the culture work in multiple languages and countries for global companies?
6. Does the firm have online resources to reinforce behaviors and the process?
7. Can the consultants work at the executive level as strategic partners?
8. Do they have clients that have sustained the results many years later?
9. Do they have evidence and case studies that demonstrate they have measurably shifted behaviors to improve business results?
10. Do they have a proven methodology and system of repetition and reinforcement to sustain change?

The shaping of successful organizational cultures is Senn Delaney's passion. In the management-consulting world, we are specialists, dedicated to continuously innovating new approaches and methodologies, grounded in our foundational research. While conscious of the confluence of factors that drive an organization's performance, we are experts in shaping culture for impact and in implementing the best approach to shaping a culture for competitive advantage, in concert with all of the critical elements of enterprise success.

## About Senn Delaney

Senn Delaney is the culture-shaping firm of Heidrick & Struggles International, Inc., the premier provider of Executive Search, Culture Shaping and Leadership Consulting services worldwide. Founded in 1978, Senn Delaney was the first firm in the world to focus exclusively on transforming cultures. A singular focus of creating healthy, high-performance cultures has made us the leading international authority and successful practitioner of culture shaping that enhances the spirit and performance of organizations.

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