Strata Consulting Group

Building a Successful Culture in Construction

Strata Resource Pack
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Leadership Development | Culture Building | Data Analytics | Workforce Optimization | Outcome-Based Strategy

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Why Workplace Culture is the Key to a Thriving Construction Industry

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To read the full issue visit www.buildingfuturesmag.com

By David R. Wilson, Ph.D., Strata Consulting Group

"Culture eats strategy for lunch." This may be the most repeated phrase of leadership consultants today. And it's accurate. No matter how much you strategize, your organizational culture will determine the results you see from your efforts. Culture is the hinge on which strategy swings. This is as true for construction as for any other industry. But what we really mean when we say "culture is the key" is that a *healthy, high-functioning* culture is critical to the success of the industry.

Every organization has a culture. The question is, is the culture the one you want, and does it achieve your organization's mission? To answer this, we must first identify what counts as "culture?" And secondly, we have to ask what makes a workplace culture "high functioning?"

Simply stated, culture is the set of repeated behaviors, shared values, and patterns of communication that form the identity of a group. Culture communicates what is considered "normal" or "acceptable." Of course, much of this is unspoken or even unconscious. When people join a team, they naturally ask, "How are things done here and how do I fit in? Does this workplace offer me a sense of belonging? Am I valued here? Is my work meaningful?" The signals a culture sends are crucial to whether workers find positive answers to those questions.

When the answers to these questions are positive, workers tend to see their work as a career, not just a job. Conversely, when the answers are negative, workplace morale declines, presenting numerous risks not only to the individuals themselves, but to projects, companies, and the broader industry. A negative work environment is correlated with higher mental health risks, injuries on the job, and decreased ability for companies to recruit and retain skilled laborers.

One of the areas where the construction industry has struggled is diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). When individuals feel excluded from participating as full members of the workforce, the organization's creative capacity to move towards its goals is stunted. This exclusion (even if it is unintentional), includes anything from socio-economic status to gender to ethnicity or race. It sends the implicit message that differences, including innovative solutions arising from those differences, "don't belong here."

Fortunately, workplace culture can be measured, and the data from workplace assessments can be used to help frame strategies to shift culture so the industry can move confidently into the future.

Recent research shows that companies that maintain a positive workplace culture from the field to the office, with steady progress towards DEI outcomes, improve in numerous ways, including higher productivity and increased profitability. As workers perceive a genuine sense of value, meaningfulness, and belonging, it feeds directly into the company's ability to recruit top talent, improve workflow efficiency, and secure market share. Safety standards are also more easily achieved, and workers are more likely to see a clear path to career development in the construction industry, benefitting themselves and the companies they work for. People success and business success go hand in hand.

So, the question is, if culture is key, how are you working to build a high-functioning culture in your workplace? ∎

Culture consists of identity-forming:
- Repeated behaviors
  Shared values
- Patterns of communication
- Customs
- Collected stories

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Building a Strong, High Functioning Culture
Key Questions for Team Members to Ask Themselves Regularly

1. **How am I working to create a psychologically safe environment for my organization?**
   - Am I listening well to others?
   - Do I check my assumptions?
   - Do I respond rather than react?
   - Do I handle disagreement respectfully?
   - Do I promote kindness?
   - Do I offer criticism without personal attack?
   - When others ask for help, do I let them know it's ok not to know everything and to ask for help when needed?
   - Am I intentionally developing my communication skills and habits?
   - Do I attempt to listen first and speak second?
   - Do I point regularly to the successes of others on our team?

2. **How am I taking risks and being vulnerable?**
   - Am I regularly thinking about how we can develop as a company in ways we haven't before?
   - Do I share my ideas with others on the team?
   - Do I find time and space to think "outside the box" with how we do things?
   - Am I open to correction from my colleagues?
   - Do I admit my shortcomings freely?
   - Do I celebrate failure when it is the result of trying something new?
   - Do I let others develop from where they are so they can hone their skills?

3. **How is my contribution to the company tethered to and influenced by our company mission?**
   - Do I consistently see myself as part of team that is moving towards a clear mission?
   - How does what I do move us towards our mission?
   - Do I reflect on our mission statement regularly and allow it to shape my work priorities?
   - What do I do to affirm other members of our team and to support them?
   - How do I contribute to our team being a collaborative entity?
   - How do I share my strengths with others in the company?
   - Who am I learning from that has strengths I can learn from?

Assessing Your SEEN and UNSEEN Culture: Field Team

In the seminar, we looked at how culture involves both "seen" (location, space, tools, equipment, materials, people, structure, policies, etc.) and "unseen" (assumptions, values, belonging cues, meaning, stories, understanding, knowledge, etc.) elements. Use this worksheet to list out some of the "seen" and "unseen" elements of YOUR field/jobsite culture. We've added a couple of examples in each column to get you started. You can use this as a team activity in an office or field meeting too!

Seen Culture

- **Materials, Equip., Tools**
- **Drawings, specs, etc.**
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Unseen Culture

- **Unique team greetings (e.g. fist bumps, handshakes, etc.)**
- **Team sayings (e.g. "let's keep it LEAN")**
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Assessing Your SEEN and UNSEEN Culture: Office Team

In the seminar, we looked at how culture involves both "seen" (office space, furniture, gathering space, people, structure, policies, etc.) and "unseen" (assumptions, values, belonging cues, meaning, stories, understanding, knowledge, etc.) elements. Use this worksheet to list out some of the "seen" and "unseen" elements of YOUR field/jobsite culture. We've added a couple of examples in each column to get you started. You can use this as a team activity in an office or field meeting too!

Seen Culture

- **Office space/setting (e.g., open concept, closed offices, etc.)**
- **IT equipment and support**
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Unseen Culture

- **Team values**
- **Communication methods**
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Tools for Assessing Your Team

How does YOUR team behave when together? How do they interact, communicate, establish relationships, and build culture? Strata offers a range of tools to help you assess your team and build your culture strategically. Three of these tools are listed here as a starting place for your consideration. Let us know how we can help!

DiSC

DiSC is a well-researched and time-tested tool to help you identify the behavioral styles of your team. Whether looking at an office team, field team, or a comprehensive team profile, DiSC profiles and training provide key insights about how your team interacts, how it can communicate effectively, and how you can help build on strengths and fill gaps in your workforce.

Decisive

Interactive

Stabilizing

Cautious
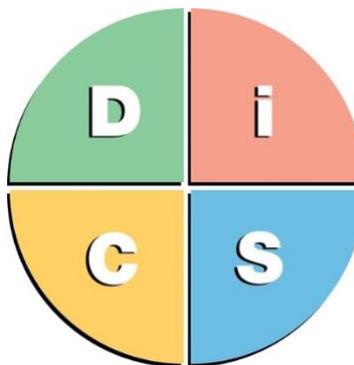
- Increase self-awareness regarding behaviors and how they work in a team
- Increase others-awareness regarding behaviors
- Improve ability to communicate effectively in our team
- Increase sense of belonging for each of team member

Values

What motivates your workforce? Each person on your team brings their own values to their work. Knowing what motivates your team members can be critical to creating effective training, building leadership influence, and developing everything from team building to incentive programs. Our values assessment looks at seven core values and provides an individual and team profile.

Workforce Analysis

The only way to know how you are doing with cultural development is to measure it. Set clear outcomes, build activities/programs, and then measure to see if it's working. Strata offers a workforce assessment point-in-time snapshot and analysis to help you see where you are so you can identify key strategies for moving the needle and improving your culture. If you're trying to get at whether your team members are tied to your organization's mission, if they feel safe, if they feel included, if they find meaning in their work, and if your cultural development initiatives are working, this assessment will help!

Best Practices for Developing DEI in Your Organization

1) Establish a DEI subcommittee

2) Develop strategies and set outcomes

3) Generate buy-in from key leadership

4) Embed diversity within recruitment and advancement strategies

5) Integrate DEI initiatives into safety program

6) Develop and offer DEI education

7) Conduct workforce analysis and measure outcomes

8) Communicate findings back to organization

DEI Company Self-Assessment Tool

This brief self-assessment takes a broad look at your company's posture towards Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion using **Strata's Four Core**™ Framework (People, Structure, Culture, and Strategy). This is a small sample of Strata Consulting Group's larger in-depth workforce analysis and DEI assessment process.

This shortened version is not meant to be a comprehensive analysis and should only be used as a basic indicator and potential discussion guide with your team.

To take the assessment and get your score immediately, go to this link:

Strata DEI Self-Asessment Tool

About Strata

We'll walk with you to help energize your processes and maximize an efficient path towards your culture and leadership goals.

Thank you for selecting Strata Consulting Group. Our team combines more than 30 years of experience in cultural development, leadership training, organizational process design, and data analytics. We provide a carefully curated selection of best practices, analytical frameworks, developmental models, and educational curriculum for your organizational success.

Unique in our approach, Strata utilizes outcome/results-based strategies and data analytics to help gauge movement towards your goals. Using our customized Strata reports, all participants in the consulting process will be able to visualize and track progress toward your desired outcomes. This facilitates accountability and allows us to adjust as needed along the way, reducing wasted resources, and fostering continuous improvement. As a lean process, our time with your team will be maximized, allowing more time to spend on achieving your goals.

For questions about the seminar or any of the information contained in this resource pack please feel free to contact us.

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Resources

Here are some great resources (just click the link to check them out) to get you started thinking about your culture. Need coaching or consultation? Contact us at info@strataconsultinggroup.com or visit us at www.strataconsultinggroup.com.

- **Daniel Coyle, *The Culture Code: The Secrets of Highly Successful Groups* (New York: Bantam, 2018).**

- **Kathryn Jacob, Sue Unerman, and Mark Edwards, *The Key to Transforming and Maintaining Diversity, Inclusion and Equality at Work* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020).**

- **Amy C. Edmondson, *Teaming: How Organizations Learn, Innovate, and Compete In the Knowledge Economy* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2012).**

- **Benjamin Laker, "Culture is a Company's Single Most Powerful Advantage. Here's Why," *Forbes*, April 23, 2021. https://www.forbes.com/sites/benjaminlaker/2021/04/23/culture-is-a-companys-single-most-powerful-advantage-heres-why/?sh=4b6535b2679e**

- **Jennifer Brown, *Inclusion: Diversity, the New Workplace & the Will to Change* (Hartford: Publish Your Purpose Press, 2016).**