

The Results Pyramid: Experiences + Beliefs + Actions + Results = Culture

Leaders create experiences every day. Experiences foster beliefs. Beliefs, in turn, drive the actions people take. Collectively, their actions, with few exceptions, produce their results (Connors and Smith, 2011).

Culture building is a leadership imperative.

Organizational culture is the way people think and act. Every organization has a culture, which either works for you or against you—and it can make the difference between success and failure. Either you will manage your culture, or it will manage you. The experiences, beliefs, and actions of the people in your organization constitute your culture and *your culture produces your results*. Leaders must ask themselves one all-important question: If everyone in the organization continues to think and act in the same manner as they do today, can you expect to achieve the results you need to achieve?

The most effective culture is a culture of accountability.

A clear line separates accountable and non-accountable behavior and thinking. Above the line are the steps to accountability: See It, Own It, Solve It, Do It. Below the line is the all-too-familiar blame game or victim cycle. When individuals consistently engage in these two very different modes of thinking and acting, they create different organizational cultures, which perform at strikingly different levels.

It is not wrong to go Below the Line. We all do. It's human nature. In fact, we can all occasionally benefit from venting our frustrations about the obstacles that block our paths. However, if we remain stuck Below the Line, we become more focused on what we cannot do rather than on what we can do. We set our sights on the obstacles we face, not the actions we can take to get past those obstacles and achieve the results we want. People who are habitually Below the Line do not get results. Instead, they grow increasingly frustrated and paralyzed.

People who live Above the Line, accept the fact that they are, and must be, part of the solution. They focus on what they can do rather than on what they cannot do to get results. They view obstacles as opportunities to make great things happen rather than as excuses for failure. The more time you, and your organization, spend Above the Line, the greater will be your results.

A culture of accountability exists when people in every corner of the organization make the personal choice to take the steps to accountability.

- **See It:** When you See It, you relentlessly obtain the perspective of others, communicate openly and candidly, ask for and offer feedback, and hear the hard things that allow you to courageously acknowledge reality.
- **Own It:** When you Own It, you are personally invested, learning from both successes and failures, aligning your work with desired organizational results, and acting on the feedback you receive. You align yourself with the mission and priorities of the organization and accept them as your own.
- **Solve It:** When you Solve It, you constantly ask, “What else can I do to achieve results, overcome obstacles, and make progress?”
- **Do It:** When you Do It, you do what you say you will do, staying focused on top priorities. You do not blame others. You sustain an environment of trust.

If everyone takes the steps to accountability, the entire organization moves away from the mistaken idea that accountability means “getting caught failing” and toward a more positive approach that empowers people to begin “starring in the solution.”

The old culture will not produce new results.

Remember, by definition, the culture produces your results. You can't expect your current culture to produce new results. It simply won't work. In most cases, the current culture is not a bad culture. It's simply a culture that won't produce new results. The new culture always builds on the strengths of the old culture. However, to achieve new results, some shifts in the culture will be required.

You can't expect the old culture to magically abandon its powerful, persistent, existing attributes and produce new results. That just won't happen. To achieve new results, you must create a new culture that will produce those results. You do this by defining the needed shifts in the way people think (beliefs) and act, which will then produce the new experiences that will help them adopt those desired beliefs and actions. Too often, leaders attempt to change the way people act without changing the way they think (i.e. their beliefs). As a result, they get compliance, but not commitment; involvement, but not investment; and progress, but not lasting performance.