AUGUST   **ISSUE: 34**

WHAT FLAVOR IS YOUR CULTURE?

Ask Roxi

AUGUST Question

QUESTION:

"When should I stand my ground vs.

TEDx - Jay Wilkinson -
Company Culture
Why it Matters

Dear Roxi,

As summer comes to a gentle close, I hope you took some time for yourself, friends, and family, to enjoy the sunshine and revel in the warmth.

Having recently moved to the mountains of North Carolina, near Asheville, I have been struck by the dramatic differences in regional culture from upstate NY. There are as many fast food restaurants and big box stores. It is as hard to get a car registered at the DMV as anywhere else, and there are nice people and not nice people. The difference, though, is the culture that pervades the environment all around us.

In NC, southern hospitality is still very much alive and well, even with the "imported people". It takes no time at all to get to know people, and everyone loves to start a long, drawn out conversation and tell stories. No one is in a big rush to get anywhere and yet, everything still gets done in a reasonable time. It's fascinating to notice the many subtle and not so subtle differences in culture. In NY, I was usually in a more of a hurry, and it took a bit longer to get to know people, and I didn't hear too many people telling stories. Neither culture is good or bad - they are just really different. So are our workplaces and we can feel it the minute we walk in the door.

Why should you **seriously** pay attention to your organizational culture? You need to because the culture impacts everything everyone is doing and how they are doing it. Humans have defined their ways of being and doing for tens of thousands of years through their beliefs, traditions, rituals, values, and norms...which of course, make up their cultures. A very basic human need it to belong. It makes sense because not many, if any, Homo Sapiens could have survived for the past 200,000 years without others helping them.

go with the flow and go along with someone else's opinion?"

ANSWER:

This is an easy answer. Stand your ground when your deeply held values are at risk of being violated - and be clear with others about the value you are standing on. For instance, if you are faced with an ethical question that you feel violates your value of honest or being trustworthy, then don't give in to anyone's pressure.

However, if is simply a matter of opinion - should we go left or right to get to our destination, consider how big a deal it is, whether you are or the other person simply needs to be "right" or "get my way" vs. letting life unfold. It's

Culture has the power to give and take life. It is such a powerful force that those who are believed to have violated the norms and mores of the culture are punished in one way or another, up to and including being shunned, starved, and killed. A more positive example of the power of culture is the ways in which people celebrate those who behave in ways their culture highly values, such as artistic creations, rites of passage, a worthwhile accomplishment, a heroic deed, etc. The culture may require the people within it to behave in accordance with it or risk being shunned or spit out. In most workplaces, however, the culture may have enough flexibility to allow people to question it, and work together to redefine or reshape it.

An organization's espoused culture and values may or may not reflect the reality within the organization. All of us know organizations that do and don't reflect what they say matters. For instance, at Enron, the poster company for bad leadership, their senior management made decisions based on a single unpublished value, "Maximize price per share of common stock" - not even close to their espoused values of "respect, integrity, communication and excellence." This wouldn't be so bad in and of itself, except the very real sub-test to maximizing common stock was, "by any mean, legal or illegal." Enron's real values were, very simply, greed-based; that was their basic principle. This resulted in creating a toxic 'end justifies the means' culture that made a mockery of their espoused values. This fatal decision on the part of Enron's management defined and consumed their culture until it was no more.

It's a case study in what not to do, and a lesson ignored completely by the housing and financial sectors that also fell prey to deeply-embedded, full-blown, greed as their underlying value.

We have all suffered from leaders who say one thing and do another. Native People's called this behavior speaking with forked tongue. Bottom line: One cannot overstate the importance of the leaders' role in creating, shaping, nurturing, and sustaining the desired workplace culture.

Since the time when we humans began to create communities, to trade with each other, to build structures and systems, culture has been a very big part of how we define ourselves. Even when we are not fully conscious of the cultural forces that shape us, we learn quickly "how we do things here" to both survive and thrive with our fellow human beings. This is as true in a Fortune 100 company as it is in a family system and of course, in any of our workplaces.

To understand what is happening in our organizations and the impact of the leadership within, we must understand the impact of the cultures around us. Our beliefs, customs, learning, arts, and more, of a particular society, group, place, or time, are the threads of the tapestry for any culture. It's also a way of thinking, behaving, or working that exists in a place or organization. This is a dictionary definition. I define it by simply saying, "It's the way we do things here."

The word, culture, is used in so many ways to describe people. The American culture, gang culture, a culture of greed, liberal vs. conservative cultures...and so on. Unless we have studied and understood the nuances within any specific culture, we can too easily fall into the trap of making sweeping generalizations, and assumptions. We may assume we know others' attitudes, motivations, values, and beliefs - based on limited information and experience. Our thoughts can be infused with bias, stereotypes, and opinions. To prevent falling into this oversimplification trap about anyone or any culture, we need to ask more than assume. We need to be open to learning from those who are similar and those who are different from us. This is true in our workplaces and it's true in our world.

Culture is like the air we breathe. It is all around us, and the signs are there like the wind. Sometimes it's in neon lights. More often though, there are subtle clues to tell us what's going on and we need to look for them.

Just like there are archetypes in spiritual belief systems, there are cultural

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archetypes that can be seen and measured. We will focus here on four dominant cultural archetypes that are present in virtually every organization or system on the planet to one degree or another. They have different and even opposite value drivers, effectiveness assumptions, and leadership styles.

4 DOMINANT CULTURAL ARCHETYPES.
People - Possibility - Product - Policy

Using a tool I created called the C.A.T. Scan - or Cultural Assessment Tool, you cab assess your team and organizational cultures by way of these four archetypes. You will also gain insights about how your leaders and you might affect them, and how to strengthen and/or change them.

Each of these cultures brings value, strengths, and challenges to the table. It is a rare case when only one of these is operating within the larger organization. In fact, an organization may have all four operating at the same time. Usually, there are one or two that dominate and one that is the least noticeable.

Product: This is a thinking culture where the focus is on results, objectivity, competitiveness and transactional interactions with the external world, including customers, suppliers, regulators, etc. Getting to the goal line really matters in a product culture. These leaders are highly competitive, drivers, and all about bottom-line results. They care a lot about market share and achievement and profits (in the non-profit world - big influence). An example of this could be a highly market driven company like General Electric.

Policy: This is a sensing culture where the focus is on control, accountability, rules, hierarchy, and formality. Attention is largely internal. These leaders focus on monitoring, timeliness, details, organizing, uniformity, laws and rules. An example of this culture could include governmental agencies and public schools.

People: This is a feeling culture where the focus is on teamwork, collaboration, and empowerment of the people within the organization. There is a strong belief that taking care of your own will take care of everything else. These leaders care and emphasize commitment, people, participation, service, loyalty, and teams. Examples of this culture might be Southwest Airlines.

Possibility: This is an intuitive culture where the focus is on innovation and agility. It is entrepreneurial, with few rules, often shifting roles and priorities on a dime to do whatever needs to be done. They want to stay on the cutting edge and meet or even help define customer needs with new solutions. Leaders here focus on vision, innovation, flexibility, and transformation. They even enjoy breaking the "rules" and forging entirely new pathways. Examples that leap to mind are Apple, Google, and Zappos.

These 4 P's - Product, Policy, People, and Possibility are the predominant cultural archetypes we see in organizations around the world, not just in the United States. Next time you are out and about, pay attention and you will notice the predominant culture pretty quickly. You can also check out who is leading the culture to give you more insights. It will likely become an awareness that you will never lose. I equate it with learning to read words on a page - once you know, you know. And like reading, it's important to make sure you read it ALL that is written or you might judge the book by its cover, and that would be a disservice to the organization and its leaders. So it goes with culture - you will pick up the obvious, but there is more to every culture than the obvious.

Because it is common to find sub-cultures within the larger culture, it's a good idea to look at the leader, her team, and the bigger system to see where they match, conflict, or compliment each other. Here's a methodical way to do that.

Mahatma Gandhi so wisely said, "A nation's culture resides in the hearts and in the soul of its people." And so it goes in every workplace and every community and every family. If we aren't taking care of the culture, we aren't taking care of business.

I believe our number one job, as leaders, is to ensure that healthy, productive cultures are created, nurtured and rewarded such that our people can and will contribute the best and truly enjoy coming into work every day!

To begin, let's start with four examples from the C.A.T. scan, or Cultural Analysis Tool, and consider whether your organization is characterized more by:

1. Teamwork and collaboration. Is it like family and is loyalty a big deal? Or...

2. Innovation, autonomy, and risk taking. Is it like being in a start up all the time/Or...

3. Competitiveness and achievement? Is it all about winning? Or is it...

4. Structure, efficiency, control. Are rules a big deal?

Which one or more did you choose as main way we do things here for your organization? Was it People, Possibility, Product or Policy? Was in a combination? Which one didn't you choose?
The point is - they are generally more obvious that you might have realized and fairly easy to diagnose with our C.A.T. scan. Go ahead, take your culture for a test-drive.

WHAT'S NEW?

# RADIO SHOW: PODCAST 24/7 & SATURDAYS AT 11AM EST

I am really excited about the AskRoxi radio show I've been hosting every Saturday morning at 11am EST. It is also a searchable podcast available 24-7. I have fantastic guests on the show regularly where we talk about LEADERSHIP challenges, experiences, and tips and traps. In addition, my intent is to impart practical ideas and suggestions about how to Lead Like it Matters!

Please join me! When the show is live, we take call ins and I will announce the phone number at regular intervals.

REQUEST OF MY LOYAL READERS...

You may not realize it, but it REALLY MATTERS to me to have your reviews of my leadership book on Amazon . So PLEASE - if you would - if you like any of my 3 books, take 5 minutes and write a review. I would be SO GRATEFUL! Thank you! Or you can just insert my last name to write a review for any of my books.

Cross of Ivy was released in July 2015, much to my excitement. I wrote this novel 25 years ago, and have loved it all this time. Finally a publisher loved it, too and the rest is history! It is the story that winds through 4 generations, WWII, the cities and back streets of Boston, Baton Rouge, New Orleans, and the fictional city of Cross, Vermont... where a fictional Ivy League University resides. The protagonist grows into a woman who is married to a football coach and loves a Louisiana farmer.
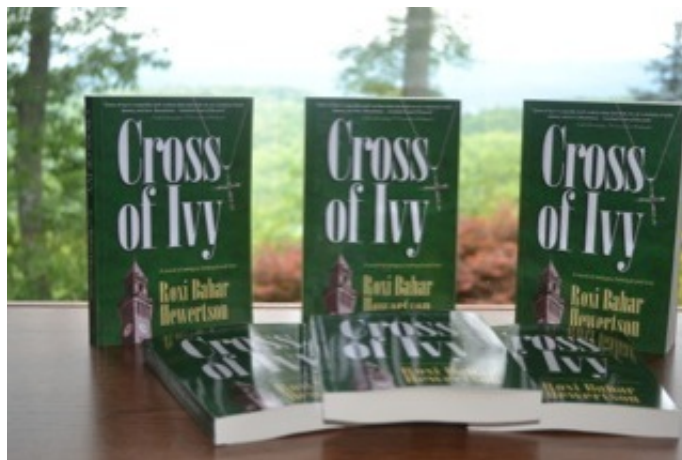
Really enjoyed seeing old friends and meeting new colleagues at the July 16-18 NCCI Annual Conference in Nashville TN. Whenever a group of bright, talented leaders are in a room together, magic happens.

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THANK YOU!!! We've sold over 4000 copies (across the world) of Lead Like it Matters and I hope you will help us get to 10,000, because that's when publishers start to pay close attention!
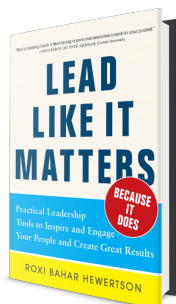
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I'd be delighted to SPEAK to your group or Association about the contents of my book, or any number of pertinent leadership topics - from Ending Meeting Madness to Responses to Change to Emotional Intelligence...and so many more! Just contact me.

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QUOTES

QUOTES OF THE MONTH

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"Together with a culture of work, there must be a culture of leisure as gratification. To put it another way: people who work must take the time to relax, to be with their families, to enjoy themselves, read, listen to music, play a sport."
Pope Francis

"Seeing is more than a physiological phenomenon... We see not only with our eyes but with all that we are and all that our culture is. The artist is a professional see-er." Dorothea Lange

SPREAD THE WORD!

I encourage you to share this newsletter with anyone you feel would enjoy it. Remember, past newsletters on a wide variety of leadership topics are located in the archive in the link above right. Just click and read. Enjoy!

With Gratitude,

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