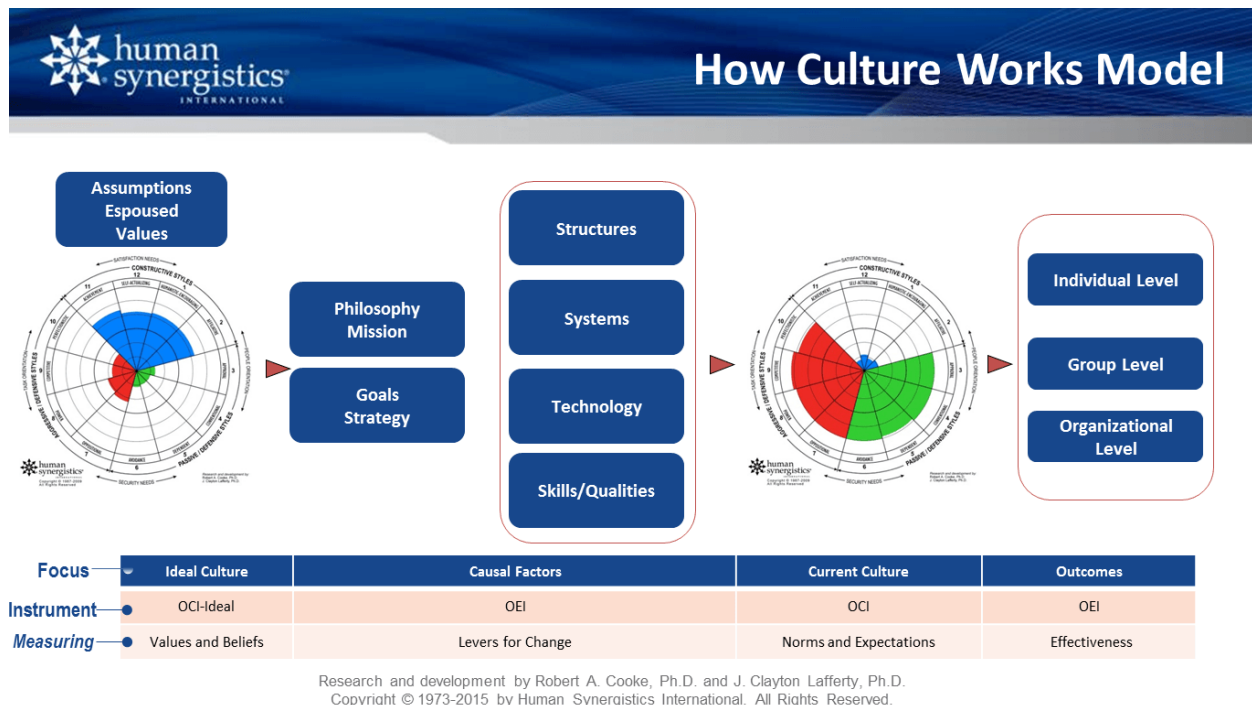# BirdsEye - Culture Leaders Network
Transformational Success Stories Guest # 4

Rachel Savoie and Samual Charron
Co-Chairs - Cultural Change Committee at Assumption Life

White Paper Topic:
Key Principles of Culture Change - Cultural Change Committee

How Culture Works Model

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Key Principles of Culture Change - Cultural Change Committee
By Rachel Savoie and Samual Charron

Question # 1: What was your first impression of the OCI organizational cultural inventory from Human Synergistics? Did you find the visual framework helpful? How did it help Assumption Life?

<u>Samual</u>: I found the experience insightful. As employees, we live and experience our company's culture every day, but the OCI (Organizational Culture Inventory) gave us a way to define and talk about it. One of the most valuable aspects of the OCI was its ability to assess our culture using clear, data-driven insights. The visual framework, especially the circumplex model, made it easier to identify different behaviours within the organization.

For Assumption Life, I would say that the OCI helped both leadership and employees understand our cultural strengths and areas for improvement. It provided a shared language for discussing culture, making our efforts to drive positive changes more focused and measurable.

Of course, fully adopting this common language takes time, and our understanding of it will continue to evolve as we face new situations together. Seeing our culture represented in a structured way has been an important step in our journey. Now, our focus is on ensuring that employees always feel valued—not just for their contributions and achievements, but as individuals who shape our culture and success.

<u>Rachel</u>: I am a visual person so the visual aspect really helped me understand, however it does take a little bit of time to get use to the wordings and actually understand this more in our day to day. It was a journey for Assumption Life but the framework was helpful for the teams since it helped us every step of the way.

Question # 2: How did the cultural change committee help senior leadership build a case for cultural change and personal transformation (of individual attitudes, values, beliefs and behaviours)? What worked best?

<u>Samual</u>: It's difficult for me to say, as I wasn't part of the initial Culture Committee. However, I had the opportunity to participate in sessions designed to empower a group of informal leaders (leaders without formal titles) by giving them direct access to Frank and his expertise on culture. It was a truly valuable experience. In fact, we've incorporated activities from those sessions into our team's practices, allowing us to actively experience our culture rather than simply discussing leadership styles in theory.

<u>Rachel</u>: The cultural change committee helped the senior leadership to get everyone involved since some employees are not comfortable to speak with managers or VP's, so this gave them a colleague to talk with and try to understand.

Question # 3: One of the main roles of a cultural change committee is to listen to staff as the process of change was unfolding. How did the committee help make space for constructive dialogue, especially when some of the changes being requested where challenging for people across the organization?

Samual: To create a space for open and constructive dialogue, the culture committee launched a book club. It provided a structured yet informal way for employees to share their thoughts, exchange ideas, and engage in discussions across different departments. Unlike formal meetings, the book club encouraged open conversations where people felt comfortable expressing their perspectives.

Over time, the book club evolved into the Culture Exchange group, recognizing that learning and discussion don't always have to come from books. However, the core purpose remains the same: ensuring employees feel heard, even when change is challenging.

Rachel: The cultural change committee helped open the conversations with various activities – Blue Zone Days where we would have various employees share their stories, leadership week that brought everyone together and created a safe space to share.

Question # 4: When stories were told to help amplify a shared vocabulary around cultural norms (i.e. constructive thinking) what stories worked best?

Samual: I don't have a specific story, but as a company with a history of conventionalism and dependency, moments of leadership vulnerability stood out. These personal stories had a much greater impact than any presentation on achievement-based behaviours.

For most people, change is something they need to feel—not just read about or listen to in a presentation. When leaders openly shared their experiences and challenges, it demonstrated a real shift in mindset, helping to foster more positive team dynamics.

Rachel: My feeling is that life experiences always works best and if we look back and the stories that people still use as examples are stories that happened to many of our employees that were brave enough to share in sessions with everyone!

Question # 5: In what manner have you seen staff engage in the cultural change process through the cultural change committee and how did these engagements make a marked difference on business performance; specifically, achievement-based thinking?

Samual: Employees participated in the cultural change process mainly through workshops like Blue Zone Days, where culture-related topics and experiences were shared, and company-wide initiatives like Bingo Culture. In Bingo Culture, employees formed cross-departmental teams to complete tasks inspired by a Bingo card, with a focus on encouraging achievement-based behaviours and reinforcing positive workplace habits.

The impact on business performance may not always be immediately measurable, but there's no denying that a happier, more engaged workplace leads to better work and a more creative environment.

Rachel: The engagement was a bit slower than wanted but simply we needed to prove ourselves as a company and a committee so people didn't think this was the flavour of the month, but now 5 years later we are still going strong.

Question # 6: As the cultural change committee worked through the change process, what key skills did leadership and staff need to acquire to ensure they were working more effectively with others?

Samual: To successfully navigate a cultural shift, the way we impact others carries more weight than our self-perception. Therefore, both leadership and staff must cultivate greater awareness of those around them by:

· Practicing empathy: Strengthening the ability to understand and relate to the feelings and
    perspectives of others.
· Developing emotional intelligence: Managing our own emotions while recognizing and
    responding to the emotions of others effectively.

Workshops, coaching, and real-time feedback loops play a vital role in equipping employees with these essential skills.

Rachel: We needed to keep a roadmap and make sure that this was kept on target and top of mind.

Question # 7: What was the most influential initiative do you believe the cultural change committee did to help influence positive changes in the organizational culture? What was a key lever for change?

Samual: I can't pinpoint a single most influential initiative because cultural change isn't a one-time project, it's an ongoing journey. While a company may set a start date, there is no definitive end. As new employees join and expectations evolve, fostering connections and trust becomes a daily commitment that takes different forms over time.

To support this continuous evolution, organizations can:
· Embed cultural expectations into performance reviews and leadership development programs.
· Establish culture champions across departments to sustain momentum.
· Provide ongoing training and resources to reinforce constructive behaviours.

Rachel: Leadership Week! This brings our complete company together once a year and we focus on ourselves not on the companies results but on the people that bring those results. So Investing in our employees is the key lever I think for this change.

Closing Comments by Rachel and Samual:

Samual: The most powerful driver of change was leadership commitment and visibility. When senior leaders and culture committee members actively demonstrated constructive behaviours (especially in high-pressure situations where people typically feel unanchored) it sent a strong message that culture is a priority, setting the tone for the entire organization.

Rachel: I believe that this cultural change is not easy but they say what is hard makes you stronger and I believe that as a company we are stronger!

Final Insights by Frank Gallant, Peak Experiences:

A Collaborative Approach: Our Model of Culture Change

To understand how to transform corporate culture, it is vital to know how corporate culture is formed in the first place, and how it evolves over time. Our own view is that corporate culture cannot be mandated from the top of organizations, but rather emerges from the shared experiences of those involved in the unfolding drama of organizational life. In our experience, most in-depth culture change processes take two to five years pending the size of the organization and the depth of the change and commitment required.

Who Needs to be on Board? One member from each of the following:

Leg 1: Senior Leadership Team
Leg 2: Human Resources and/or Learning and Development
Leg 3: Internal Culture Change Committee (Guiding Coalition of Change Agents)*
Leg 4: External Third Party Consultation / Advisory Support (Peak Experiences)

This powerful interdependent stool of support – senior leadership, a culture change committee, human resources and an external advisor all play a critical role in strategy and stickability.

A culture change committee is often made up of senior leaders, middle managers, representatives from learning and development/ human resources, staff and a member of the Peak Experiences culture change team.