



CUSTOMERS BUY  
**YOUR BRAND**  
NOT JUST THE  
PRODUCTS YOU SELL.  
**COMPANY  
CULTURE**  
DIRECTLY AFFECTS  
YOUR BRAND.

# MY BUSINESS CULTURE IS WHAT?

Business Culture, Strategy, and Tactics

**TACTICWARE RESOURCE GROUP**  
**WHITE PAPER**

  
Tacticware



*A Tacticware Resource Group, LLC White Paper*

## **Introduction**

In this white paper, we discuss culture, strategy, and tactics and how each affect customer, employee, and brand perception. Additionally, we discuss assessing company culture and embracing cultural change.

Throughout this paper, we introduce questions that you must ask yourself to determine the true temperature of your company's culture. We implore you to consider every question honestly, both as an employee of your company, and as a leader of your organization.

Often when a company encounters difficulty, some of that problem can be traced back to a cultural problem. By having an accurate representation of the current state of culture, your organization can be proactive in ensuring that your team keeps true to organizational values, and in turn, breeds its own success.

# ***Culture Is Your Brand:***

## **Revolutionize**

If you were to ask a group of business professionals the definition of culture, you would likely receive a variety of responses. Sometimes they are right, other times they are not, as culture has impact on every facet of your organization and is felt in different ways. Consider this definition:

*Culture is the shared values and behaviors of its management and employees.*

Culture establishes perception, expectations, accountability, and performance. That culture is in turn transparent to all who interact with your organization, including employees, customers, industry, and even the community as a whole.

Companies with healthy cultures ooze value. Innovation thrives. Customer loyalty and satisfaction are superior. Employee and customer retention is high. Company financials are predictable and sustainable. Stakeholders take pride in their accomplishments. Shareholders invest because it is profitable.

Internally, effective strategies and tactics shape culture to achieve its potential. Production, R&D, supply chain, administration, marketing, and sales all contribute to culture. Every department and employee is a cultural contributor. With positive culture, enterprise capacity accelerates and expands because the enterprise talent pool is capable of capitalizing on new opportunities.

Management, employees, and shareholders all thrive with a quality culture. Sound too good to be true? Well, it's not. Nearly every industry has one or two dominant players who have exactly this scenario in place.

# *From the Employee's View:*

## Cultural Health

What is it like to be an employee of your company?

You know your organization, but every member of your team may experience your company culture differently. To determine what it is like, I suggest you thoroughly consider the answers to the following health-check questions:

- Are vision, mission, and core values really integrated into the company's daily business practices?
- Are strategies and tactics well planned and executed?
- Do tactics create value or merely activity?
- Is the management team transformational and communicative?
- Is the company work environment positive or toxic?
- Do business ethics and professionalism stand firm against harassment and discrimination?

### **Highlight: Retention**

Employee retention communicates a great deal about the culture of the company.

In your organization, is management a revolving door of new faces? How many new hires actually survive the first year or two? There is something to be said for organizations who bring in new ideas and people to revolutionize. However, it is a very different scenario when you continually lose your employees and have to replace them.

For one, hiring new employees is an expensive investment. You invest time and money to bring on someone new, let alone to get them established in your company. Additionally, when they leave, what are they taking with them? Is it the relationships with clients they have built while wearing your company hat? Because that lost relationship could directly affect company the company bottom line substantially more than just one lost hire.

Another aspect of retention is mentorship. Ask yourself, is facilitating subordinate success, training, and leadership a management priority in your company? Are you truly investing in the

growth of your employees?

**Highlight: Communication**

Employees are cultural ambassadors to customers and vendors. It is commonly believed that 55% of communication is body language, 38% is the tone of voice, and 7% is the actual words spoken. With that in mind, what message do your employees communicate to the customer? While your organization might have a sales script or other avenue to streamline communication, that potentially leaves 93% of what employees are saying up for interpretation. Your clients are smart; they can tell if the employee believes the words they say.

Management shapes the cultural environment, while employees live it and communicate it. Culture is transparent and has few secrets. Customers, vendors, and community establish perception about the organization.

***Tip:** 360 Cultural Assessments provide great insight and metrics into better understanding and modifying company culture.*

# *From the Customer's View:*

## Cultural Health

What's it like to be a customer of your company?

Customers are not just purchasing products, they are purchasing the company brand with every order. They have a laundry list of expectations: quality, service, value, relationship, and innovation, among others.

Achieving customer expectations demonstrates the health of company culture. We suggest the vast majority of soured customer relationships are not based on price, but rather dysfunctional business practices and relationships.

Ask yourself these questions about your organization:

- Are quality, service, and value consistent and predictable?
- Is innovation truly innovative?
- Are both customer loyalty and satisfaction measured and verified?
- Does top management have a one-to-one relationship with key customers?
- Do customers consider your company to be the premier supplier and innovator?

Key customer surveys are a real wake up call for determining the facts regarding company culture. When it's discovered a company's top volume accounts are not enamored with the relationship, quality, or service, it's time to address the challenges.

The fact is that quality customers have clear expectations. Flawed cultures diminish the value of products and innovation. Customers with bad experiences simply find other more qualified suppliers.

***Tip:** 360 Customer Surveys measure customer satisfaction and provide insight into better understanding customer loyalty and expectations.*



# ***Strategy and Tactics:***

## **The Combination of Success**

First, let us differentiate strategy and tactics.

- *Strategy is a carefully devised plan of action to achieve a goal.*
- *Tactics are the actions and activities necessary to achieve the strategy.*

An effective strategy plots a course of success for the organization. It defines a climate for critical thinking and self management. Effective tactics achieve the strategy efficiently. Efficient tactics focus the enterprise on activities with the greatest return on investment.

Organizations with effective strategies and tactics are constantly vetting and refining the approach to achieve competitive advantage. In our view, every company department should have a clear strategy contributing to the goal.

Strategic organizations are objective based. Tactical organizations are activity based. That is, tactical-based companies sometimes fail to consistently achieve objectives. Strategic organizations generally demonstrate a high performance culture. In a strategic organization everyone understands the company course and is committed to its success. Interestingly, we often find enterprises that are labeled strategic are, in reality, tactical.

Consider this:

*“Strategy without tactics is the slowest route to victory. Tactics without strategy is the noise before defeat.” — Sun Tzu, The Art of War.*

Ask yourself:

- What strategies does your organization have in place to keep a positive organizational culture?
- What tactics are planned to achieve that strategic goal?
- How are those tactics measured for their own success?
- What is the process for brainstorming or implementing new tactics? How would you approach changing tactics while keeping true to the overall strategy?

# ***Your View:***

## **Is Cultural Health a Priority for Your Brand?**

What do you want your company culture to broadcast?

Companies with fast and sustainable growth are highly aware of culture. It's the source of competitive advantage. Employees demonstrate it in their job descriptions. Customers feel it in every communication and order placed.

- As an example, look at how Amazon has reshaped the retail sales environment through its business model. The organization has come a long way from book sales; it has driven online e-commerce to explode, and in doing so, it's completely changed the way we shop. Even externally, other brick-and-mortar stores have been immensely impacted by "The Amazon Effect."<sup>1</sup>
- As written by Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos in his 2016 annual letter, "...customers want something better, and your desire to delight customers will drive you to invent on their behalf... [Success] requires you to experiment patiently, accept failures, plant seeds, protect saplings, and double down when you see customer delight."<sup>2</sup>

Quality customers realize flawed supplier cultures cost them financially and emotionally. There is simply not enough profit margin in business today to purchase from suppliers with challenged cultures. Again, customers are buying your brand and not just the products.

By 2020 it's estimated as the boomer generation retires, x-y generations, millennials, and foreign workers will comprise approximately 60% of the U.S. workforce. Never before has critical thinking, effective communication, and work environment been so important. Doubting, just ask them about the value of culture. Employee retention, given the low unemployment rate of today, is critical. If a business culture is flawed, skilled and quality employees generally move to a better environment.

Culture, strategy, and tactics establish brand perception. Both workforce and customer expectations have evolved. Those enterprises embracing change best deliver competitive advantage.

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<sup>1</sup> Adam Hartung, Forbes. How The Amazon Effect Will Change Your Business.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/adamhartung/2017/02/28/how-the-amazon-effect-will-change-your-life-and-investments/>

<sup>2</sup> Alex Heath, Business Insider. Amazon's Jeff Bezos constantly reminds his workers about the biggest enemy: 'Irrelevance. Followed by excruciating, painful decline.'

<http://www.businessinsider.com/read-amazon-ceo-jeff-bezos-2016-letter-to-shareholders-2017-4>



**Tip:** Interview your most important customers personally for real truth about company performance. Find any ideas that customers have that could positively impact the relationship.



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## ***Solution:***

# **Sustainable Change**

Change solutions begin first with measuring and understanding the cultural health of the enterprise. You are unable to create a positive, effective culture if you don't know your specific starting point and the challenges associated with it.

Once your management team understands the cultural health of your organization, then a developmental plan must be crafted to modify culture, strategy, and tactics. Then your organization, from the top executives to the newest hires, must all work together with open communication to follow that crafted, strategic plan.

We know from experience in most cases, rapid change causes both customers and employees to distrust the brand. It's simply human nature. Alternatively, steady and consistent change is sustainable.

***Tip:*** 360 Cultural Assessments and Customer Surveys provide factual evidence to management teams in order to revolutionize cultural change.

# ***Conclusion:***

## **Revolutionize**

If your company lacks critical thinking, effective communication, and clear strategy, then you must revolutionize. When business practices, tactics, and innovation are challenged, you must choose to revolutionize.

Otherwise, customers will career adjust your employees and market share accordingly.

As an exercise, we suggest you go section through section of this white paper to critically consider each of the questions asked. Talk with your team members in other areas of the organization to determine other perspectives. How does your organization compare? What are the points that have room for improvement?

Businesses today are constantly changing. As such, you must consider your company culture to be fluid, changing every day with every interaction internally and externally. In a perfect world, that culture would stay true to your organizational strategy. However, conversely, it can also change quickly when individuals in the company do not follow the company cultural strategy. We suggest periodic health checks to investigate the success of your revolutionized culture. If you find pain points, you can then be proactive in eradicating them.

Objectively speaking, it can be helpful to employ an unbiased observer to help your organization when considering cultural analysis and change. Oftentimes an outside, objective ally can assist in determining all sides and pieces of the puzzle, giving a honest view of culture with no play of politics.

Tacticware offers change solutions in culture, strategy, and tactics. Learn more about transforming your business by contacting us.

# White Paper Author

Paul Fournier is President of [Tacticware Resource Group](#). Tacticware is a business management consultancy firm that offers customized solutions in culture, strategy, and tactics. Services include consulting, training, 360 Cultural Assessments, strategic and tactical development.

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