

HOT TOPICS: 5 Top themes & questions for research project - Question 3 - Systemic understanding
A question for you - what is the systemic understanding in & of your company or organisation? Share it to add yours to the richness of the mix. You may well recognise or resonate with systemic understanding that follows.
responses collated by Halina Jaroszewska

Here is a flavour of systemic understanding shared by those asked:

What parts of your company's culture work well? Which parts could work even better?

- People are committed here and tend to take pride in their work. There are some people working in silos although on the whole there is open communication and welcoming of new ideas and employee input. We tend to hire people who are a very good cultural fit these days (having learned the hard way in the past). A lot of work has gone into making operational processes more transparent and reliable and there is still work to be done here. It can be that a small number of capable managers get overloaded with work because we're often still in transition in terms of the definition of senior roles.
- Look, act, feel – being recognised, are they seen? In the past the context of not good enough. Instead of what would it take to get to, break the task down into footsteps. Lack of ambition in some areas is staggering.
- We have an OGSM (objective, goals, strategies and measures) and this is something that is shared throughout the company and tracked monthly. This outlines the decisions on 'where to play' and 'how to win'. You have to make choices and as long as there is alignment on the choices at board level and alignment on how you will deliver and achieve these choices, then the system works.
- At the moment, our consultant knows what the culture is and tells us about it, it's basically about trustworthiness and customer focus, which it has always been, just communicated effectively.
- Most of the team understand the culture of our company and it is what drives them every day.
- Creativity and innovation; Team working; Flexible working works well; what could work even better - More problem solving and finding solutions; Team taking more responsibility; Team understanding the importance of sales / marketing
- Core operations work well. Professional delivery works well.
- Cross-departmental communication could work better - everyone agrees on the need to break out of silos but actually doing it is harder than it sounds.

How do you think/feel/see your company's culture developing fit for the next decade?

- We can create a hybrid model to deliver excellence + an experience for repeat business as client and candidate. Need a joined-up approach; offices around the world do their own thing; cross-collaboration is vital for next decade
- On our OGSM we also have a line about 'the company growing up' acknowledging that we need more systems and processes in place as we grow, to remain efficient. Alongside this are KPIs (set each quarter) and values and behaviours and a personal development plan. We believe you need all of these components for a business (and individuals within the business) to be successful.
- Building system processes and Talent pipeline
- In the last two years have had to mature fast; creativity and innovation of the team; push hard; everyone to feel open to new ideas. Team meetings are a good solution; team and flexible working – might need to work from home etc. trust the team and developed a culture of honesty; measured against deliverables; people work better; own processes ... could get unstuck so need to get stricter on processes from HR with regard to projects and project management; set standards re outputs and measurement. Need to have information ready at fingertips. Previous project: multitude of means/channels of communication with the client which means things can get lost. If not in the document, then assume not acted on. Need to have a record of all discussions to protect both clients and ourselves.
- Developing for next decade: get accredited re customer service/quality standards; building talent pool for career progression and retain them.

Who of your people know what the culture is, how it works, what are the outdated habits/must do's, what could make it work healthier for the whole?

- Works well as well-respected brand. Culture is one of a family – for more junior people treated like grownups. Experience of the why – look at market place/competitors .. parts of recruitment will become redundant. How to keep value within the experience?
- Culture: new senior management team now challenging but better. Poor performers have left in past 7 months since joined. Who are there now I have brought in. Outdated habits gone. KPIs are down. Question is maybe viewed as not important. Look at metrics in a different way – be promoted, have a career, accountability, ownership of own PNL.
- All the team; No out-dated habits (currently)

Learning from when things go wrong rather than finger pointing – where does your company's culture sit re this? Is it fact or fiction?]

- Learning fact or fiction: In my company we have changed culture. If mistake made hold hand up and look for a solution/s. Ask is this systemic, always done this way? How could it be done differently?
- I am constantly asking them to ditch what is not important and focus on what really matters. We seem to have moved away from the blame culture which was part of our organisation until recently. I feel it is fact not fiction (I would need to ask the team independently to check)
- Learning from where go wrong – approach from project management ... boundary between person's performance so ask is it a systemic failure or personal. Keep an issue log for reflection with solutions to prevent the issue happening in the future so address the issue now. Great tool for learning and moving business forward. Employees get it. Need to agree to issue log to investigate how the issue happened – look as a team and as an individual. Project reviews
- It is a multicultural and multilingual culture, with distinct sub-cultures within the organisation. The situation regarding through doing and permission to make mistakes depends very much on the senior manager you report to - some make it a fact and for others it is fiction.

A wealth of data which enables questions to pop, insights to emerge, curiosity to be piqued, resonance to happen and the inevitable really, surely not as we forget that the metaphorical pointed finger always has three pointing back at ourselves!

One question that pops is this: does culture actually exist? In the same way that we refer to the organisation or company forgetting that it is the people who make the company/organisation/ culture. It is the people who make the culture, collude with the culture, accept the culture, develop the culture, ensure the culture is maintained. Being curious does everyone subscribe to the culture, understand it, translate it which begs the question what gets lost in translation? On that premise do we impose a culture on the people and make them fit it? Or could we engage the people to design a culture that reflects their values as well as the values that as a company or organisation is aspiring towards. It's the old chestnut 'buy-in'. How can the culture of an organisation / company flex yet stay true as people join and leave?

As our skin renews itself is it possible for the culture of a company or organisation to stay fresh, current, relevant and a living process rather than simply sitting smugly in a handbook assuming that it is imbued in every person once they sign on the bottom line of a contract and then walk through the door? Questions simply enable information to emerge which remains as information until emotions get attached and positions become entrenched resulting in the 'but that's the way we do it / it's always done that way / it's our foundation.

The perfect time to start questioning everything is in that very moment of complete certainty.

**[Thinking Points: What parts of your company's culture work well? Which parts could work even better? How do you think/feel/see your company's culture developing fit for the next decade? Who of your people know what the culture is, how it works, what are the outdated habits/must do's, what could make it work healthier for the whole? Learning from when things go wrong rather than finger pointing – where does your company's culture sit re this? Is it fact or fiction?]*