



# Driving a high-performance corporate culture

Communication tools, techniques and best practice from leading global organizations



## Executive Summary

# Introduction

**In this executive summary, you'll find highlights of Melcrum's comprehensive report, *Driving a High-Performance Corporate Culture*. This report is the result of three months of benchmarking research. During this time we interviewed communication experts and practitioners around the world. To find out how to purchase the full report with an exclusive 15% discount, see the order form at the back, alternatively call +44 (0)20 8741 4670 or 1-866-MELCRUM, or e-mail [info@melcrum.com](mailto:info@melcrum.com)**

Most organizations recognize instinctively that corporate culture deserves attention. They can no longer just rely on their particular product or service to set them apart from their competitors – corporate culture is a key source of competitive advantage. Research shows organizational culture drives employee behavior, therefore just about every business measure in a company will be affected by it – costs, productivity, revenue and external brand. But in a complex business world where mergers, acquisitions and alliances shape the corporate landscape, what does culture look like in your organization? What role does internal communication play in driving it? And, ultimately what is culture's impact on the bottom line?

***Driving a High-Performance Corporate Culture***, the new research study from Melcrum, gives you a “behind-the-scenes” look at how best-in-class organizations drive a high-performance corporate culture. You'll find out how to communicate culture effectively with a special focus on how culture is affected by an organization's history, size and level of diversity. Plus, find out how to prove the value of your culture initiatives to senior managers, with practical and transparent measurement techniques.

This executive summary gives you an overview of what you'll find in the report's four chapters:

1. What is organizational culture?
2. Corporate culture and the communication function
3. The multi-cultural organization
4. The impact of organizational culture on performance

***Driving a High-Performance Corporate Culture*** brings you:

- **Tried-and-tested techniques** for bringing culture to life which you can immediately implement.
- **Exclusive case studies** – benchmark against best-in-class companies. Learn from the experiences of **IBM, Royal & SunAlliance, ANZ, Dell, Gap, Innocent, BDO Stoy Hayward, Ford Motor Credit Company, HSBC and Pitney Bowes.**
- **Templates, tools and models** to help you influence culture throughout your organization and measure the results.
- **15 in-depth interviews** with experts including **Roger D'Aprix, Jim Shaffer, Angela Sinickas, Fons Trompenaars, Paul Sanchez, Bill Quirke, Fiona Rogers, Richard Mosley and Domna Lazidou.**
- **Statistics and top tips** on measuring culture and its impact on an organization's bottom line.
- **Practical ways** to align global strategy and brand with corporate culture.
- **Advisory articles and best-practice methods** on driving organizational culture change.

**Looking to improve your organization's competitive advantage? *Driving a High-Performance Corporate Culture* gives you the tools to make a difference.**

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## Case study organizations from the full report

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ANZ	Gap
BDO Stoy Hayward	HSBC
Dell	IBM
Royal & SunAlliance	Innocent
Ford Motor Credit Company	Pitney Bowes

## Thought leaders

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Roger D'Aprix	Paul Sanchez
Domna Lazidou	Jim Shaffer
Richard Mosley	Angela Sinickas
Bill Quirke	Fons Trompenaars
Fiona Rogers	Tim Payne

# 1: What is organizational culture?

Culture can be seen as the heart and soul of an organization that shapes how its people behave. It's a body of knowledge, beliefs and attitudes. It guides the way employees think and behave around issues like quality, customers, teamwork, innovation and decision making – all things that directly impact an organization's performance and how it works with – and is perceived to work with – its stakeholders.

To effectively shape and influence corporate culture, one of the first and most important challenges is to understand what somebody means when they say they want “a culture change.” What is culture and what does it look like in your organization? At Dell, (see case study extract below) the focus is on the role of senior leaders, while at BDO Stoy Hayward, (see case study extract over page) it's all about defining and sharing organizational values to build a strong culture.

**Over 50% of failed mergers, acquisitions and alliances are due to organizational culture mismatches**

## DELL

### The shift in culture post-September 11

The story of Dell's reaction to September 11 is unique because it grew out of the company's own set of values and character. Temporarily abandoning economic measures of success, we reached out to our employees on an emotional basis, reinforcing and making real the oft-quoted concept of “the Dell family.” Communications that used to come from the “Office of the Chairman” were simply signed “Michael and Kevin” following September 11.

★ TOP TIP ★

#### GETTING CULTURE DOWN ON PAPER

By March 2002, every Dell employee worldwide was hand-delivered a copy of “The Soul of Dell.” The document serves as a statement of corporate philosophy, communicating the kind of company we are and what we aspire to be, while aiming to ensure that our actions are consistent with the values and beliefs we share. “The Soul of Dell” codifies our culture, outlines our goals, and provides a vision for a future drastically changed after September 11.

#### “WHO WE ARE” VS. “WHAT WE DO”

As shocking as the tragedy of September 11 was, at Dell we have discovered a positive consequence of that terrible day. Our employees reached within themselves and responded with strength, caring and selflessness. The internal employee dynamic aligned itself with the external customer experience, as first thoughts went to colleagues, then quickly extended to customers with urgent needs.

*“While our primary goal is to build on our position as one of the world's most admired companies, we also want to foster a great internal culture. As we learned...you can't have one without the other.”*

**Elizabeth Heller Allen,  
Vice President of  
Corporate Culture, Dell**

CASE STUDY EXTRACT

**Driving a High-Performance Corporate Culture** presents case studies from your peers around the globe, providing you with a behind-the-scenes look at what's working in driving a high-performance culture and the pitfalls to avoid. In this chapter, we focus on examining the fundamentals of culture – we look at ways to define culture and provide a framework for clarifying outcomes and agreeing realistic objectives. Case studies include Dell, HSBC and BDO Stoy Hayward plus insights from thought leaders include Roger D'Aprix, Bill Quirke, Paul Sanchez, Fons Trompenaars, Tim Payne and Jim Shaffer.

## BDO STOY HAYWARD

### Sharing values at work to build a strong culture

In 2002, accounting firm BDO Stoy Hayward was in the final stages of transition from a network of independent practices to a single national firm. The challenge was to build a cohesive culture and a sense of belonging across the new firm and to ensure that its people lived up to its brand. Shared values were fundamental to this, so the firm embarked on "Values at Work," a cultural initiative to define a set of core values that had the support of partners and staff throughout the organization.

★ TOP TIP ★

#### ENGAGE LEADERS IN DEFINING CORE VALUES

The next step was to develop the findings of a recent employee survey into a clear statement of core values and reach a common understanding of what this meant in practice. It was crucial to engage the partners in this. "If the leaders and owners of the business didn't sign up to the values, the initiative would fail," says Jan Thornbury, Management Consultant.

A fundamental step in engaging partners was a working conference for the firm's 200 partners, employing a series of structured group discussions and voting techniques. "We involved all the partners in developing the values, agreeing how they would translate into behaviors and generating specific examples for each fundamental value," explains Thornbury. "This enabled them to take ownership of the core values and commit to upholding them," she says.

★ TOP TIP ★

#### DEVELOP A CULTURAL BRAND – THE VALUES CUBE

BDO Stoy Hayward produced a booklet entitled Values at Work that set out its four core values and examples of behaviors associated with

each value. This was tested extensively on a representative sample of employees before being distributed throughout the organization. Thornbury explains, "We had to make sure that its language and tone applied to everyone in the firm."

A logo was devised to underpin the internal communication campaign. The Values Cube (see Fig. 1, below) depicts the four core values connected like the pieces of a three-dimensional jigsaw. "The design shows that the four values are equally important and interlinked as the design is complete only when all four pieces are in place," explains Thornbury.

Each value is associated with a particular color, so that people can quickly identify the subject of internal communications material. "The colour palette reinforces the message in people's minds," says Thornbury. "For example, everyone knows that material that is predominantly green is about mutual support."

Figure 1.1: BDO Stoy Hayward's Values Cube



> The full versions of these case studies also contain top tips on the link between internal culture and external brand. Plus expert analysis from Paul Sanchez on the four key building blocks that define your corporate culture.

## 2: Organizational culture and the communication function

Communication is an essential tool for shaping organizational culture. Values remain nice words on a piece of paper until employees can interpret what they mean in practical terms and how they should behave differently in response. The case study extract from Gap, below, demonstrates how to help employees embrace culture change and the long-term effects of reinforcing it.

When considering communicating culture it's also important to look at the role of leaders. Leaders and managers may have the right intentions, but they will be far more effective with the right training, materials and tools to interpret values for their teams (see Roger D'Aprix article extract).

### Who has responsibility for shaping and maintaining organizational culture?

Shaping and maintaining organizational culture takes a team effort. An internal communication function that takes on the challenges of reshaping a company culture on its own will probably regret it, and its impact is likely to be limited. While communication is one of the key tools for shaping organizational culture, it's important to recognize its limitations. The fact that culture is ingrained into every part of an organization means a range of functions will need to be involved to influence change.

***“It doesn't matter which is the lead function in a culture change, so long as there is collaboration.”***

Fiona Rogers,  
Managing Consultant,  
Strategic Consultancy,  
COI

### GAP

#### Helping employees embrace cultural change

##### REINFORCING ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

After the rollout effort introducing Gap's Purpose, Values and Behaviors (PVB) guidelines, the communication team worked to connect behaviors to the real work of the organization. The workforce was connected with the PVBs through posters, coffee-cup jackets and freestanding kiosk display boxes set up in conference rooms and other common areas. Communications were designed to keep the PVB strategy top-of-mind among employees.

A PVB page on the GapWeb intranet and a newsletter for leaders were developed to highlight success stories and provide tips on how to live by the PVBs. The team also produced tools, such as a deck of cards, for leaders to use with their teams in meetings to help foster discussion and ensure compliance.

Reinforcing the guidelines ensured that the PVBs permeated every aspect of the organization.

The Values and Behaviors have been incorporated into all recruiting, new-employee, and compensation and benefits materials. Every existing major company program and every new initiative are put through the internal communication team's "PVB Filter," to ensure that it directly mirrors Gap's new cultural guidelines.

*“Employees needed to learn how to stop operating by division and to come together across functions, borders and brands.”*

**Paul Pressler, CEO, Gap**

CASE STUDY EXTRACT

**Find out what role the communication function plays in driving corporate culture, what other functions the communication team should work with and how to help line managers communicate culture to their teams. You'll find practical tools and tips on how to make culture meaningful and define your organizational values. Plus expert insight including:**

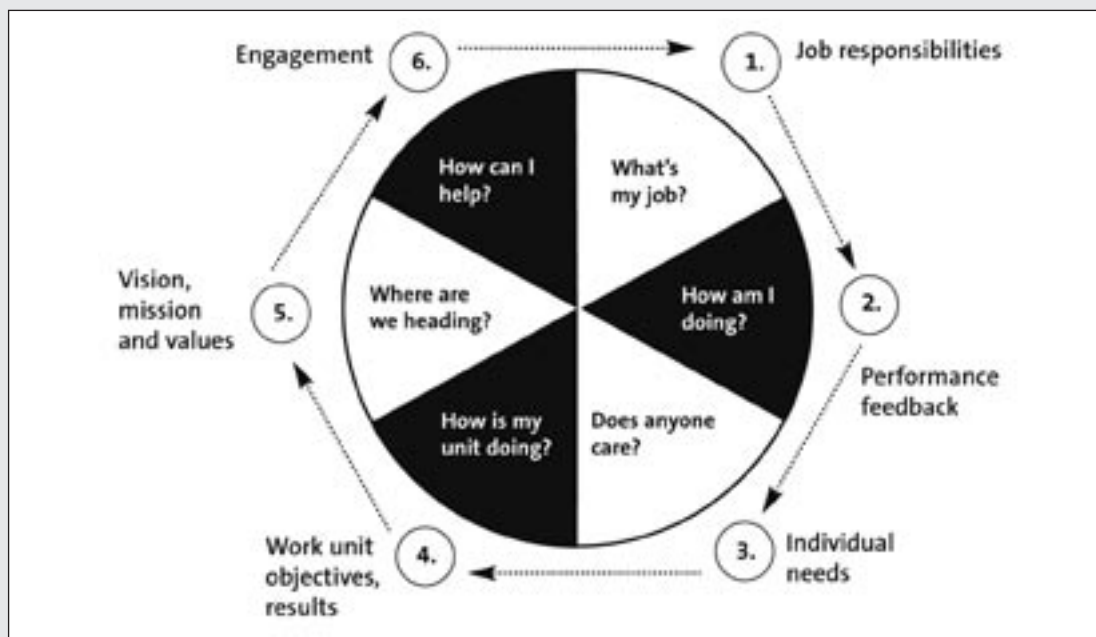
- **Bill Quirke: Communication techniques that bring corporate culture to life**
- **Fiona Rogers: A partnership approach to transforming culture**
- **Roger D'Aprix: Communicating culture down the line**

## ROGER D'APRIX: Line managers' role in communicating vision and values

Despite the increase in remote working and the adoption of e-mail, instant messaging, voicemail, texting, blogging, video messaging and so on in corporate communication, D'Aprix remains convinced that face-to-face communication remains the most effective channel for line manager communication. "It's incumbent on managers not to rely on technology as a surrogate for interacting with employees," he explains. "They need to understand that one of their primary responsibilities is helping their teams to understand the vision, values and objectives of the organization as well as listening to their concerns, coaching and mentoring."

To this end, the Manager's Communication Model that D'Aprix created over 20 years ago remains valid as it defines line manager communication responsibilities in terms of providing the answers to six key questions, each of which relates to a matching organizational principle (see Fig. 1.2 below).

Figure 1.2: The Manager's Communication Model by Roger D'Aprix



D'Aprix maintains that the visual collaboration inherent in face-to-face meetings is key to engaging employees on an emotional level and creating a culture of belonging. "People respond to human touches and look for evidence that they count for something. Face-to-face communication shows individual employees that their manager – and by association their company – cares about them and what they contribute to the organization."

### Creating a culture of belonging: a joint responsibility

D'Aprix highlights the critical importance of maintaining dialogue at all levels of the organization in order to create a culture of belonging. "The effective organization recognizes that it must build a community of like-minded people who have a sense of being connected together in a worthwhile enterprise," he says.

> This chapter contains the full Gap case study and Roger D'Aprix expert analysis on helping both employees and managers embrace culture change.

### 3: The multi-cultural organization

Today's business landscape presents organizations with complex challenges when it comes to shaping their culture. Organizations are increasingly global, often growing through mergers, acquisitions and alliances. They may take advantage of emerging markets by creating totally new brands, which require employees to work in very different ways. And technological advances make it possible to work from almost anywhere in the world and allow work to be outsourced relatively easily to third parties.

#### Uniting a global organization behind a single culture

Against this backdrop, many organizations seek to build a "one company" culture across diverse business units in order to unite the company under a common brand, encourage collaboration and knowledge sharing and harness cross-selling opportunities. At Ford Motor Credit Company (see case study below), it was important to sustain and leverage a "one-company" family culture.

#### Creating distinct sub-cultures for competitive advantage

Other organizations aim to create or maintain distinct sub-cultures to enhance performance in specific business units or enable the delivery of niche brands. And some are working to shape the corporate culture for thousands of employees across the globe who, thanks to technology, rarely have any need to physically visit company premises. IBM (see case study extract over page) faced a tough challenge with over 40% of employees working remotely. Read how it harnessed the intranet as a platform for employee-driven culture change.

**With more than 40% of IBM's employees working remotely, driving culture change seemed an enormous task**

## FORD MOTOR CREDIT COMPANY

### Sustaining a family culture sharply focused on adding value

Like any commercial organization, Ford Credit's primary purpose is to enhance shareholder value, but as the wholly owned subsidiary of Ford Motor Company, its mission is to support its parent company, so driving profitability is embedded into its culture.

#### ★ TOP TIP ★

#### **GIVE LINE MANAGERS "SOAK TIME" FOR CHANGE MESSAGES TO SINK IN**

Chris Solie, Communication Director, underlines the importance of timing the communication of major announcements. The internal communication function addresses this by ensuring that sensitive or area-specific changes that come from the center are announced in waves to different levels of management, so that the managers of the affected locations hear the news first and receive support and advice on passing it on to their staff.

This gives them a chance to digest the information and anticipate possible reactions to it. Solie refers to this as "soak time." She says, "Giving people time to take in information is crucial to the smooth running of a company."

This strategy supports Ford Credit's culture of an extended family, or a community of businesses working together. Because local managers have a high degree of autonomy over their own offices, they need to be able to explain to their staff what major announcements will mean for them and answer their questions. Solie emphasizes that managers also need to be sufficiently comfortable with the information to be able to tell staff when they can't answer all their questions and to set up reasonable expectations of when further information is likely to become available. "This mitigates people's fears and creates a feeling of security in insecure times," she explains.

CASE STUDY EXTRACT

**Find practical tips and templates on what the role of communication is in building global cultures with a special focus on connecting global messages to local operations. Explore full case studies from Royal & SunAlliance, Pitney Bowes, Ford Motor Credit Company, United Airlines and IBM on communicating a "one company" culture, creating a brand within a brand and working with sub cultures.**

# IBM

## Driving culture change by consensus

IBM used its global intranet to harness the collective intelligence of its 330,000-strong employee population and drive culture change by consensus. As David Yaun, Vice President Corporate Communication explains, the intranet provides the platform for its innovative enterprise-wide online forums for discussion, collaboration and creativity – or “Jams.”

### WORLDJAM: SETTING THE SCENE FOR CULTURE CHANGE

In May 2001 IBM held WorldJam, its first global online brainstorming exercise. More than 52,000 employees participated, generating some 6,000 ideas for what individual IBMers could do to improve their jobs, their working lives and the company.

IBM opened up its intranet and invited all its employees to jam on ten specific issues. “We formulated some specific questions on these issues and had very loosely moderated discussions around them for 72 hours. A variety of leaders from around the company provided moderation, facilitation and encouragement to keep the dialogue going, but the discussion was shaped by the employees themselves,” says Yaun. “This

represented a remarkable statement of trust in our employees, and set the scene for culture change.”

### VALUESJAM: DEFINING A NEW CULTURE

In 2003, the communication team organized ValuesJam in which the entire company engaged in a global online forum to identify IBM’s core values. They started by asking about 80 people in four different groups around the company to put together starter sets of questions framed around the role of values in managing a company. This led to the organization of four forums based on open and provocative questions designed to elicit a dynamic and fruitful debate. (see Fig. 1.3 below.)

There was a huge response. Although ValuesJam was held in the middle of the summer – July 29 to August 1 – and it was only run in English, around 70,000 IBM employees participated.

*“We’d never considered how strongly people feel about IBM’s role in shaping the modern world.”*

**David Yaun, Vice President,  
Corporate Communications, IBM**

Figure 1.3: The four ValuesJam forums

<p><b>Forum 1: Company values</b></p> <p>Do company values exist? If so, what is involved in establishing them? Most companies today have values statements. But what would a company look and act like that truly lived its beliefs?</p>	<p><b>Forum 3: A company’s impact</b></p> <p>If our company disappeared tonight, how different would the world be tomorrow? Is there something about our company that makes a unique contribution to the world?</p>
<p><b>Forum 2: A first draft</b></p> <p>What values are essential to what IBM needs to become?</p>	<p><b>Forum 4: The gold standard</b></p> <p>When is IBM at its best? When have you been proudest to be an IBMer? What happened, and what was uniquely meaningful about it?</p>

> See the full report to read this extensive case study in its entirety, including maintaining employee satisfaction in challenging times and defining a new culture, the role of senior leaders and finding ways to implement the values.

## 4. The impact of organizational culture on performance

The question that really matters for every organization is, “What’s the impact on the bottom line?” The most effective organizations have a culture and strategy that are clearly aligned, so that the organizational culture drives behaviors that are helpful and supportive in delivering the strategy.

Where the two are not aligned, the culture may encourage behaviors that conflict with what the organization is trying to achieve, and puts obstacles in the way of executing the strategy. For Southwest Airlines (see case study below), the key challenge was to maintain its strong family culture during rapid growth.

### Creating a culture that drives strategy

Culture can be described as an unwritten rulebook that feels so “normal” that employees would find it hard to identify or describe. So to understand what’s driving people’s behavior, you will need to carry out a cultural audit. Leading measurement expert, Angela Sinickas, (see article extract over page) provides five tips and tactics to help measure your organization’s culture.

**Creating a culture of ownership increased Southwest Airlines’ net income by 75%**

## SOUTHWEST AIRLINES

### A culture of ownership that drives organizational resilience

When Sunny Stone, Southwest Airlines’ Director of Culture Activities, joined the company 18 years ago, it employed 5,000 people. It is now the US’s fourth largest airline, with 31,000 employees operating more than 3,000 flights per day to 62 cities in 32 states. The key to maintaining a fun and supportive atmosphere during this rapid expansion has been to uphold a strong family culture. “As we’ve grown we’ve tried to keep the small company feeling,” says Stone. “It’s been a challenge, but a good challenge.”

#### ★ TOP TIP ★

### REINFORCE CULTURE WITH A DEDICATED COMMITTEE

Southwest’s family culture is brought to life by the culture committee, which Colleen Barratt, Company President, founded in 1990. Back then it consisted of 15 people who were charged with protecting the “Southwest Spirit” – a spirit that promoted a family-like and fun atmosphere and came into being when the company was small and its future relatively

uncertain. That number has now grown to more than 100 employees who arrange hundreds of events each year, overseen by the culture activities team which provides them with tools and funds.

“We started really growing in the early 1990s and wanted to find a way of reaching employees who were all over the country,” says Stone. “There are now 105 members on the culture committee, ranging from people who load drinks onto planes to VP level.”

The committee meets three times a year at their Dallas headquarters and discusses ways of showing employees in the field that their efforts are recognized and rewarded. Groups of 15 to 20 employees from the culture committee then visit their colleagues at Southwest’s airports, reservation centers, provisioning centers, and maintenance departments across the US and organize parties, give out gifts, or help employees with their duties. Their job is to ensure that the Southwest culture remains strong in every location.

CASE STUDY EXTRACT

> Read the full case study in the report, including **Southwest Airlines’** recognition and incentive schemes and the impact of culture on its bottom line.

## ANGELA SINICKAS: Developing surveys to measure the impact of corporate culture

Corporate culture can help drive business results, but it takes a cultural audit to differentiate which elements of the culture can lead to superior performance.

### FIVE TIPS AND TACTICS FOR MEASURING CULTURE

#### 1. Use a customized survey

A standardized survey may miss the characteristics that are unique about the organization and underpin its culture. These are the key factors that a customized cultural audit seeks to uncover and measure in relation to business performance.

A standardized survey may identify patterns and correlations that are irrelevant or impossible to act on. Sinickas illustrates this with an example from the Gallup Q12 questionnaire, which found 12 factors that correlate very highly to employee engagement in many companies all over the world. One of those factors is having a best friend at work. "Although this finding makes perfect sense, there is little that an organization can do to encourage friendships among its employees," she explains. She believes in taking a more practical approach.

Sinickas's philosophy is to achieve business results through focused diagnostics and practical solutions. "Look at the numbers and develop ways of improving the positive scores and addressing the negative ones," she advises. "The critical success factor is to pick the important metrics – the characteristics that together make an organization unique."

#### 2. Use open-ended questions to identify key metrics

It's important to identify factors that relate to implicit culture as well as obvious practices and behaviors. Sinickas recommends using open-ended questions in interviews and focus groups to draw out how people really see their organization. Examples include, "How would you describe this as a place to work?" or "What's it like working here?" She asks focus groups, "What's management like here?" to draw out issues that are top of mind.

Survey questions are then based around the responses. These take the form of a statement followed by a range of agree/disagree options or a frequency measure – a question beginning "How often," followed by several options on a frequency scale ranging from "almost always" to "almost never" with three points in between. "This uncovers whether there is a problem around a particular behavior, how often it occurs and how strongly people feel about it," explains Sinickas. "The frequency scale puts numbers to otherwise intangible cultural characteristics."

#### 3. Use stories and scenarios to uncover value-adding behaviors

Sinickas uses focus groups to draw out employees' personal experience and insights about what actions or behaviors might be considered a concrete demonstration of characteristics that add value to the organization. Employees are asked to relate practical examples of situations that brought extra money into the company or cost money through lost productivity, duplication of effort or miscommunication. They then try to identify the actions and behaviors that result in successes and the ones that make things go badly. That leads to questions about the running of the company. Perhaps there's too much bureaucracy. Perhaps the management manages only vertically and never crosses over horizontally. Or perhaps information isn't being passed from shift to shift and work is being duplicated.

> See the report for Angela Sinickas's full article, including the full list of tips and tactics for measuring culture and an in-depth focus on identifying key variables in culture surveys.

**In this chapter we give you an insight into the impact of corporate culture on business performance. We analyze what types of culture high performing organizations have and show you which one is best for your organization. We explore:**

- **How to carry out a culture audit**
- **Organizational best practice in driving culture to help execute strategy at Southwest Airlines, Innocent Drinks and ANZ Bank**
- **The potential pitfalls when considering a culture change**

**Plus an exclusive eight-step model for successful culture change not available anywhere else.**

EXTRACT



# Driving a high-performance corporate culture

## Executive Summary

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