

Creating Conscious Culture - PART 2

Published on July 17, 2018 - Mark Vandeneijnde - Co-Founder at BEING at Full Potential



Have you ever wondered...What makes a great organizational culture? How culture impacts and influences organizational performance? Why so many attempts to create great cultures fail? What we can do to approach culture change in a more sustainable way?

Our partner in New Zealand, Peter Leong, has been passionately researching these questions over the last couple of years. and has come to the conclusion that the next paradigm in value creation will come from raising the consciousness of organizational cultures.

Last week we shared **PART 1** of this series on Conscious Culture. We set the context for why culture programs have taken center stage in the management world. Most experts now agree that working at the organizational culture level is key to unleashing the next paradigm for value creation.

Today we share PART 2 in which we break down the key reasons why most culture programs fail and why a more CONSCIOUS approach is the only viable way forward

Next week, in **PART 3**, we introduce very concrete tools and methods to sustain-ably bring a more conscious culture to life

This series shows us that there is great reward in raising the consciousness level or maturity within organisations. Leaders can now have access to a new way to re-imagine and re-sculpt their organisational culture as the pathway for outstanding performance by everyone in the organisation.

We will provide a roadmap to *shift mindset and raise consciousness of the people so that we can unleash the immense (but untapped) Human Potential in the process of co-creating and actualising a conscious workplace culture.*

PART TWO: THE DEEPER DRIVERS OF CULTURE CHANGE

“For (the) organisation to change its way of working would require a complete assessment of all aspects of its culture”.[\[1\]](#)

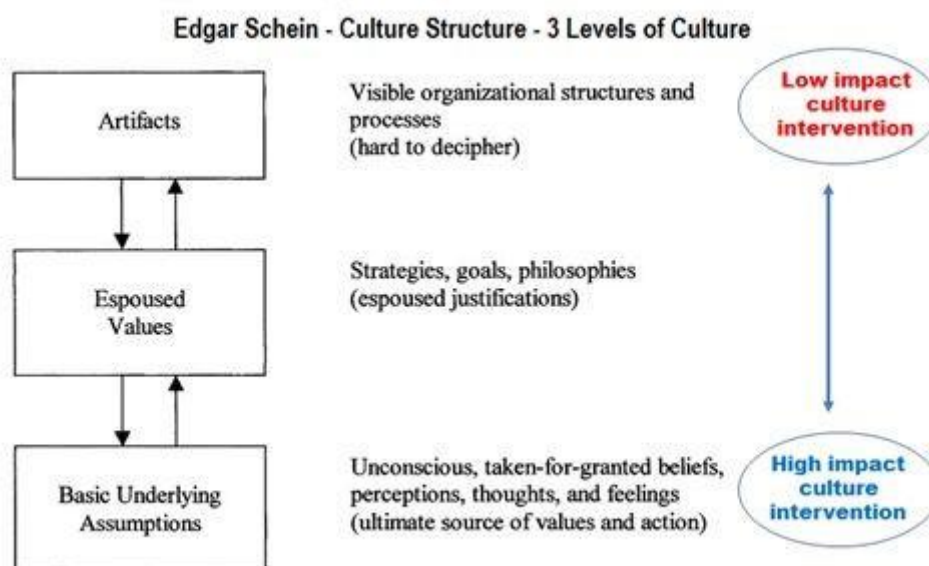
Edgar Schein (one of the preeminent thought leaders and practitioner on organisational culture since 1980s) explained that “the biggest danger in trying to understand culture *is to oversimplify it*”, for example, to say that culture is just ‘the way we do things around here’ or that culture is ‘the company climate’ and so on. These are only manifestations of culture, *but none is at the level where culture matters*.

The term ‘levels’ of culture means the degree to which a cultural phenomenon is visible, or not visible, to us as leaders of culture change.

“In order to manage culture, you must understand what culture is, what content culture covers, and how to assess it. It is dangerous to oversimplify this concept because of the illusion that one is managing culture when one is, in fact, managing only a manifestation of culture and, therefore, not achieving one’s change goals.”[\[2\]](#)

He adds that a better way to think about culture is *“to realise that culture exists at 3 ‘levels’,” namely, the Artifacts, the Espoused Values and the Basic Underlying Assumptions levels, and that “we must understand and manage the deeper levels of culture”* for greater impact of the culture change process. This is illustrated in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1 – Edgar Schein’s – Structural Framework - 3 Levels of Culture



“Culture is deep, extensive, and stable. It cannot be taken lightly. ***If you do not manage culture, it will manage you***—and you may not even be aware of the extent to which this is happening. *But this is not easy.*”[\[1\]](#)

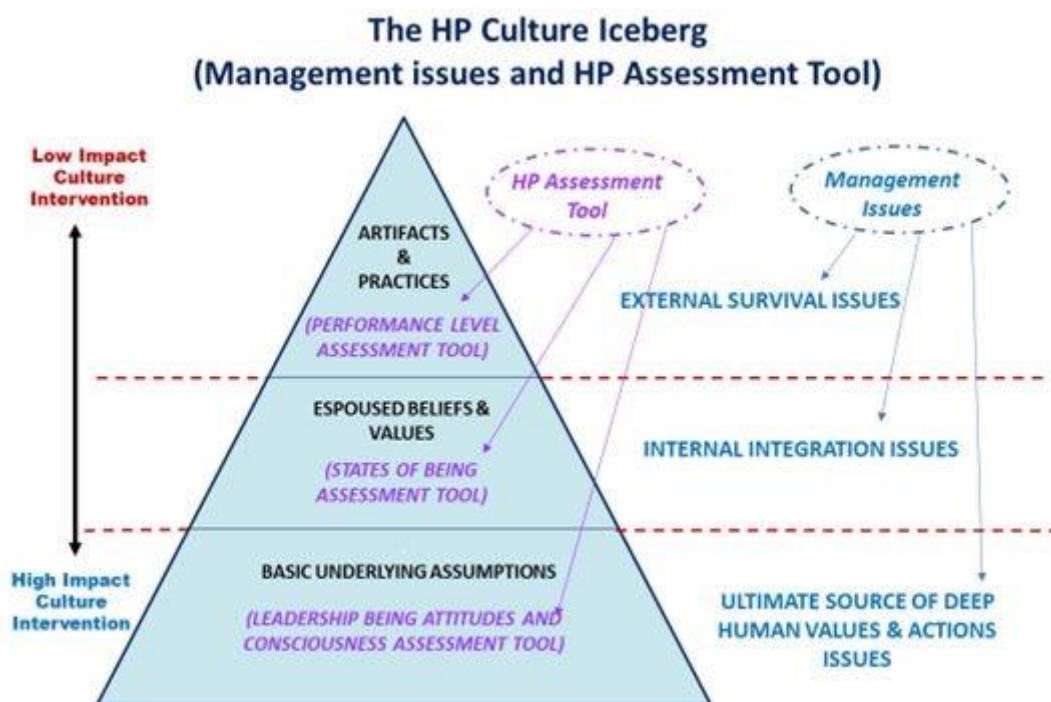
[1] Edgar Schein – Organisational Culture and Leadership

[2] Edgar Schein – The Corporate Culture Survival Guide

A DEEPER LOOK INTO THE CULTURE ICEBERG

Let us expand and transform Edgar Schein's 3 level culture structure into a more comprehensible and practical 'HP Culture Iceberg'. This will make it easier for change leaders to take a closer look at what they are dealing with in terms of the *management issues* at each level of the culture iceberg, and the *corresponding types of Human Potential (HP) assessments* that they can now use to measure how well they are doing in overcoming and solving these management issues, as illustrated in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2 – HP Culture Iceberg – The 3 levels of culture



Top level - Artifacts and practices – *looking primarily at external survival issues* and how we can manage and track these issues with the **HP Performance Level assessment tool**

Middle level - Espoused beliefs and values – *looking primarily at internal integration issues* and how we can manage and tract these issues with the **HP States of Being assessment tool**

Bottom level - Basic underlying values – *looking primarily at the ultimate source of deep Human values and actions issues* and how we can manage and tract these issues with the **HP Leadership BEING Attitudes and Consciousness assessment tool**

The iceberg metaphor helps us to explain the importance and impact of all 3 levels of culture more clearly, especially in paying attention to the 'invisible' and deeper layers of the culture iceberg. What we see (or is visible) above the surface of the water is only the tip and a very small part of the total

iceberg. The rest of the iceberg is 'invisible', being below the water. The point is that we cannot ignore this massive and 'dangerous' chunk of the iceberg that is hidden from us if we want to safely navigate around the 'invisible' danger posed by the iceberg, even though we can see where the visible tip of the iceberg is.

Most culture change programs navigate and address the (simpler) first two culture levels (artifacts and espoused values) without adequately addressing the third and deeper level at the bottom of the 'culture iceberg' (deep underlying assumptions). They are in fact mainly addressing the visible (or surface) manifestations of culture, but not adequately addressing the ultimate source of deep Human values and actions in the organisation's culture.

"We cannot oversimplify culture, it gives us the illusion of managing culture with managing only manifestation of culture - therefore not achieving one's change goals or performance." [1]

To achieve the high-performance goal of any culture transformation initiative, *we must acknowledge the WHOLE (all three layers) of the HP culture iceberg to gain the full impact of any culture transformation.*

The most important advantage of the HP culture iceberg as shown in Figure 2 above is that ***it gives change leaders a new solution – how to successfully manage and change not only the top two levels, but especially the bottom level of the culture iceberg - the most elusive, troublesome and ignored aspect of culture change initiatives in the past - where the greatest impact and reward lies.***

"It is the degree of alignment or congruity between the 3 levels that determines how an individual's 'sincerity' or 'integrity' is judged by others." [2]

[1] Adapted from Edgar Schein – The Corporate Survival Guide; italics mine

[2] Edgar Schein – Organisational culture and Leadership

A MORE CONSCIOUS APPROACH TO CULTURE IS THE (ONLY) WAY FORWARD

"Unconscious assumptions sometimes lead to ridiculously tragic situations."[1]

The third level of the culture iceberg (deep underlying assumptions) deals with the ultimate source of Human values and actions. We can now associate the third level of the culture iceberg with raising the awareness and consciousness of people in organisations and other ecosystems as the ultimate source of Human values and actions.

Our first contention in this paper is that *the more we understand, manage and nurture culture on all three levels and especially at the third level of culture, the higher and greater the impact in achieving breakthrough performance (and results) that are long lasting.*

There has been a lack of know-how (or practical knowledge) that can help culture change leaders to address this third level of the culture iceberg. But not anymore. *Change leaders can now lead and manage the third layer of the culture iceberg by using the Human Potential Leadership Being Attitudes and the Consciousness Maturity assessment tool.* We will examine the various maturity levels of consciousness in this paper.

"Conscious culture is driver of peak performance and value creation in the organisations." [2]

Our second contention is that *only by raising the individual and collective awareness or consciousness can we create that ‘space’ where sustained breakthroughs in performance and results can truly take place.* Culture and consciousness being integral to each other and operating consistently from this deep ‘space’ will lead to real and profound culture change. ***This ‘space’ is the new change lever for high-impact culture transformation.***

“No problem can be solved from the same level of consciousness that created it.” [3]

Figure 3 – The Space is the Secret – the Wisdom Carrier



Image - Vanessa Smith - www.craftingconnection.com

In a recent HBR article [4] by Tasha Eurich, she wrote that “Self-awareness seems to have become the latest management buzzword — and for good reason.” She went on to write that when we are more self-aware or conscious (when we see ourselves clearly), ***“we are more confident and more creative. We make sounder decisions, build stronger relationships, and communicate more effectively. We’re less likely to lie, cheat, and steal. We are better workers who get more promotions. And we’re more-effective leaders with more-satisfied employees and more-profitable companies”*** [5]

In this white paper, when dealing with the deep and basic underlying assumptions of culture, we are treating ‘awareness’ and ‘consciousness’ as the same thing.

“... awareness or consciousness is all that is ever known or experienced, and it is awareness or consciousness that is knowing and experiencing itself” [6]

Next week we will further expand on our understanding of CONSCIOUSNESS and why it is so important in the context of culture. We will also introduce some very concrete tools and methodologies that help us raise organizational consciousness in more sustainable and systematic way.

[1] Ibid

[2] www.consciousculture.nz

[3] Albert Einstein

[4] What Self-Awareness Really Is (and How to Cultivate It) - 2018

[5] Tasha Eurich – HBR article - What Self-Awareness Really Is (and How to Cultivate It)

[6] Rupert Spira – The Nature of Consciousness

NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR (Peter Leong)



I write this White Paper with full and humble acknowledgement that my personal learning and knowledge is derived from the wise and intelligent work of many other preceding authors, researchers, thought leaders, and especially the ancient masters and sage of wisdoms from both the East and West.

More recently, I cherish the wisdom I gained from Sujith Ravindran and Mark Vandeneijnde in their passionate work in the field of Human Potential Realisation – both from a beautiful blend of scientific and ancient mystical approach. I also draw new inspiration from the growing network of deep thinkers and practitioners at Being at Full Potential around the world.

This White Paper is simply a curation of these wisdoms and knowledge weaved into my own thoughts and words that I hope do justice to those wise and enlightened people who influenced my life.