



TOOL KIT



THE WILKINS GROUP

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Culture—an Organization's DNA

Culture—the way we do things around here or, the way a group prefers to behave—exists everywhere. When I downsized my family home for a condo, I moved into a community with a distinct culture. Wanting to fit in and belong, I set about discovering what the culture was.

The experience of learning the culture of my new community reminded me of the important elements of organizational culture.

Culture exists at three levels. 1. Artifacts. 2. Espoused Values. 3. Shared Tacit Assumptions. The easiest to observe in an organization is its artifact level: what you see, hear, and feel as you wander around.

- Notice your emotional responses to the architecture, the décor, the climate
- Notice how people behave toward each other, toward you

Culture is very clear at the artifact level and impacts you emotionally. But you really don't know why people are behaving the way they do. Talk to insiders to find out:

- Ask them questions about the things you observe and feel
- Ask about what things the company considers important
- Ask if the company's culture is reflected in its practices and behaviors

The biggest risk in working with culture is to oversimplify it and miss basic principles:

- Culture is complex. Culture controls you more than you control culture.
- Culture is pervasive. To survive in an organization, you must know and honor its sacred cows.
- Culture is enduring. It provides stability and predictability.

Does your organization need a culture tune-up? The Wilkins Group would be pleased to give you some tips and tools for examining the effectiveness of your company's culture. Let us hear from you.

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Providing Tools for Productive Workplaces

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