

BrandArchitects

Aligning progressive cultures for business performance.

Strategically-focussed cultural management to increase productivity, competitive advantage and shareholder value.



When culture breaks down.

Sound familiar? You need our help.

- Your people don't understand what they're trying to achieve
- The organisation is backward-looking and resistant to change
- The organisation is failing to cope with the impacts of change
- Factions are rife
- Internal competition and information hoarding is limiting growth
- Post-merger integration has stalled
- Customer service and satisfaction is suffering
- Repeat business is dropping off
- Low morale is affecting business performance
- Absenteeism is higher and retention lower than the industry average
- High flyers are leaving, and it is becoming harder to recruit and retain staff
- Rumours are widespread, and company communications are not trusted
- Teams lack enthusiasm and are apathetic
- Staff show little faith in leadership and undermine the management; or 'toe the line' without conviction, slowing progress and damaging performance
- These problems affect the business only in specific departments, territories or business units, or are more widespread, and affect the organisation in general.

Culture = Business

Proactive cultural management eliminates internal constraints and optimises business performance. Brand Architects are one of the few organisations that not only offer cultural measurement, but also take a business-orientated approach to deliver real, improved performance from your single largest, and annually recurring, cost.

Strategic cultural management delivers real shareholder value.

We all know a great culture when we see one. When you walk into the office, take a seat in the boardroom, sit down opposite your interviewer, you know instantly whether the place 'has a good feel' to it, or if the atmosphere is 'poisonous'; whether you're in the presence of a dynamic, productive team or if everyone's just nodding along and going with the flow. We all have an instinctive response to organisational culture, but we don't always realise its profound impacts for the bottom line.

When employees are asked whether they would recommend their company as a 'great place to work,' those companies that end up in bottom quartile see a 0.41 ROA (return on assets). Those in the top quartile see 1.3. In 2010, the Sunday Times' Best Companies to work for exceeded the five year returns of the FTSE 100 by more than four times over: 15.1% compared to 3.5%. In Good to Great, Jim Collins identified visionary leadership – putting the institution's culture, and not its celebrity CEO, first – as a defining factor of Fortune 500 companies that saw returns of at least three times the general market. Organisations in the top 25% for employee engagement demonstrate revenue growth that is 2.5 times that of the bottom 25%. Those that are not only in the top quartile for engagement but also for enablement see revenue growth that is an incredible four and a half times greater than those in the bottom quartiles. They also exceed industry five year averages for return on investment, assets and equity.

Culture might seem too amorphous, too subjective, to be effectively governed. In fact, since culture is the manifestation of company values in actions and behaviours, it is eminently manageable. It is fluid and dynamic, certainly – but this fluidity is linked to that of internal systems. Culture is a function of business operations; and by these, it can also be managed. Brand Architects views cultural management, like branding, as a process for delivering business objectives, not as an end in itself. We expect cultures to be changeable and fluid, not static, since business objectives are responsive to market conditions and culture should be responsive to business objectives.

Transitional cultures are measured and tracked, not as a point scoring exercise, but as a precondition for aligning organisational cultures for business transformation. Measurement and assessment allow interventions to be planned and structured to meet strategic objectives; that's why we offer quantitative and qualitative cultural assessments as an essential first step for proactive cultural management and as part of a wider Organisational Brand Alignment programme.

In most organisations, salaries and culture's associated costs make it the most expensive asset by far. Yet few understand how to manage culture effectively for business performance.

The strategic focus of aligned cultures accelerates value creation programmes to deliver real stakeholder value. For example, a UK government department implemented a new wellness programme to align with strategic efficiency targets. In six months, voluntary employee participation stood at 60%, and absenteeism had fallen by 2.2 days per person per annum.

Disciplined cultures don't need excessive controls: they hire the right people, treat them well and trust to their ability and their shared values. Bureaucracy is not only time-consuming and expensive; it is symptomatic of a lack of trust. The company that cannot trust itself will never be trusted by its partners and customers. High performing cultures work by conviction, not compliance: aligned by the same vision, all members of the organisation perform to the best of their ability, rather than to the bare minimum required. The organisation is coherent, rather than simply compliant. Cultures such as these challenge, but do not undermine leadership; they encourage innovation, rather than stagnation; their teams function productively, not grudgingly.

Effective organisational cultures have a clear, authentic sense of self on which leadership and employees agree, that is enacted in systems and procedures, and that is effectively communicated, both internally and externally.

In mature economies, competitive advantage through price, technology and product is becoming ever harder to find. Culture is, however, a largely untapped resource for competitive advantage. The right culture allows comparable organisations to outperform their peers; inspiring intense loyalty from their staff, customers, partners and suppliers.

Since culture is a product of the business' whole operations, culture is always being managed: either positively and proactively, or passively; it is never just an 'add-on.' For example, if your brand has a strong ethical or social responsibility element, but procurement compromises on these principles for cost, or if your business model depends on premium customer service but rewards staff on the volume of calls handled, you are failing to manage culture effectively. Worse still, you actively undermining your own business objectives. In such cases, customer perception is unlikely to accord with the stated values, and brand equity will be quickly eroded. So, whilst traditional branding has dealt mostly with the 'look and feel' of an organisation, Brand Architects' Organisational Brand.

High-performing company cultures benefit from:

- Effective, engaged employees making additional, discretionary effort
- Improved, on-brand service delivery
- Increased productivity
- Spontaneous innovation
- Creativity channelled to meet strategic objectives
- A workforce of enthusiastic brand ambassadors
- Improved knowledge sharing and teamwork
- Improved employee retention
- Reduced recruitment costs
- Attraction of the best quality candidates with a good cultural fit

Aligning Cultures with Business Objectives

THINK: directing culture

Our first priority is leadership. Clear direction through visioning and strategy articulation lays out a programme for growth and development that can be understood throughout the business. Articulating the business vision internally liberates the potential of your employees, enabling them to make a full contribution to business objectives and in delivering the brand promise to your customers.

Less than half of employees say that they work in an organisation that has capable leaders and people systems that drive the right behaviours. But when all employees understand their role in the company's vision, they not only feel more secure, they are also more productive. Being able to see how your role is a key contribution to a larger ambition reduces anxiety and apathy and helps employees to take pride in their work, generating enthusiastic brand advocates on the frontline of customer service.

ACT: enabling employees and enacting culture in operations

Operations must be planned to support staff in delivering the vision. If employees are engaged but not enabled, as much as a third of the workforce may be making plans to leave (if they are neither engaged nor motivated, this rises to a massive 76%). Frustrated employees may manage to overcome all the obstacles to get their jobs done – but will risk burn-out in about six months. Alternatively, they may just stop trying and match their efforts to the limited opportunities they are offered, or simply leave: a loss of what is often a company's best and brightest talent.

Enabled employees function in a supportive environment and within optimised roles that allow

them to perform to the best of their ability. The brand reflects, sustains and promotes the vision; communications, systems and rewards facilitate and incentivise delivery of the business objectives. Other contributors to enablement include fit-for-purpose organisational structure and process design, training, adequate resourcing, performance management and empowerment.

FEEL: engaging and inspiring employees

Reduced productivity at work – sometimes known as presenteeism – accounts for 1.5X as much lost working time as absenteeism and costs UK employers £15.1 billion a year, so it's important that employees not only understand but are also engaged by the business vision, inspired to feel positively about the organisation and to make discretionary effort. Contributors to engagement include a clear, promising business strategy; faith in the leadership to carry it out; a focus on quality and service, respect and recognition (including but not limited to pay and benefits); and opportunities for personal and career development.

The number one means of engaging employees and inspiring pride in the brand is by ensuring that your products and services are seen as the best; but engaged employees are also the brand's key champions, and so have a direct effect on its external perception. Just as inertia typifies disengagement, momentum is characteristic of engagement and enablement. Organisational Brand Alignment is the Brand Architects' process for building momentum and increasing the speed of business change and is therefore the ideal tool with which to address culture.

How would you like to be seen?

Aspiration

How do you see yourself?

Internal operations, culture, engagement

How do others see you?

Brand-alignment cultures



Need to know more?

To speak to a brand strategist

call +44 (0) 207 557 9950

or, for rapid response for market sensitive
mergers or acquisition,

call +44 (0)7710 385 534

BrandArchitects.com

BrandArchitects

Brand Architects: 11-13 Broad Court, London WC2B 5PY, United Kingdom. +44 (0) 20 7557 9950. BrandArchitects.com

