ITSM AND CULTURE

IN THE WORKPLACE

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Culture in the workplace

I recently saw an article highlighting the importance of culture in the workplace which I fully support and echo. Whilst this article promoted the importance of adopting the right culture in the workplace it did not explain the logistics of adopting such a culture. This I understand because culture is a mindset that is often unwritten and unspoken however, the most powerful fibre woven into everything we do.

In my opinion, culture is designed and influenced top-down, meaning culture in the workplace lies 100% in the lap of leadership, more so, leadership at the highest level. In other words, almost in every case, an organisation with a strong culture will also have a strong governance capability.

To understand what I am trying to highlight here, we should firstly look at the definition of culture; an organisational culture can be described as a "set of values that are shared by a group of people, including ideas, beliefs, practices and expectations about how people should be behave".

Without over-simplifying this, we can compare this with a parent/child relationship, the child will typically mimic and echo its parents ideas, beliefs, practices, and expectations. As a child grows into adulthood such beliefs, practices and expectations typically adjust or even change significantly influenced by others. Culture in the workplace can be evidenced in many ways such as through the:

- Scope of controls
- Power of influence
- Level of trust to allow others to express themselves, experiment and make decisions
- Preparedness to share knowledge, develop others and welcome inquisitiveness

In summary, a poster on a wall saying all the right things may indeed enthuse and promote an intention, or give an impression of what we want people to see but culture is silent behavior, so the question is, are we just 'talking the walk' or are we prepared to put on the shoes on and 'walk the talk'?

Let's get brutal here, we see articles like this article that I have composed here, so am I just saying the right things? Am I trying to create an impression of someone that I am not, or something that I do not practice myself? Or do I genuinely eat, sleep and breath what I am saying? What culture do I truly adopt? In my opinion, you walk' culture…..

Bringing this back to IT service management (ITSM), we have enterprise goals and objectives, so why don't these cascade to the strategy of each respective organisation within the enterprise and subsequently to the respective teams and individuals? In some cases, not only do organisational, team and individual goals compete with each other, some teams and individuals would not be able to tell you what strategy or goals comprise of therefore, culture fails i.e., we are saying all the right things and in turn delivering the opposite! In simple terms, you design top-down and implement bottom-up!

We could translate 'designing top-down' as a responsibility of the governing body based on evaluating, directing, and monitoring (EDM) and 'implementing bottom-up' as a management responsibility based on planning, doing, checking, and acting (PDCA). In terms of ITSM, if we refer to ITIL we could look to the 'guiding principles' and how we elect to adopt and adapt these which would contribute to a culture that we walk and not just talk about!

So, if we are going to promote a culture let's embed this, let's build this into the fiber that make-up who we are and what we do!

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