

Accessing Cultural Levels and Making Culture Change Happen

TOOL OVERVIEW

Content Area: Culture Change
Methodology: Bath Consultancy Model of Five Cultural Levels
Title: Accessing Cultural Levels and Making Culture Change Happen
Outcome / Deliverable: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify cultural levels in your team / work group • Help you surface deeper levels of culture which may block progress • Understand where there may be differences between levels • Compare current culture with target culture • Identify changes you can make
Description / Overview: A 4-6 hour team session on making culture change happen – including options.
How do we know we need it? If a team / function recognises the need to address culture change/ overcome blocks to change
Audience: Teams addressing cultural change or focus groups within wider organisational initiative to address culture
How to use it: As guidance for a facilitator or manager in planning team sessions on cultural levels
When not to use it: When not wanting to look at deeper levels of culture
Recommended users: Managers and facilitators who want to facilitate culture analysis and action planning
Required environment (audience size, equipment, room style / space): Normal meeting room / flipcharts / projector
Other Information (interdependencies with other tools, Pre-requisites for using; copyright restrictions) Links to other tools: Joint copyright with Bath Consultancy Group

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1. Positioning: Purpose

The purpose of this tool is to:

1. Identify cultural levels in your team / work group
2. Help you surface deeper levels of culture which may block progress
3. Understand where there may be differences between levels
4. Compare current culture with target culture
5. Identify changes you can make

2. Situational Factors

This tool is designed to be used by managers and facilitators who are reviewing culture in their team / function / work group and want to explore deeper levels of culture which may block progress. It can be used as a part of a culture change process across a function, working with focus groups or actual teams. You can use this tool to address how you are working towards the target culture and where there may be changes you need to make.

3. Introducing a Model of Cultural Levels

Background

In approaching culture you may want to draw on some definitions of culture and discuss what it is with the group. The following notes can be drawn upon for this discussion with the group or your own input.

What is corporate culture?

Beneath the surface of everyday organisational life there are powerful forces shaping and constraining behaviour: the force of tradition, views and values about how things "should be done", the unspoken prioritisation of different activities together with beliefs about how to deal with people.

Collectively these forces create an informal, yet mostly hidden, set of understandings about how to operate that represents a backdrop against which the "action" of organisational life takes place.

Why does it matter?

Corporate culture is sometimes described as "the glue that holds the organisation together"; it can also represent the glue that keeps things stuck when there is mounting pressure to change.

Basic Assumptions Underlying this Model

This approach to cultures is based on the following assumptions:-

- Every organisation has its own unique culture (and sub cultures) in the same way that individuals have personalities.

- For the successful development of an organisation, an appreciation of cultural forces is essential. The success of major initiatives or important changes such as mergers, reorganisations or attitude change programmes often rests on cultural factors.
- The enormous potential for natural development and creativity inside all organisations is contained and channelled by cultural forces.
- Cultures can and do evolve. While cultural change cannot be forced or engineered, an organisation's natural capacity to change can be released, shaped and cultivated.

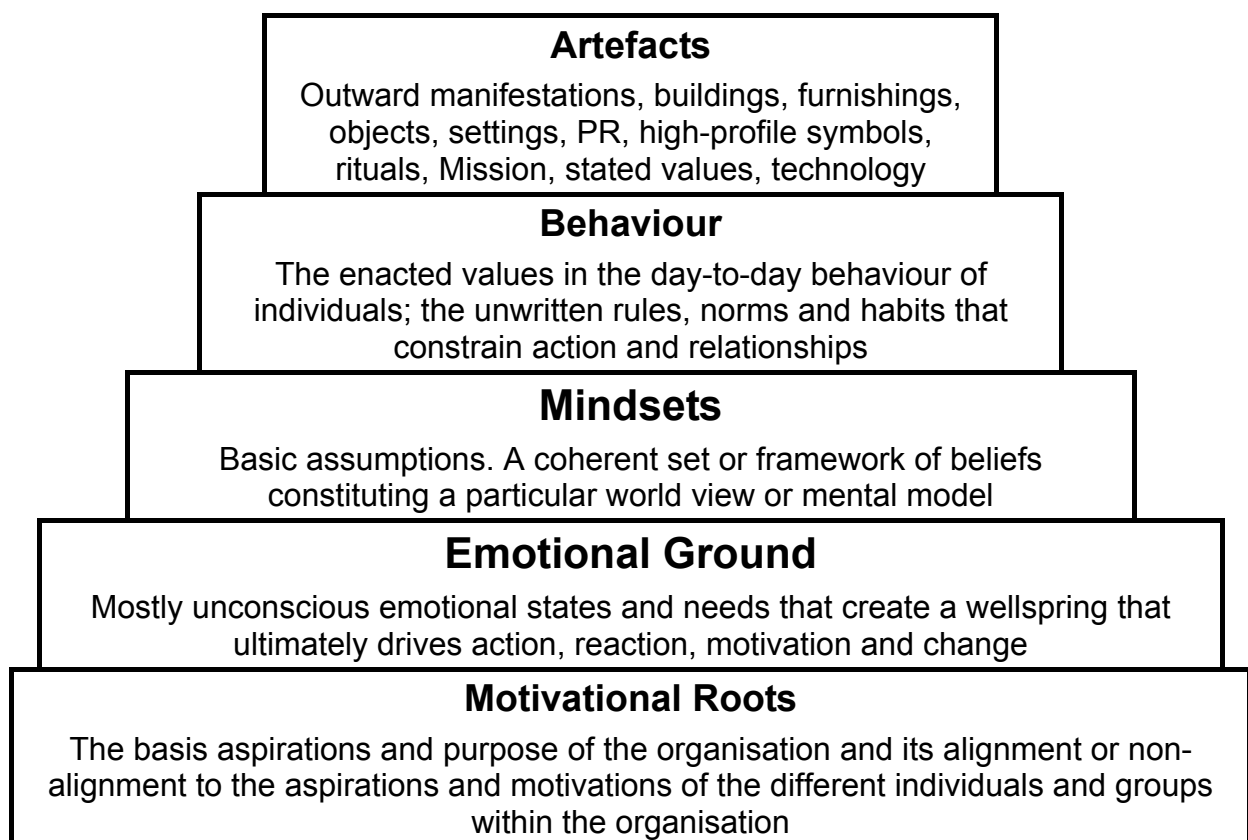
Levels of culture

Cultures are expressed in symbolic forms. Some are conspicuous and even carefully fashioned - a deliberate expression of recognised and accepted cultural norms.

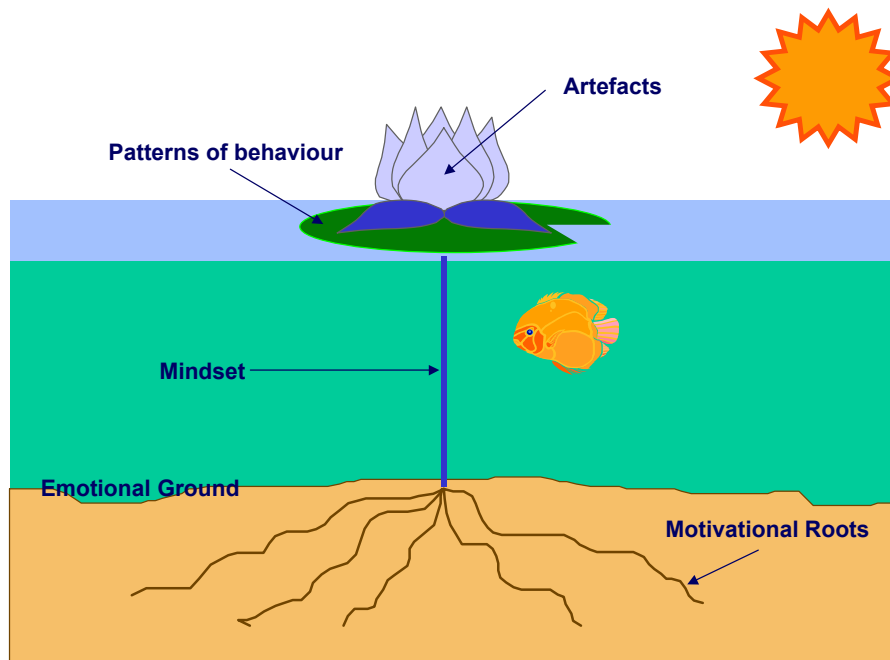
These high profile symbols will include logos, slogans, mission statements, publications and the like.

Others are more low profile, residing in the acts of individuals and departments, defined by the theories in use rather than those espoused.

It is useful to consider aspects of culture, including the symbolic, as tending to operate on one of five levels, and we have used this to develop the following model:-



The Lily Pad Model of Culture



A pictorial way to represent culture is to think of it like a lily pad on a pond. What's visible above the surface is the artefacts – the symbols – and the behaviour you see enacted. The deeper levels are the mindset – assumptions and beliefs – represented by the stem, leading down to the murkier depths of the emotional ground, and finally the motivational roots.

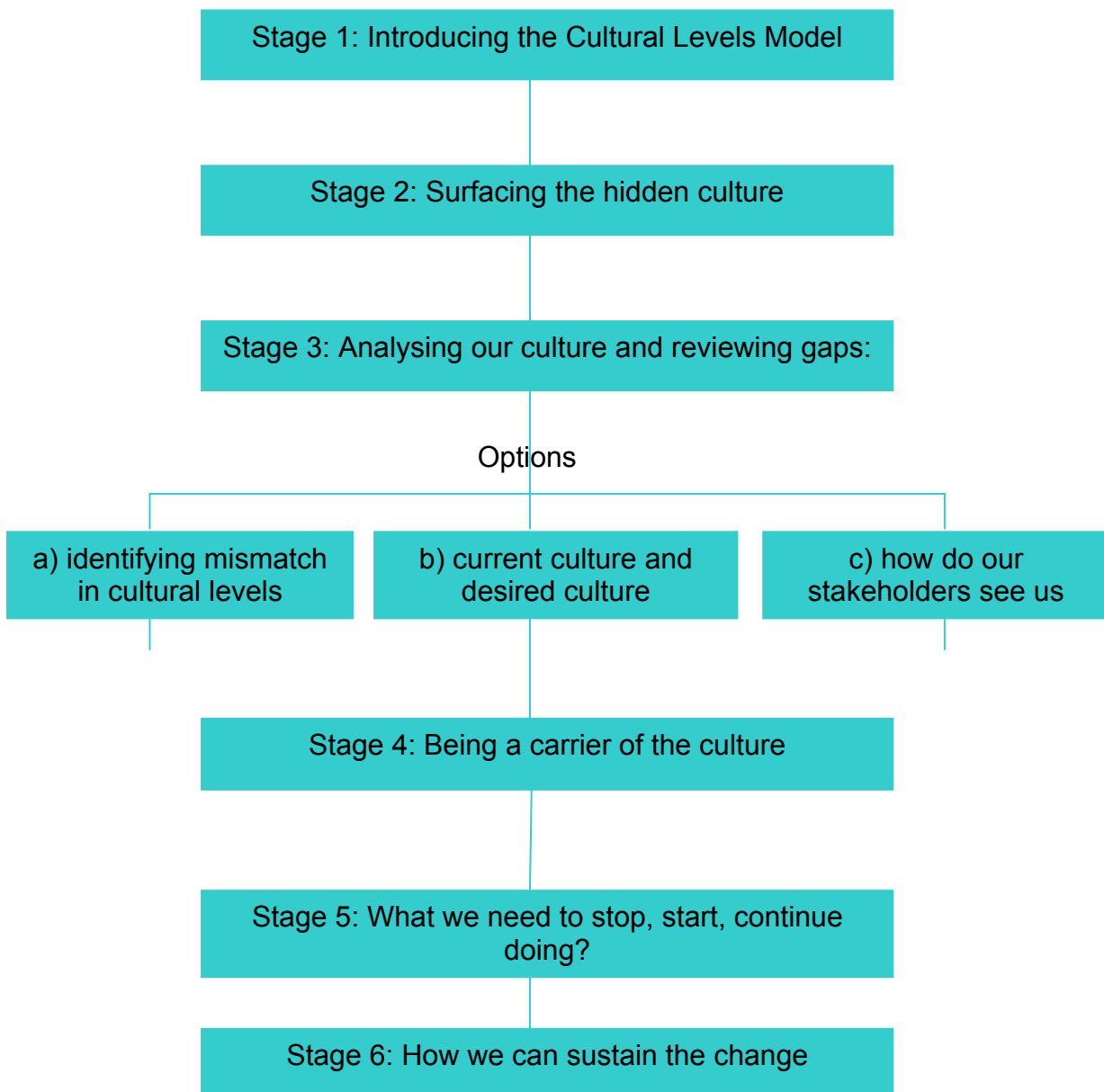
This analogy helps people understand that there are different levels to culture which organisational change can impact in different ways. This can result in mismatches between levels which block or impede change. The summary slide over leaf shows how change needs to be managed at different levels to ensure real lasting change will take place. This is why it's important to identify levels, where they mismatch and how to address changing deeper levels of culture. As in the lily pond the deeper levels are hardest to see, or get your hands on, but they do have a significant impact. They are also most likely to resist imposed change but can be unblocked by raising awareness to them, and raising commitment to change.

Five Levels of Culture Summary

- Organisational change impacts levels of culture differently
- Temporary mismatches between levels of culture are likely
so . . .
- . . . change must be managed across all levels of culture or the culture will tend to resist change
- The deeper levels of culture - mindset, emotional ground, motivational roots - are the hardest to see, but have the most potential to unify
- The deeper levels of culture can be developed or unblocked, but are resistant to imposed change

4. Process Stages

Six stages are suggested for the process:



Process Stages

To learn more about the six process stages contact:
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