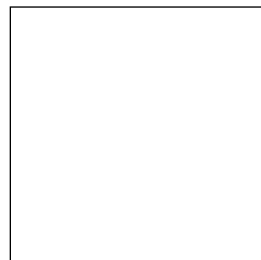# IS YOUR ORGANIZATION A GENERATIVE PLACE TO WORK?

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Overview Organizational culture plays a critical role in the success and quality of any enterprise. The question is, what makes a particular culture unique? I believe that *culture* is a function of the quality and character of the web of relationships in the organization and in many ways the relationships are the organization. Another question is, what determines the quality of the relationships? The answer is the quality of agreements among individuals and between individuals and the organization.

Many personal skills, organizational factors, and other variables enable functional agreements between collaborators. This instrument is an attempt to recognize the importance of the variables, their specific presence, and their participation in designing and creating the relationships that are effective in realizing the goals of the organization. Given the different functions that organizations serve, an instrument might be more useful if it is tailored to measure the factors a particular organization believes will result in the most effective culture rather than using this generic instrument.

The instrument does not come with any statistical validation at this time. It is not intended to evaluate an organization for an award. Its best use is to serve as a place to start a conversation about an organizational culture, as well as whether and how it might be changed. As training and development professionals, your thoughts and responses are most welcome.

CULTURAL ASSESSMENT

Directions: *Circle the response that most accurately reflects your organization. At times you might be torn between two or more answers, make the selection that **best** reflects your assessment. Your candor is most important.*

1. The prevailing attitude of people toward others in the organization is:

   (1) I will defeat you.
   (2) I will use you.
   (3) You scratch my back, I will scratch yours.
   (4) We are partners.
   (5) We are for each other and for the whole.

2. The prevailing philosophy of most people in the organization is:

   (1) Do unto others before they do unto you.
   (2) Do unto others because everyone is doing it.
   (3) Do unto others in a way that is fair.
   (4) Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.
   (5) Do for all in a way that best serves all.

3. The prevailing belief system in our organization is:

   (1) Might makes right; winning is everything.
   (2) It is a tough competitive world.
   (3) We need to compromise.
   (4) Strategic partnerships is possible.
   (5) All stakeholders serve means-sustainable growth.

4. The quality of our agreements and keeping promises is:

   (1) Tacit, dysfunctional, hostile, codependent.
   (2) Legalistic and/or haphazard.
   (3) Intent, roles, and promises clear.
   (4) Intent, roles, promises clear, and effective accountability loops in place.
   (5) Intent, roles, promises clear, and effective self-improving and self-evolving accountability loops in place.

5. The quality of response when other people speak in our organization is:

   (1) Stereotyping and discounting.
   (2) Distracted and impatient.
   (3) Focused and nonjudgmental.
   (4) Active and appreciative.
   (5) Draws out the genius in others.

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CULTURAL ASSESSMENT (CONT.)

6. The quality of inquiry is:

   (1) Punitive.
   (2) Like a cross-examination.
   (3) One of purposeful exploration.
   (4) Clarifying and integrity-evoking.
   (5) Cocreatively escalating.

7. The quality of speaking in our organization is:

   (1) Attacking, blaming, alienating.
   (2) Confusing.
   (3) People speak their truth without blame or judgment.
   (4) Clarifying and integrity evoking.
   (5) Elicits breakthroughs.

8. The mood in our organization is:

   (1) Forceful and uncertain.
   (2) Wasteful and convoluted.
   (3) Polite and aloof.
   (4) One of concern for others.
   (5) Alive with enthusiasm and respect.

9. Our business results are:

   (1) Exploitative for the good of the few.
   (2) Subtly exploitative.
   (3) Value-adding for all.
   (4) Consistently high-performing from additive synergy.
   (5) Radical sustainable growth from exponential synergy.

10. The level of trust in our organization is best described as:

    (1) Fear is palpable.
    (2) Communication is constrained by unspoken fear.
    (3) Surface politeness prevails.
    (4) Truth telling is rewarded
    (5) Mutual trust and respect are at the highest levels.

11. The level of mutual respect and caring is:

    (1) Focused on the worst in others, blaming.
    (2) "Dissing"—disrespect, discounting, dishonesty, discouraging.
    (3) Perceptive of others as limited and in need of development.
    (4) A mind-set of appreciation and concern for the well-being of others.
    (5) Committed to unleashing others' gifts and potential.

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12. The discomfort and group conflict with others are used:

    (1) As an opportunity for denial and counterattack.
    (2) To generate denial and defensiveness.
    (3) As a signal to minimize others discomfort.
    (4) As an important signal for action and dialogue.
    (5) As an opportunity to generate a vital feedback loop.

13. Our organizational energy is characterized by:

    (1) Unhealthy stress; uncertainty and fear; blaming and attacking.
    (2) Reacting; defending; escaping; gossiping.
    (3) Analysis, planning, and design.
    (4) Exploration and discovery; reflection and practice.
    (5) Learning and teaching; cocreation and innovation; truth telling and deep listening; risk taking.

14. Our organizational mood is characterized by:

    (1) Reinforcement of vicious cycles.
    (2) Fear of making waves.
    (3) Reinforcement of status quo.
    (4) Exploring new pathways.
    (5) Spawning of generative spirals.

15. Our organizational performance is:

    (1) Worst in class.
    (2) Borderline.
    (3) Reasonably effective and efficient.
    (4) Best in class, a standard-setter.
    (5) Masterful and innovation spawning.

16. The quality of our agreements is:

    (1) Unconscious and dysfunctional.
    (2) Unclear and/or unkept.
    (3) Mostly implicit.
    (4) Mostly explicit.
    (5) Self-sustaining; self-regulating; always renegotiating.

17. Our organizational processes are:

    (1) Malfunctioning.
    (2) Of uncertain reliability.
    (3) Minimally meeting standards—errors within tolerance.
    (4) High-integrity, continuous improvement.
    (5) Self-improving and evolving.

CULTURAL ASSESSMENT (CONT.)

18. Our communication pathways are:

    (1) Personal and systemic denial.
    (2) Crisis-driven; subtly exploitative.
    (3) Developmental work is marginally value adding.
    (4) Highest reliability and predictability.
    (5) Spirit- and soul-enhancing.

19. Our interactions can be described as:

    (1) Attacking; blaming; grossly exploitative.
    (2) Dissing—disrespect, discounting; discouraging.
    (3) Polite on the surface; conflict suppressing.
    (4) Open, trusting, and respectful at the highest levels.
    (5) Alive and aware.

20. Our energy is characterized by:

    (1) Pervasive palpable fear.
    (2) Fear-driven high energy.
    (3) Moderation and evenness.
    (4) High levels for many.
    (5) Collaboration and generative ability.

21. Our collaborative problem-solving ability is:

    (1) Nonexistent.
    (2) On a path of diminishing results.
    (3) Cooperative when essential.
    (4) Masterful.
    (5) Innovative.

22. Generally, employees are part of the organization until they:

    (1) Burn out.
    (2) Find something more tolerable.
    (3) Retire.
    (4) Stop learning and move on.
    (5) Find something they love more.

23. Our people go to work everyday because they:

    (1) Have not looked for something they like and they need a paycheck.
    (2) Do not have the initiative to change.
    (3) Are satisfied with their basic competence and they are comfortable.
    (4) Have the opportunity to solve problems and express creativity.
    (5) Continually exhibit masterful, innovative productivity.

24. We believe our products and/or service offerings are considered to be of _____quality?

   (1) Inferior
   (2) Marginal
   (3) Adequate
   (4) Above-average
   (5) Leading-edge

25. Our organization has a reputation in the community of being:

   (1) Exploitative.
   (2) No place special.
   (3) An okay place to work.
   (4) Top quality.
   (5) One of the best places to work.

26. Our skills in the area of collaboration and conflict resolution are:

   (1) Not part of our employee development.
   (2) Considered important, but not part of our formal training.
   (3) Part of employee development.
   (4) Considered an essential competence for all employees.
   (5) Encouraged, valued, and rewarded.

27. Our dominant organizational conversation on the availability of resources (people, equipment, expenses) is one of :

   (1) Scarcity.
   (2) Not enough.
   (3) We have enough.
   (4) We have more than enough.
   (5) We have an abundance of resources.

28. Our organizational performance in terms of using resources is that we:

   (1) Waste a lot of resources.
   (2) Waste some of our resources.
   (3) Do not think much about using resources.
   (4) Are effective in our use of resources.
   (5) Are efficient in our use of resources.

29. As a dominant organizational mind-set, we:

   (1) Always talk about how bad things are instead of working.
   (2) Talk about problems and issues but work anyway.
   (3) Do not waste time talking about what we believe cannot be changed.
   (4) Are open to doing things differently to resolve our challenges.
   (5) Proactively use our creativity and focus on solutions to our challenges.

CULTURAL ASSESSMENT (CONT.)

30. Our communication habits and processes:

    (1) Foster polarization and unproductive fighting and bickering.
    (2) Ignore conflict that everyone is aware of.
    (3) Have little impact on the ultimate resolution.
    (4) Contribute to resolving the conflict because we have had some training.
    (5) Foster resolution because we have been trained and having good agreements is one of our organizational values.

31. When we get into conflicts, we step into a mind-set of:

    (1) Righteous bravado and posturing.
    (2) "I am right."
    (3) Making believe it does not exist.
    (4) Sharing information.
    (5) Openness, willingness to be educated and learning.

32. In conflict situations, we perceive other(s) as:

    (1) Short-term adversaries.
    (2) "I do not trust them."
    (3) "Prove to me you are trustworthy."
    (4) "I want to trust you."
    (5) Prospective partners in long-term collaborations.

33. We use _____ to resolve our differences.

    (1) Personal power
    (2) Our position
    (3) Logical thinking in our conversations
    (4) Feelings and intuition based on experience in our conversations
    (5) Logic, feelings, and intuition in our conversations

34. Our communication is filled with:

    (1) Purposeful secrecy and withholding of information.
    (2) Providing information when asked or required.
    (3) Providing some information.
    (4) Full disclosure of information.
    (5) Full disclosure of information and feelings.

35. Our first thoughts when we have a disagreement is that:

    (1) Winning is everything and I act accordingly.
    (2) Winning is important and I will show them why I am right.
    (3) Having dialogue will be helpful.
    (4) What I learn and what I can teach about our different perspectives.
    (5) How can we develop a new agreement that takes care of everyone's needs.

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36. When dealing with difficult situations, it is essential to:

    (1) Let someone else take responsibility for the outcome.
    (2) Heavily rely on the advice and counsel of experts.
    (3) Seek expert information as a guide.
    (4) Rely on the experts and use your own opinions and experience.
    (5) Take personal responsibility to resolve the situation using all available resources.

37. When we do not know the answers, we rely on:

    (1) Frenetic energy to find the solution.
    (2) What we already know.
    (3) What we know and the input of others.
    (4) Input from discerning sources.
    (5) All available resources including our own grounded intuition.

38. Most people in our organization understand that we learn the most when we are:

    (1) Speaking.
    (2) Listening to ourselves.
    (3) Listening to others.
    (4) Listening to others and ourselves.
    (5) Listening to others with our hearts.

39. When we begin a new initiative, project, team, or reporting relationship, we:

    (1) Quickly move into action without consultation.
    (2) Touch base quickly with others involved.
    (3) Make sure we have a similar vision for the outcome.
    (4) Spend the time to make sure we have an alignment of heart and mind going forward.
    (5) Spend the time to make sure we have alignment of heart and mind going forward as a matter of standard practice.

40. When a project runs into conflict and challenges, we immediately:

    (1) Look for ways to protect and insulate ourselves from blame or fault.
    (2) Talk about who is not performing to everyone but the person we believe is responsible.
    (3) Ask a supervisor to step in and fix the problems.
    (4) Open frank conversations with the people involved.
    (5) Have a comprehensive common standard conversational process to follow.

41. As an organization we have:

    (1) No consciousness about the value of differences or the cost of conflict.
    (2) A general awareness of value of differences and the costs of conflict.
    (3) An awareness of the real costs of seemingly unresolvable differences that result in a work-stopping conflict.
    (4) A process in place to constructively address differences so as to quickly resolve costly conflicts.
    (5) A process in place to prevent differences from becoming costly conflicts.

42. Most people in our organization immediately access the following processes used to resolve conflict:

    (1) Grievance process.
    (2) Informal conferences.
    (3) Ombudsman process.
    (4) Mediation.
    (5) What they believed was the best process for the situation.

43. When it comes to training in interpersonal skills, our organization provides:

    (1) No education.
    (2) Some education as part of employee or management development.
    (3) Basic communication skills training, including listening, speaking, and presentation skills.
    (4) Advanced communication skills, including role-plays and other exercises.
    (5) Practicum and a learning program with comprehensive skills training.

44. Our comprehensive learning programs enable employees to deal with the emotions of others because they include:

    (1) Little emotional learning as a group because it is looked upon as too touchy-feely.
    (2) Some basic sensitivity training.
    (3) Some training in the area of emotional intelligence.
    (4) Personality typing, such a MBPA or DISC, and how to deal with differences effectively.
    (5) The requirement to be certified in "emotional intelligence."

45. In terms of productivity and reaching goals, we understand that it is all about:

    (1) Working harder.
    (2) Working much harder.
    (3) Working smarter.
    (4) Synergy in our collaborative efforts.
    (5) Synergy in our collaborative efforts that begins with a shared vision and an agreement on how to achieve it.

46. When we have conflict, we understand how important it is to:

    (1) Get everyone back in action quickly.
    (2) Quickly get a new agreement in place even when there is disagreement.
    (3) Get the people who disagree to compromise.
    (4) Make sure the people who disagree go along with the new agreement and promise not to undermine the new agreement.
    (5) Have alignment and true resolution (no "chatter") about the new agreement.

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47. We understand how critical it is to have the "difficult" conversations quickly and:

    (1) Unfortunately most of them are never had.
    (2) People usually have them with themselves, but they are rarely public.
    (3) People are beginning to say what needs attention, and their personal integrity is demanding that the tough questions be asked and answered.
    (4) We usually have the difficult conversations, although things could be addressed in much greater detail.
    (5) We regularly and with detail have the difficult conversations with ourselves, our supervisors, our teams, and our futures.

48. The leaders in our organization are _____ available to engage in thoughtful dialogue.

    (1) Never
    (2) Sometimes
    (3) Often
    (4) Most of the time
    (5) Always

49. Our organizational commitment to individual and organizational learning is:

    (1) A platitude of empty words.
    (2) Available to everyone but not rewarded within our culture.
    (3) Reflected in our robust catalogue of educational offerings.
    (4) Reflected in the generativity that "learners" bring to their work.
    (5) Explicitly recognized and rewarded by our organization.

50. As an organization, we are optimistic about our future because:

    (1) It is part of our value statement.
    (2) Everyone runs around quickly and is very polite.
    (3) We have a proven track record and measurable results.
    (4) Many people in the organization can take charge of a project, develop a joint vision, and drive to a desired result.
    (5) Most people in the organization can take charge of a project, develop a joint vision, and drive to a desired result.

SCORING

Directions: *Total all the numbers you have circled. Take the total score and use the instrument not so much as a grade, but as a basis for reflection, discussion, aspiration, and planning.*

0–25	You have a great deal of work to do to create a generative organization.
26–50	D: At least you are looking at the game board.
51–75	D+: You are getting onto the game board of generativity.
76–100	C–: You are on the generativity game board with a great deal of work to do.
101–125	C: Welcome to the low end of mediocrity.
126–150	C: Welcome to the high end of mediocrity.
151–175	B: You are doing some generative work, but there is room for improvement.
176–200	B+: You should feel real good about the generative place you work in.
201–225	A: Congratulations on being in a very generative work space.
226–250	A+: Congratulations on being in a highly generative place to work.

For all the 1 and 2 responses, you have much work to do. Where you have 3s, do you want to settle for ordinariness? Where you have 4s, what small incremental improvements can you make to get to 5? And for all the 5s, be proud and inspired to use the same skills in other areas.