

# Culture

Create stories, symbols, rituals and structures to support and reinforce values of equity, diversity and inclusion.

## Introduction

“Culture” is often understood as that which is taken for granted in a society or organization. At its most basic, culture might include assumptions about what an organization does, or the reasons for its success. Culture can also be thought of as the “artifacts” of the organization—such as routines, systems and structures.

The taken for granted nature of culture can lead many organizations to reflect dominant, white, heteronormative elements and reinforce other kinds of privilege (arising from: nationality, sex assigned at birth, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, disability status, etc).

Important concepts to consider in promoting a more equitable organizational culture include understanding the [characteristics of White Supremacy Culture](#) and exploring [how to](#) be [anti-racist](#).

## Tools for equity

Cultural Web: Introduction

Culture component: Stories

Culture component: Symbols

Culture component: Rituals & routines

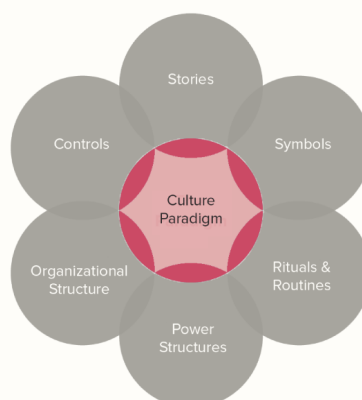
Culture component: Power structures

Cultura component: Organizational structure

Culture component: Controls

## Cultural Web: Introduction

The Cultural Web can be a useful tool for achieving some clarity on what constitutes the culture of an organization, why culture is significant for strategy development and the ways it might be possible to manage change. In particular, the Cultural Web highlights the importance of that which is taken for granted in an organization.



The following sections explore each of the six culture components to allow for reflection on your organization's current state and where you would like it to go, in alignment with your organization's mission and strategy.

## Sources

### Culture Web Paradigm

Fundamentals of Strategy

## Key steps to realign culture

- Analyze culture as it is now
- Imagine the culture as you want it to be

- Map the differences between the two
- Reflect
  - What weaknesses are hindering your vision and mission, or are misaligned?
  - Which factors do you need to change—and what are the priorities?
  - What new beliefs and behaviors do you need to promote at different levels?
- Make an action plan
  - What are the key issues to address—both to reinforce and change?
  - Who should take action? Leadership commitment to action is essential.
  - How you will track and measure changes?
- Measure differences over time

## Sources

### **The Management Centre**

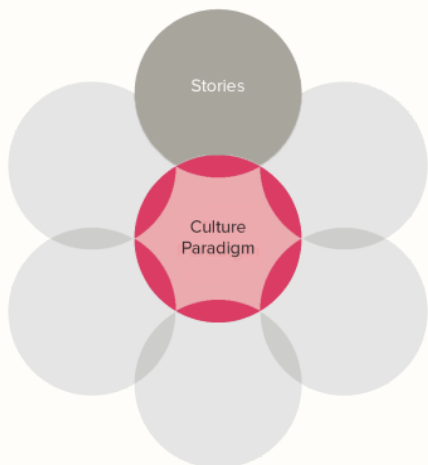
Culture eats strategy for breakfast

### **Culture Web Paradigm**

Fundamentals of Strategy

## **Culture component: Stories**

Stories are crucial to an organization's culture. Consider the events people talk about within your organization, success and failures, and notable personalities.

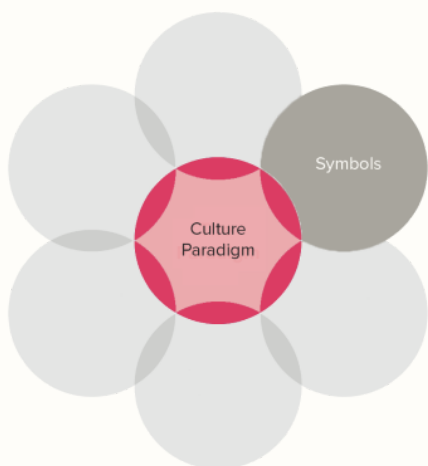


### Reflection questions:

- What stories do people tell about your organization—internally and externally?
- What heroes, villains and mavericks appear in these stories?
- Are there multi-racial, multicultural perspectives and accessible ways of engaging, communicating, and collaborating?

### Culture component: Symbols

Logos, titles and terminology are all symbols that become a shorthand representing the organization. Consider how equitable these may be and whether they are inclusive of all groups.

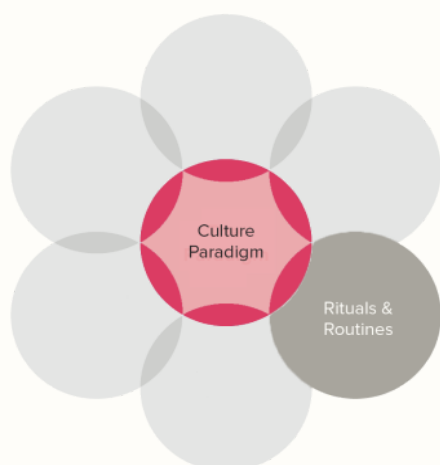


### Reflection questions:

- Is specific jargon or language used? How well do people within the organization and its constituents know and use this?
- Are there any obvious status symbols? Are they accessible and inclusive?

### Culture component: Rituals & routines

Behaviors and rules signal importance and connect team members. Take note of ways members of the organization behave and what is considered outside the norm.

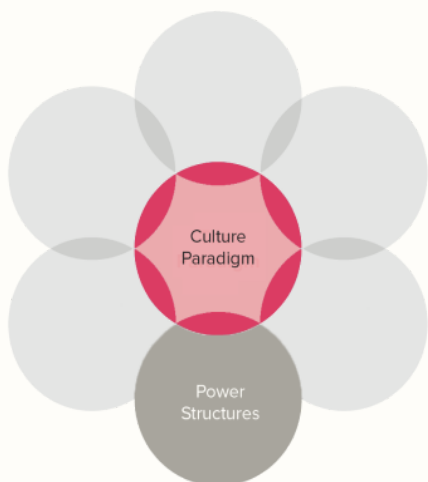


### Reflect questions:

- When a problem is encountered, what rules do people apply when they solve it?
- Are the rules and routines in our organization equitable and diverse?
- Do practices and rituals reinforce values of equity, diversity and inclusion?

### Culture component: Power structures

Power and influence over decisions, operations and direction are rarely distributed equally. This can include formal as well as social or persuasive power.

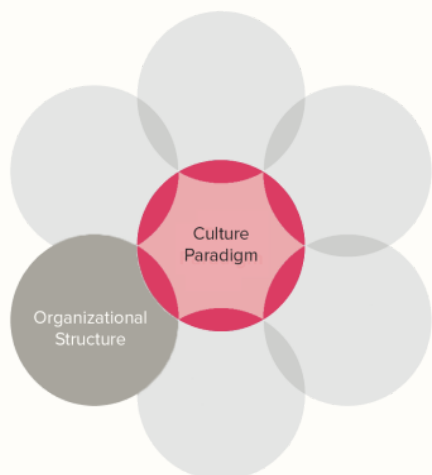


### Reflection questions:

- Are the power structures fair, just and understood by all team members?
- Who makes or influences key decisions? Who has the real power? Is it the same as formal power? How is this power used or abused?
- Do staff at all levels feel safe to step into their power and to voice perspectives that challenge dominant paradigms?

### **Culture component: Organizational structure**

Formal organizational structures and relationships can dictate whose contributions are most valued, and can entrench some of the less visible cultural components noted above. Consider whether changes may be needed to the way the organization is structured.

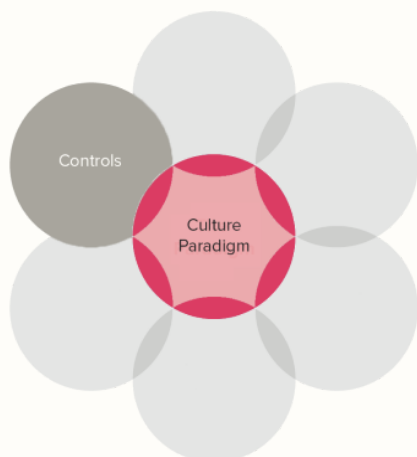


### Reflection questions:

- Is the structure flat or hierarchical? Formal or informal?
- Where are the formal lines of authority? Who can challenge them?
- Are these structures clear and accessible to all team members?

### Culture component: Controls

Controls are measurements and systems (e.g., salaries, compensation) that monitor and thus emphasize what is important in the organization.



### Reflection questions:

- Is the organization loosely or tightly controlled?
- What process or procedure has the tightest controls: finance, ethics, quality?

- Are there intentional, ongoing conversations to consider and address these control systems?

## Sources

### **Culture Web Paradigm**

Fundamentals of Strategy