

Episode 115: How do I assess my company's culture?

Lou Gerstner, the former CEO of IBM, talked about the role of culture in transformation. In his book he wrote, "that culture isn't just one aspect of the game, it is the game." He believed an organization was the collective capacity of its people to create value.



1. Control systems

What is the hierarchy like in the organization and how ridged is it?
The way data and directives flow can be very telling about an organization.

2. Degree of urgency

Does the team struggle with balancing urgent over important?
If they do, you never get to work on building a future.

3. People or process?

When it comes to work, does the organization think people or process first?
One is no better than the other – it's more about how the organization thinks.

4. Decision making process

Some organization's decisions are made at the top – tablets of stone from on high
In some cultures, decisions are made by consensus and all need to be aligned. Others drive decisions to the lowest point.

5. Organizational orientation

How is business organized: by Business Unit, by region, by function?
Look for who has the P&L for the business – they will have the power.

6. Personality

Is the personality formal, informal, trendy, old fashioned or something else?
Each of these will change the way the company thinks and reacts to change.

7. Values

Each organization has value they say they hold dear to them.
Are they published and followed? If they exist but not followed, then learning that will tell you a lot about the culture.

Bottom Line: Typically not one thing defines a culture, but if you can build a picture or mosaic that gives you a view, it will be easier to navigate that culture.