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# Workplace Culture – Building Something Good in Different Teams

Jim Timpson

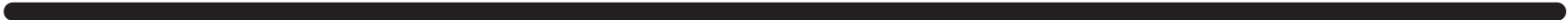


# A Starting Point

What can we do in 45 minutes?

- Get clear about what we mean by organisational culture
  - Establish a simple, evidence based way to describe different cultures
  - Identify what good and bad looks like
  - Clarify what would be needed if you wanted to get the best from what you have or make some changes
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**Point 1: you may not have a culture  
but if you do it's easiest to observe  
at the level of teams**



# The Best Definition of Workplace Culture

1. A pattern of shared basic assumptions
2. That a group learns as it solves its problems of external adaptation and internal integration
3. That has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members
4. As the correct way to perceive, think and feel in relation to those problems.

- Schein 1985

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# What creates it?

- Personalities within the team – if there is some stability over time
  - Leadership style – if there is some stability over time
  - Nature of the work
  - Key drivers for success
  - History
  - Employee & management reward structures (e.g. pay, bonuses, individual v team rewards)
  - Organisational structure, policies & practices
  - Size & development stage of the business (e.g. start-up, multisite, multinational)
  - External environment (e.g. legal, economic, social)
  - Attitude of organisation to risk-taking & innovation
  - Sector: e.g. healthcare, finance, manufacturing
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# You could think of it as the personality of a team

- As with any other personality it benefits from having some emotional intelligence:
  - Self awareness – do you know your strengths and weaknesses?
  - Self control – is it safe to talk about them?
  - Motivation – are you able to consistently do the things you're being paid to do well?
  - Empathy – can you collaborate effectively with other teams?
  - Influencing skills – have you banked enough credit and good will within the wider organisation to influence them when it matters?
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# Schein's Lily Pond



Behaviours and  
artifacts

Beliefs, values,  
objectives, strategies

Underlying  
assumptions

# The top of the Lily Pond



# Schein's advice on culture

- Work with it if you can
  - Change it if you must
  - Remember that change requires specific behaviour change in relation to a specific aspect of the culture
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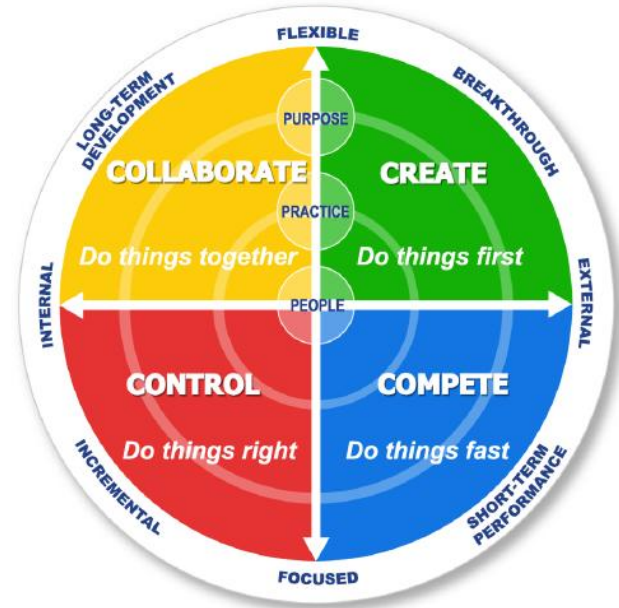


# What do you like about the culture in your team?

# Cameron & Quinn simplified culture to 4 competing priorities

Their research suggests that successful teams choose, consciously or unconsciously to consistently prioritise some over others

THE COMPETING VALUES FRAMEWORK



# Even more simply



Remember; no department has only one characteristic but you can see what they emphasise

Some cultures are so strong that you can see them at an organisational level

People and shared values will deliver success

*John Lewis Partnership*  
Waitrose John Lewis



Innovation will deliver success

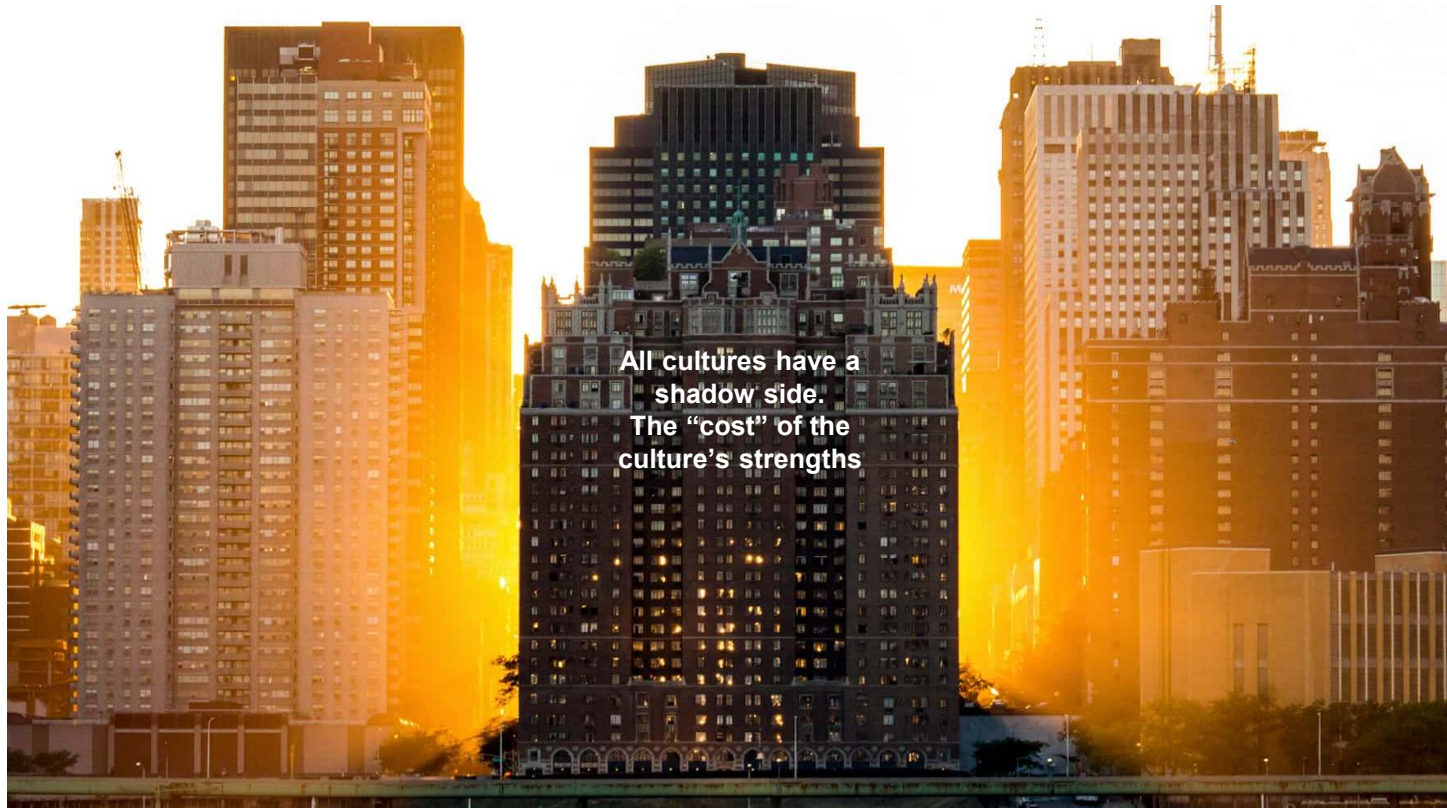


Excellent systems and processes will deliver success

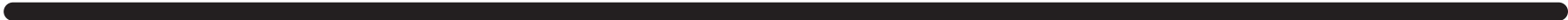


Exceeding customer expectations will deliver success





All cultures have a  
shadow side.  
The “cost” of the  
culture’s strengths





# What's your team's bad habit?

# An outline for “Good”

- Leaders need skills in feedback, an attractive vision of the future and the discipline to model the way they’re asking everyone else to behave
  - Teams need to come together periodically to review how they work together to deliver their work
  - Teams need trust, constructive conflict, the ability to make group decisions and hold each other to account in service of their shared goals
  - Team members need to understand each other’s working styles and personalities enough to secure the benefits of diversity and to create some psychological safety which in turn supports accountability
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# Also....

- Not all teams are the same, that's fine, they just need to know their strengths and manage their weaknesses
  - Rather than talking about transformation it would be better to start by identifying what you're already doing right and making sure you keep doing that
  - If you need to make some changes it's important to be clear and what you need to do and why and make sure your efforts are highly focused on what exactly it is that you're looking to change and the specific substitute behaviours required to deliver that change
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## Cameron & Quinn Take a “Zero Sum” view of culture

- If you want more of one thing you'll need to accept having less of something else
  - People focused cultures are often slow to change because there is resistance to upsetting people or forcing them to work in way that they don't like
  - So an increase in innovation and possibilities comes at the cost of prioritising the happiness of team members
  - It doesn't mean you pay no attention at all to staff morale. You might strive to implement the unpopular change as kindly as possible, but you're still going to make clear that it's definitely happening
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# Example: a safety culture



# Example – Alcoa

“I knew I had to transform Alcoa

But you can’t order people to change. That’s not how the brain works. So I decided I was going to start by focusing on one thing.

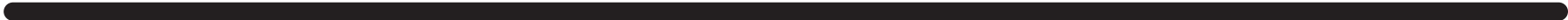
If I could start by disrupting the habits around one thing, it would spread throughout the entire company”

Paul O’Neill – CEO Alcoa (1987 – 2000)

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# **If you want to facilitate change you should start with your own behaviour and leadership style**

You have most control over your own behaviour, then systems and processes and finally other people's behaviour. You have to model the behaviours you want to see in others



# Changing Culture

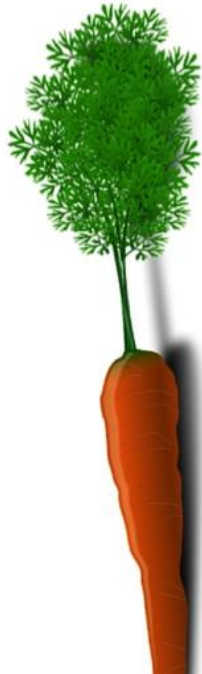
On the first day at  
work



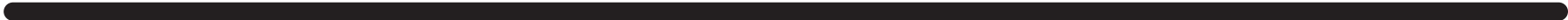
After 6 months in the  
organization



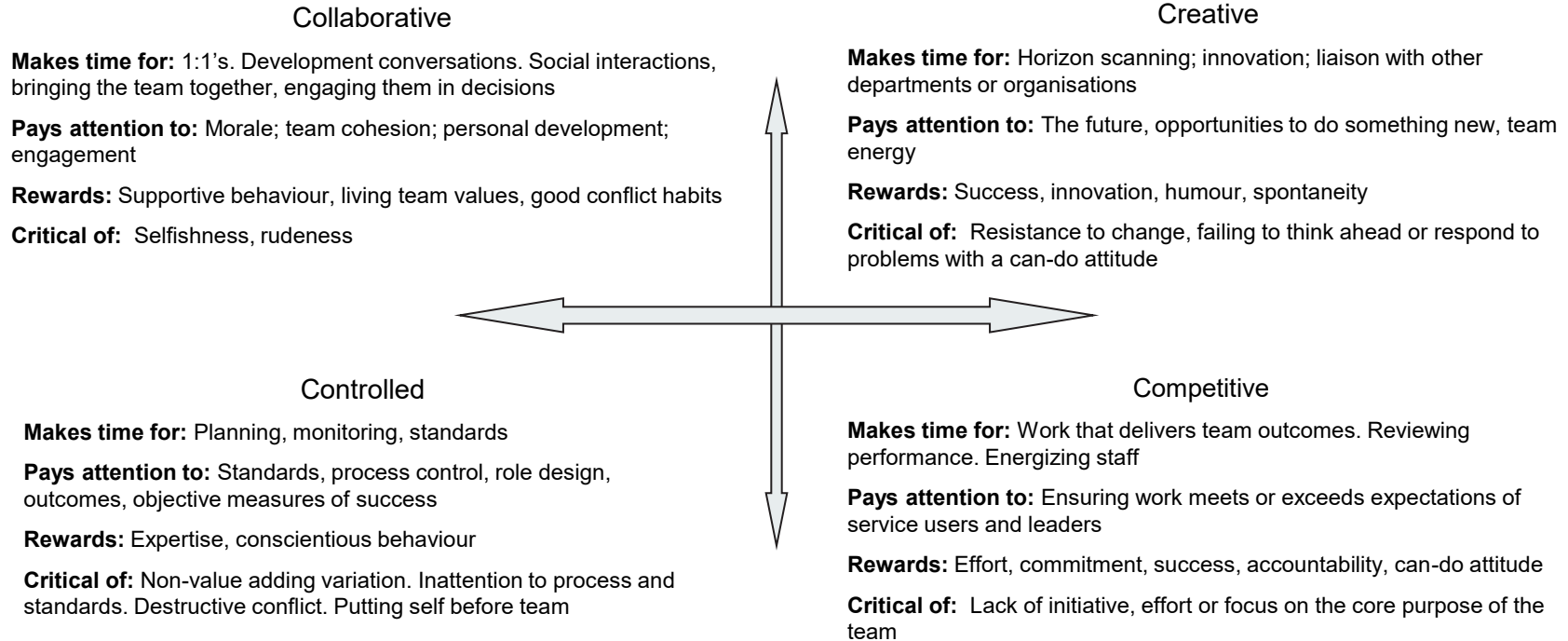
# An unfashionable view



**VS.**



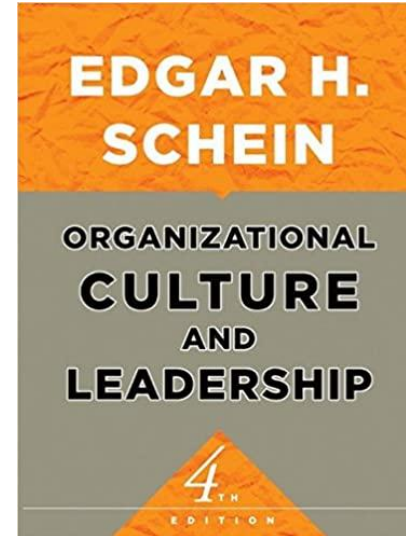
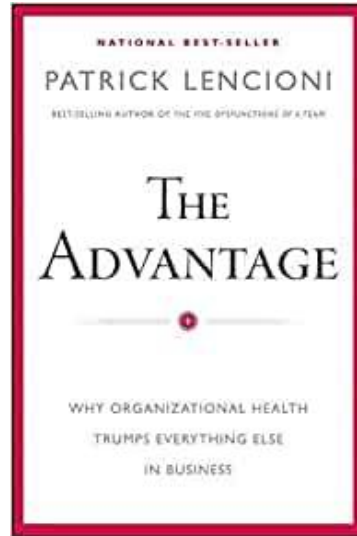
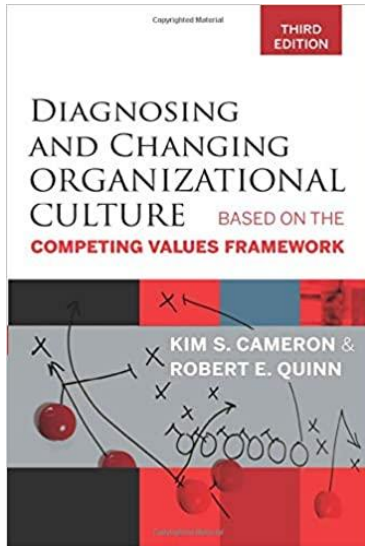
# How does your leadership style already support what's needed? How might you need to reallocate your time or focus to reflect the changing context?



# Conclusions

- Culture is “what works around here”
  - It reflects deeply held values and assumptions that can be invisible to the people in the team
  - All cultures have weaknesses which are often the “cost” of their strengths
  - It’s easiest to work with the strengths of the existing culture
  - If you want change think about modelling behaviour, how you can create habits and systems aligned with the change and telling everyone what the change is and why it’s necessary
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# Some References



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# Any questions?

Do you have any questions,  
comments or thoughts?

