

Chapter Nine — Our Cultures Shape Our Behaviors — So We Need To Shape Our Cultures

Our instincts have two primary tools that they use to shape and influence our behaviors. The first tool is our emotions — and that tool can have its own wide range of obvious connections to what we do.

The second tool is our cultures. Our instincts clearly use our cultures to set up the processes and the behavioral expectations that steer us in ways that help our instincts achieve their goals.

It was clear to me very early in my study of instincts that instincts can create a number of emotional reactions — and one of the most powerful and effective emotions is to make certain behaviors “feel right.”

Maternal behaviors, territorial behaviors, hierarchical behaviors, and tribal behaviors all feel right to us because those behaviors are directly and clearly aligned with key sets of instincts that are each supported by those behaviors.

When we act in accord with those sets of behaviors, it “feels right” at a very basic level to act in those ways.

I learned that relationship between instinct-aligned behavior and “feeling right” fairly quickly in my study of instincts.

Then, to my great delight, I learned that our cultures also have that same remarkable power to make behaviors feel right. I learned very early in the process of studying those sets of behaviors that we can instinctively also feel very right when we are acting in accord with our cultures.

Our cultures can make some behaviors feel right.

And — just like our instincts, our cultures can also make some behaviors feel wrong.

When we have a culture in place in any setting, we tend to feel right when we are acting in accord with that culture. We tend to feel wrong or we experience a sense of stress when we are acting out of alignment with our culture

It was extremely useful for me to realize in what I now remember to be a moment of sheer intellectual joy and pure cognitive happiness and pleasure that cultures can also guide our lives at that very important level. I felt great joy because I realized in that moment that although we cannot change, erase, or eliminate our instincts, we actually can choose — with great intellectual control and a high degree of very intentional leverage — to change, design, modify, channel, direct, steer, and manipulate our cultures.

We Can't Eliminate Instincts — But We Can Shape Cultures

For me as a work site process re-engineering practitioner, that was an extremely useful and highly functional point for me to understand. It was extremely important to understand that opportunity because that power to shape cultures gives us an invaluable tool that we can use to shape and guide the behaviors and the thought processes that we need to shape and guide to be at Peace with ourselves in all of the settings where we want to be at Peace with ourselves.

It was already very clear to me that our actual instincts could and did cause certain behaviors to feel right.

Maternal behaviors, I knew, felt right because our maternal instincts cause them to feel right.

Having someone trespass on our property feels instinctively wrong... and that instinctive reaction makes our basic behaviors that we engage in to protect our property in that situation feel right. Territorial behaviors feel right in all of our territorial settings because our territorial/turf instincts cause certain territory-related behaviors to feel right.

I understood those kinds of linkages between our basic instincts and our feelings and I could see how they influenced our behaviors every day of our lives.

I did not expect, however, when I started looking at those issues and those processes that our cultures could have an equivalent power to make specific behaviors in a setting feel wrong or right.

Our Cultures Cause Some Behaviors To Feel Right

I learned that power of cultures to make behaviors both feel right and feel wrong as I looked both at our instincts to build cultures and at the tools that our cultures actually use to structure and guide our instinctive behaviors.

That ability to make a behavior “feel right” is obviously a very useful power for cultures to have. It gives cultures both relevance and leverage over the behaviors of the people in the culture. It makes functional and logical sense for instincts to give cultures that tool kit to work with because our instincts need our cultures to achieve most of their goals.

When we understand the usual relationship that exists between cultures and instincts — with cultures functioning as a key tool to help us achieve our instinctive goals — then seeing that both instincts and cultures can and do share and utilize that very useful power to give us a sense that a behavior feels right or that a behavior feels wrong makes great functional and practical sense.

Our cultures tend to function very directly as tools to actualize and achieve the goals of our instincts. We have hierarchical instincts — so every culture invents its own rules for hierarchies. We have strong instincts to be territorial — so every culture creates its own rules for property and turf.

We have strong instincts to be paternal and maternal — so every culture creates its own rule sets of paternal and maternal behaviors.

I understood that link between cultures and instincts — but what I did not perceive for many years was the fact that the linkage works to a very large degree because our instincts grant our cultures the ability to cause specific behaviors embedded in each culture to feel right and to feel wrong.

I could see fairly early in the process that our instincts used our cultures to give our instincts a context and a tool kit to achieve their goals. Our cultures are obviously one of the very best and most effective tools that our instincts have in their tool kit.

What I could not understand clearly for several years was how cultures did that work. And then, once I recognized the linkage between certain behaviors feeling right and feeling wrong and our direct cultural expectations about those specific behaviors, it made obvious sense that the primary tool used by an instinct to achieve many of its goals would be to

give at least some of the power of an instinct to make behaviors feel right or to feel wrong as a direct and clear leverage factor that helped each culture succeed in actualizing each instinct.

We Can Change Cultures But Not Instincts

I already knew at a logistical level that we actually cannot change our instincts. The actual instincts that we each have are embedded in each of us at a very primal level and they cannot be changed.

We each have the same basic sets of instincts — and there is no way of extracting or removing any of those instincts from the basic package of who we each are.

We each spend our lives dealing with the instincts that are embedded in each of us.

As a change agent, I found that particular piece of information about the permanent nature of instincts challenging and a bit discouraging — if not intimidating.

However, as I also began to understand that our instincts achieve many — if not most — of their goals using our cultures and I also realized — fairly early in the process — from both direct experience and extensive observation — that we could, in fact, change our cultures.

That was one of the most encouraging and positive realizations that I encountered in the entire process of studying our behaviors with the goal of making our behaviors improve for key areas of intergroup interactions.

We Can, In Fact, Create Enlightened Cultures

I realized that we could not create more enlightened instincts, but we could, in fact, create more enlightened cultures. I realized that we could make the intellectual choice to use our cultures as tools to channel and focus our basic inherent set of instinctive behaviors and I realized that we could use those tools to channel our most useful and beneficial instincts in enlightened directions.

That realization was a massive awareness breakthrough for me that gave me major hope relative to all of the negative intergroup behaviors that I had been seeing in so many places.

I realized that we could decide at an intellectual level to have enlightened and ethical behaviors guide us in our intergroup interactions and it was clear to me that process could succeed if we embedded those enlightened behaviors and behavioral expectations into our belief systems and our cultures.

Because our cultures make embedded behaviors “feel right,” I realized that we could use cultures to make our intellectually chosen enlightened behaviors “feel right” by embedding those behaviors in the culture.

That approach of using cultures to guide specific behaviors simply builds on the existing model and the normal set of linkages that we all use all the time to guide our behaviors. The approach simply echoes and utilizes the normal relationships that cultures everywhere tend to have with our instincts.

Those links tend to be both tight and constant in every culture.

Instincts Are Implemented Through Cultures

As I looked at those linkages in setting after setting, it was clear that our instincts very consistently use our cultures to create the rule sets that help us achieve the goals that are set for us by our instincts in each setting.

We have instincts to mate, for example. We don’t just randomly mate. Cultures tell us how to mate. Every culture creates a rule set that outlines how mating can be done and how mating cannot be done in the context of that culture.

We have instincts to own turf. Our cultures in every setting give us the rules that guide turf possession and structure functional property ownership in each setting. We each tend to feel right relative to turf owning behaviors

in each setting in the explicit context for owning turf that is created by our culture for that setting.

Making a behavior “feel right” is an immense and useful power for instincts and cultures to have. Making a behavior feel wrong is also a very powerful tool for both cultures and instincts. Those feelings guide our decisions and our behaviors.

It was clear to me that our cultures are used very naturally and normally as tools by our instincts to actualize our instincts and to achieve our instinctive goals. It was also clear that the rules of our cultures are used to control or steer our instincts in directions that each culture wants our instincts steered.

The two processes are mutually reinforcing. I actually had a chance to test that set of interactions in real world settings. Understanding how those processes and interactions work gave me a great tool kit to use in my day job as CEO and as chair or convener in more than a dozen intergroup settings.

I Used That Alignment Between Culture And Behavior In My

Work

I have actually used that specific knowledge about the role of a culture to influence both group and individual behavior repeatedly in my work.

When I became the CEO of my most recent organization slightly over a decade ago, I started with culture building as a key functional component of my CEO agenda.

I immediately did a very explicit culture diagnosis and assessment for the organization.

It was obvious to me that like all organizations, my new work site was clearly already guided in significant ways by its culture. Some aspects of the old culture were very much in line with where I believed the organization needed to go — but I could also see that some aspects of the culture needed to be enhanced and amended if we were going to succeed at the highest levels that we could achieve.

Instead of bemoaning or complaining about those challenging and less productive aspects of that existing culture and instead of wishing, hoping, or even yearning for a better culture in those areas, it was much more effective and far more useful for me to simply figure out the right culture pieces for that organization and for that setting and then to take the steps that were needed in that specific setting to put the right set of cultural components in place.

I knew what I wanted the new belief system and the new value system for that setting to be, so I did the things necessary through a combination of rules, guidances, pervasive, and consistent communication approaches, process changes and structure design to make those specific aspects of the culture a reality.

I Shared The Culture Change Strategy With The Board Of Directors

I had been studying the component parts of organizational cultures since the early 1990s, so I knew both how cultures functioned and how cultures could be changed. I used that tool kit immediately at my new job — beginning with identifying what those key belief systems and expected behaviors of that new culture should be.

I shared that new culture design and the overarching strategy for changing the old culture at a very early point in the process with the Board of Directors.

Half of the Board was delighted with that culture change strategy and process and half of the Board thought that I was lost in some “mumbo-jumbo” theoretical and even ideological sidetrack that they tolerated at that

point in time because new CEO's tend to be given a lot of leeway by their Boards.

Later, when we had explicitly and clearly achieved all of the culture change goals that I had outlined to the Board at the beginning of the process, a couple of the skeptics on that Board told me how deeply skeptical they had been. A couple of the people on the Board who thought that the cultures issues were irrelevant and extraneous to the actual functioning of the organization told me that they could see how powerful the tool was relative to basic organizational functionality.

I communicated the new culture at that point very clearly to the leadership of the new work team. Then I did the things I needed to do as a leader in that setting to model, reinforce, explain, promote, and even exemplify the new culture.

I wanted the new culture to be data focused, so I did multiple visible data focused things — and I worked hard structurally to make data available for the organization.

I wanted the new culture to be a culture of both continuous improvement and excellence, so I both used examples of best practices and

engineering success and I set up support tools to help our team move down both of those pathways.

That process of implanting specific and targeted new thought pieces and new beliefs into that culture worked. The new total culture that was designed at the beginning of that process became a reality and it did what it needed to do to make us successful as an organization that ended up being rated number one in the country in multiple areas of performance after the new culture and the new tools were in place and operational.

Process improvement skill sets tied directly to explicit culture change worked well to create a top performing care team and organization.

I mention that success here — in this book — because I believe we need to use that same basic overarching culture modification approach and strategy to achieve Intergroup Peace in multiple settings. I believe we can use that same basic very intentional culture/goal interconnectivity linkage very strategically as part of the Art of Intergroup Peace in our various work sites, in our communities, and for our country as a whole.

We can do that culture change work successfully in all of those settings if we are clear and explicit in our intent and if we understand exactly what we are doing and why we are doing it.

If we do that culture building job well, we can have the behaviors that we want to have in place in each setting to be in alignment with our cultures for each setting and we will be able to continuously improve our interactions and our collective performance in each setting.

Cultures And Instincts Both Set Goals

Cultures, I know from looking at how we guide ourselves in our daily lives, are everywhere. Every group of people creates a culture. When I started looking at the array of intergroup interaction issues, I looked at a lot of organizational settings in a number of countries and industries. I saw cultures everywhere I looked.

Workforces create cultures. Tribes create cultures. And people who are brought together for any reason to form a group invariably create a culture for their group.

Cultures guide us in each setting. That's their job. We instinctively create cultures in each setting to do that work of guiding us in whatever context we are in.

The culture we instinctively create in each situation tells us what we should do, what we ought to do, and what we should not do for that setting and for that group.

People In Line Will Create A Culture For The Line

Cultures fascinated me when I began to study them.

People standing in a line will create a culture for the line. The line culture in a setting will tell people in the line if they can allow someone else to “cut in” to stand by them. The line culture tells the group whether breaks are allowed — and the line culture can even tell people how far you can move away from the physical geography of the line without being perceived as having lost your right to be in that particular line.

We create rules for that line — and we tend to become angry at a very basic and immediate level when someone violates the perceived rules for a line.

I have personally observed line cultures in London, Hanoi, Kampala, and Moscow and they each did tend to have some regional patterns about specific local rule sets — but people in each of those settings had the same functional pattern of creating rules about line behavior that felt right in that setting to the people who were in that line and who were subject to that cultural rule set.

People feel so right about their own line rules that people can become enraged when those line rules are violated. As an experiment, I have

deliberately done things to violate line rules in several settings. My wife hates it when I do that particular experiment and when she happens to be in the room where I do it. The anger that I have felt projected against me in a couple of line culture settings was almost frightening.

I was actually intimidated, myself, a couple of times by that anger. I have stopped doing those experiments.

Interestingly, the power of those culture-linked instincts to affect how we think and how we feel is so strong that I actually personally felt wrong and I personally felt slightly guilty for a couple of the experiments — even though I was only breaking the rules of a line culture and I was intentionally doing it as a very intentional and explicit experiment.

We do all — including me — tend to internalize our cultural expectations. People can become angry fairly easily when our cultural expectations are violated in some way.

Road rage can be triggered when road behavior expectations are violated.

People who have expectations about property or turf built into their culture can become enraged and can even damage people with a sense of

being entitled to do the damage to people who violate those expectations and encroach on their turf.

Cultures Need And Use Rules

I was also fascinated and significantly encouraged when I started to study cultures to see and learn that we can set up or modify cultures in various settings by following a few key steps. Cultures tend to form in very predictable ways. They can also be amended in very predictable and useful ways.

Once we understand that all cultures are invented — and once we understand at an intellectual level that no cultures are actually inherent to any setting or to any group — then we can think of cultures more as a tool and we can choose to build culture in our various settings that meet our behavior objectives for that setting.

Building a set of relevant rules for a culture is generally a good place to start.

Cultures, I learned, generally need rules. Cultures tend to be anchored in rules. We tend to build sets of rules and explicit expectations that tell us exactly how we should behave in the context of each culture.

When we know intellectually that the existence of rules as a key component of cultures is functionally true and relevant, then we can consciously design, build, and embed the rules we want into a culture.

We have several mechanisms that we use to enforce the rules of a culture. Some settings use laws and penalties to enforce the rules of a culture. That approach is used in a lot of settings and it clearly works in many settings.

Peer Pressure Enforces Some Cultural Rules

The rules in some settings tend to be reinforced by other people in the culture through various forms of peer pressure.

The rules of our cultures are also often reinforced by our tendency to “feel right” when we are acting in the context of our cultures. We self-reinforce those rules based on those feelings.

Those peer pressure and self-pressure enforcement approaches are both effective characteristics of a usual and normal culture rule enforcement reality.

When all people in a setting understand the culture of the setting, the people in that setting tend to use various kinds of peer pressure to encourage, force, and even coerce other people in the setting to comply with cultural

expectations. Cultures in place in many settings tend to reinforce themselves by those levels of internal coercion.

Feeling right also encourages cultural compliance. When a cultural expectation is clear and we act in accord with that expectation it generally feels right to act in that way.

When we want a particular enlightened behavior to feel right and to be used in any setting, that can be done by embedding the desired enlightened behavior into the culture of that setting.

If we want courtesy to be a standard behavior, for example, we can make courtesy a cultural expectation and people will often take great pride and will “feel right” exhibiting and even perfecting the specific aspects and attributes of courtesy that is expected by their culture.

If we want respect for seniority to be a value that we want people in a setting to share, we can embed respect for seniority into the culture and people will feel right respecting senior people and will feel wrong when the expected adherence and respect for seniority is violated for that culture.

Chairing And Managing Are Both Easier With Aligned
Cultures

As I said earlier, I have been the CEO of half a dozen companies and I have also chaired more than a dozen other organizations over the past couple of decades. Once I learned the basic set of things that we need to do to create, implement, enforce, and reinforce a culture in any setting, I have found both managing and chairing in all of those settings much easier to do.

There is a long-standing organizational theory truism for businesses that says — “Cultures eat strategy for lunch.” People who run organizations know that your likelihood of organizational success is lower if your culture fights your strategy and your chance of success is enhanced if your strategy and your culture are aligned.

Many leaders, however, have a hard time creating that alignment of strategy and culture. Some leaders are simply hopeful that a supportive and aligned culture might somehow emerge for their group. Hope is not the best tool for creating change — and hope is also not an optimal strategy for either structuring or building a culture.

Vague optimism, I have seen in multiple settings, is also usually insufficient as a culture-building tool.

Wishful thinking has its charm, but my experience has been that wishful thinking generally has marginal utility as a culture sculpting mechanism or strategy.

But, I have found, deliberate, intentional, and carefully structured culture building can be a very useful skill and a very good strategy for a leader to have.

Diagnose, Define, And Delineate The Culture

The basic process and culture change sequence that I used at Kaiser Permanente can be a good approach for many new leaders to use. New leaders can begin the process of culture change by understanding exactly and explicitly what the current culture of a setting is on key issues.

An honest look at the current cultural realities in the setting is a key and highly useful first step.

Leaders should then identify basic cultural elements that would be desirable for the setting — like a focus on customers or an eagerness to function as teams. Each leader should then do a very clear assessment of what the current culture in that setting actually is relative to that desired cultural belief.

That is a good time in the process for the aspiring culture change agent to be both brutally honest and very clear.

To use cultures as a tool in any setting, it is important to start that process with an accurate, honest, and realistic assessment of the functional culture that is currently in place in that setting.

Begin By Defining The Current Culture

It has been important for me in each of my work settings to figure out what the current culture of each organization was relative to key beliefs and expectations. Then it was very useful to me to figure out explicitly what set of values, expectations, and key cultural components would be most useful to achieve the things we wanted to achieve in each setting.

I carefully identified and developed key values for the desired culture in each setting and then I created the rule kits and the tool kits that were needed in each setting to instill each aspect of the desired culture in its new functionality and core beliefs.

Being the CEO and chair of those organizations gave me a great leverage point to do that work. As CEO, you typically don't need to get someone else's approval to do that kind of culture related work. You do,

however, very much need to get people's support — because support is key to any culture actually being implemented and internalized.

That means that getting support is also a good skill set for a CEO to have. It is important to figure out as a leader what the approaches are that are needed in each setting to get each key piece of the culture supported by the key people in your setting.

Convincing people that the cultural components you are building will create success and will improve people's work realities can be a useful part of the persuasion process.

Cultures Often Reflect The Values Of Key Leaders

The role of the leader is very often key to culture change in many settings.

CEOs and other Alpha leaders generally have a major role to play in setting up each organization's culture. As I have looked at both leaders and cultures in multiple settings in several countries, I could see that the cultures that were in place in a very large number of settings have very directly and clearly reflected the behaviors and the values of the leader or the key leaders in that setting.

In fact, the truth is that we have a strong functional tendency in most settings to have the behavioral values and expectations of the group reflect the values and expectations of the leader. That can be true in large settings and small settings — and it is clearly dependent to a significant degree on the personality of the relevant leader.

People tend to directly observe leader behavior to figure out what the key cultural values actually are for any setting. Observing leader behavior is clearly an instinctive behavior in itself.

Knowing that my own behaviors as a leader in each setting would be closely observed, I have made my own basic, primal, direct, and personal commitment to the culture I was promoting in each setting that I have served as CEO very transparent, very obvious, and very clear to all people in that setting in a highly, almost obsessively, consistent way.

If you talk to anyone who worked with me or who worked near me in those settings while I served them as CEO, I suspect that those people will say that they personally knew at a fairly explicit level what my values and my beliefs were about key components of who we were and what we were doing.

A very important and highly useful message tool that I used very deliberately as I named and supported my own leadership teams in each organization, was to make very sure that our desired cultural values for that setting were reflected in both in my own behaviors and in the behaviors and the beliefs of our other key leaders.

Who You Promote Sends A Strong And Clear Cultural Message

Selecting people for key leadership jobs who clearly have the right values for the culture you want in that setting is another lovely, powerful, clear, and effective message to send and it is a lovely and clear tool that CEOs can often use.

People in any setting pay very close attention to who you promote and people pay particular attention to who you recognize, honor, and reward. I have used both the promotion tool and the reward tool in many visible ways in each setting that I have led to communicate both values and beliefs.

I learned as I studied hierarchies that most people pay close attention to the hierarchical components of any setting. You can send particularly clear and influential messages to people about the real values of an organization based on who you promote.

When hard work in a setting results in visible and explicit career advancement, then hard work becomes a perceived and believed part of the culture.

When highly political and visible “jerk-related” behaviors result in a person being promoted, you can count on other people who aspire to being promoted to follow suit. When that happens, you can expect that your verbal efforts to convince people in that setting that your own real and primary value measure is for people to work hard and to work well with one another will be received with cynicism and disbelief by the people who see who you actually reward by your promotion decisions.

Every action is a potential message in those settings.

I have very intentionally used my own CEO leverage and pulpit to do direct communications on key values and strategies with the people in each setting. Having a good communication platform is a key reality of being a CEO. The most successful CEO’s are often very good at communicating both vision and values to their people.

People tend to pay attention to the activities and to the intended or unintended messages that emanate from the CEO as well as to the messages that emanate from other key organizational leaders.

KP Inside Outlines Cultural Persuasion Tools

One of my earlier books, *KP Inside*, contains 100 weekly letters that were written by me to the nearly 200,000 people on our staff at KP. Those letters, sent by me each week to all employees were, as you can see by reading them in that book, very directly and explicitly a culture-building tool.

Those letters to all of our staff members every week helped create a value system, a performance model, and a set of very specific shared expectations for that organization.

The letters celebrated and clearly described desired culture-aligned behaviors for the people who work in that organization. The points I made in those letters were obvious, simple, and they were intended to each be absolutely clear.

I celebrated our wins in those letters. I celebrated patient centered care. I also celebrated top quality care. I gave clear examples of wins, quality, innovation, and loving and respectful patient focus in those letters.

As a culture, we wanted ourselves to be a patient focused, caring, science-based, innovative, inventive, and continuously improving organization.

Read the letters in that book and you will see how those short notes on those issues that I sent to all of our employees every week explicated, endorsed, clarified, advocated, focused, and reinforced those specific aspects of our targeted organizational culture and value set.

The Branding Process Was Part Of The Culture Building

Process

I also used the brands for each of the organizations that I served as CEO as part of the culture building process in each setting.

It is clear that the brand of an organization tends to become an important part of the culture of each organization — so as I worked on brands in each of my CEO settings, I did that work with the intent of having the brand reinforce and even partially define the culture.

I knew that people perceive organizations to have an identity — a basic brand — that functions like a paradigm to explain the organization to the world. Paradigms explain “why” things happen. Brands explain to the public — and brands explain to people inside organizations — why organizations do what they do.

People tend to interpret key data or information they hear about an organization in the context of the organization’s brand.

Since I ran health care organizations, I know that their brands were important at multiple levels for both caregivers and patients. I know that the brand of a care system could help with employee and caregiver recruiting. I knew that the brand of each organization was very useful for both customer/patient acceptance and customer/patient decision-making.

Growth in the marketplace for those organizations was clearly affected by the strength, attractiveness, and basic desirability of the brand.

Brands Tend To Become Part Of Many Cultures

For my most recent two CEO positions, the organizations were a combination of health care delivery system and health plan. Both needed brands that made the people in the organization feel good about their place of employment and that gave potential patients and customers a positive feeling about getting their care and coverage from those caregivers.

A major goal for me as CEO was to have people join each organization as team members and to have people in the community trust us as patients and as customers.

To help achieve that set of goals, we ran fairly extensive ad campaigns in both places that created a sense of very human and personal caring levels for us as care teams. At Health Partners, we ran an ad

campaign showing people with major health problems — serious and damaging congenital problems, heart failures, and cancer — who were all served and helped in a warm and caring way by Health Partners.

At Kaiser Permanente, we also had direct member stories in our television and radio ad campaign — including having a cancer patient explaining in a television ad — “I have cancer — cancer doesn’t have me.”

The Kaiser Permanente campaign also focused very heavily on a commitment to help people improve their health. “Thrive” was the theme and the goal of that campaign. The “Thrive” ads were witty and warm, friendly, humorous, and encouraging at a very personal level. There were billboards, bus banners, radio spots, and some truly memorable TV spots encouraging people to “Thrive.”

The goal was to create a brand paradigm for people in the community about that organization that said, “We are good and warm and witty people and we are very competent and caring caregivers who are entirely on your side. We want us all to Thrive.”

We Aimed For Heads And We Aimed For Hearts

We wanted to win people’s hearts in the public and also inside our own organization with both campaigns. Those campaigns in both

organizations were aimed at shaping our internal culture as well as defining our brands.

Later ads that we run at both places also were aimed at winning people's heads — talking about the significant reduction in heart deaths, the best cancer care, and the major reductions in diabetes complications for our patients that happened for patients cared for in both settings.

We accompanied, supported, validated, and enhanced the “head” part of the campaign at Kaiser Permanente by also publishing over 1,000 research articles each year in referred medical journals that were focused on improving the science of medicine and the knowledge base for care.

We carefully publicized those research findings in the popular media and the research papers from the KP care team resulted in tens of thousands of additional mass media stories and reports.

That research campaign and its public relations support tools were very clearly aimed both at our organizations external image and external brand and at our internal culture and brand.

The research promotion part of that strategy was actually very useful as an internal culture support tool. It helps shape the culture in a care setting in a very good way when our staff members know and understand that that

powerful research is being done by “us” and that care is getting better across the planet because of that research that is being done by “us.”

We led with the warm and witty ads to win people’s hearts and then we ran the quality-based ads to get people to join up and become our patients. We used that sequence of heart followed by head deliberately for both internal and external audiences.

People believed the quality ads when they ran because they first had built a positive paradigm in their own perception base that said, “these are good and nice and fun and warm people at Kaiser Permanente (or Health Partners) and they care about me.”

We Wanted To Create A Sense Of “Us” With Patients And Members

That point is relevant to this chapter about the use of instincts and cultures to improve our internal and external world because one major goal for the ad campaigns in the both of those care organizations was to help create a sense of “us” with our own staff and also to create a sense of “us” with the public and our patients.

The ad campaigns were each intended to brand each plan as a likeable “us.” People like and trust “us.” People want to be with “us.” Both strategies worked.

A major reason that those campaigns worked internally as well as they worked externally was that the brand themes were real. People tend to be very skeptical and will look for any deviation in behavior between the brand claims and the actual performance of a care system. In both cases, the brand claims were supported by real and valid performance as care teams.

As a working CEO, I definitely found my understanding of our basic packages of instincts in those areas — to build paradigms and to identify who is an “us” — to be useful from a highly relevant business perspective.

We Can Create An American Culture That Feels Right

The impact that culture have to control and channel the impact of our instincts in various settings is the primary reasons why I now feel — and have felt — for several years — optimistic that we can end up with an American culture that can very intentionally meet our most enlightened collective needs as a people.

That is also why I am optimistic that we can create cultures of intergroup Peace in our various communities and in our various organizations and settings.

We need to do that work of creating an intergroup Peace-based culture that guides us to enlightened behaviors in a very intentional way.

We need shared American values as an anchor for that process. We need to do that culture building work in each setting with a clear and collective commitment to our higher shared values for the setting — and we need to make those values clear to us all so we can all use them well and so that we can all trust each other in their use.

Trust is a key part of the intergroup Peace process. Clear understandings about what our cultural values are can help create the consistency of beliefs and the consistency of behaviors that creates trust.

If we deliberately both identify and exemplify the exact values and behaviors we want for our overarching American culture, then we are much more likely to succeed in implementing those values and in embedding those key values in our culture in a way that makes us all feel right exemplifying and aligning our behavior with those values.

Using Culture To Create Improvement Works In The Real World — Do Good, Feel Good, Be Good

We can do that work both strategically and intentionally. I now know from personal experience in several settings that we can use a wide range of tools to very intentionally help us define our culture, codify our culture, explain our culture, and then enforce and support the culture in ways that cause people to feel right acting in alignment with the culture.

We want people to do good and we want people to be good. We also want people to feel good and we very much want people to feel right when people are doing good things in the right way in any setting.

We can get to that point as a country. We can also get to that point in our communities and our other organizational settings. That can be done if we use our culture as a tool set to help create the context and the structure for that entire process.

This isn't a hypothetical or theoretical assumption. As this book has been pointing out, I have tested that strategy and that goal set in the real world in several settings. I have been doing intentional cultural development in multiple settings for a couple of decades and that work has both gone well and been fun and encouraging to do.

I had a chance to do a significant number of culture building experiments with my multi-level, \$2 billion Minnesota health care delivery system and health plan more than two decades ago. I began doing those experiments in the 1990s and I continued to do them for more than 15 years in that particular setting.

Those experiments were a functional success.

I have also done a number of culture building experiments with the trade associations that I have chaired and I have done some levels of culture building work with the various community coalitions that I have convened or chaired.

Getting To Zero Pressure Ulcers Was A Huge Culture Win

At Kaiser Permanente, we ended up with a culture in our care system that dropped pressure ulcers in our hospitals down to under 1 percent — compared to a community average for other hospitals of having more than 5 percent of their patients with that condition.

We supported that exemplary care by the caregivers with best science and with best technical practices — but the key ingredient that created that extreme level of success for patient safety was the culture of the caregivers in those Kaiser Permanente hospitals who refused to accept the standard

community culture of other hospitals that those ulcers are just an unfortunate and normal fact of life for their patients.

The caregivers in our hospitals who had a patient-focused culture of excellence cut those painful, disfiguring, crippling, and sometimes fatal ulcers to the point where half a dozen hospitals did not have one single ulcer in over a year.

A culture of excellence and a culture of caring created a world of benefit for the patients who get their care from those caregivers.

That same set of care sites was recognized by both JD Powers and Consumer Reports for best levels of service. Service is also an organizational result that has culture embedded in its core.

Our Members Are Also An “Us”

We all benefit when we are all an “us.” That applies to patients and caregivers in very direct ways.

Internally, I have also worked hard to make it very clear in multiple ways to our employees and our caregivers that our patients and members are an “us.”

I wrote about pressure ulcers to our care team not as a statistic, but as a personal experience for individual people that caused very real and very

personal individual pain for individual patients. I repeatedly said to our staff that we needed to be the care site where our own family members could come to get great care if they ever needed our care because we cared about every patient as though every patient is family.

That approach was well received by our caregivers. It felt right. Because it felt very right, it became and was very real.

We Have Different Values For “Us” And “Them”

One major goal of those internal communications to our staff was to create a sense of “us” for our staff with the patients. I wanted that sense of “us” to exist because we have very different values in health care delivery settings when the patient is a “Them” instead of an us.

I have seen other care sites who have “Them” perceptions in place with their staff for their patients. The horror stories that can result from some of those care sites who see their patients as some category of “them” are far too familiar to all of us.

When patients are a “Them” to either leadership or staff in a health care setting, then the ethics and the behaviors that stem from that “Them” based value system are too often not good for the patients.

Creating a sense of “us” at multiple levels was my goal. The fact that we won awards as being a great place to work and also ranked number one source and satisfaction in the Consumer Reports and JD Powers relevant surveys was not accidental or coincidental.

If our caregivers had perceived the patients we care for to be “Them,” those first place rankings would never have happened.

Near Perfection Can Happen

Health Partners has about 10,000 employees. Kaiser Permanente currently has nearly 200,000 members of its internal staff. Those are both fairly large numbers of people. It is impossible with that many people not to have some people on those staffs who were not doing the right things. Perfection doesn't happen.

But near perfection can happen. It takes a combination of culture and process to achieve those near perfect goals. On an issue like pressure ulcers — where other care sites ranged from 5-to-10 percent of their patients in their hospitals who acquire those ulcers — Kaiser Permanente averaged fewer than 1 percent of our patients in our hospitals who acquired those ulcers.

I was delighted that half a dozen KP hospitals actually did not have one single pressure ulcer the year I retired. Not one.

Culture made that happen.

That kind of achievement does not happen based on management directives. That kind of performance to get care right for every patient takes a culture of caring and it takes each caregiver doing what needs to be done in a very personal and accountable way for each patient.

It takes the right science, the right processes, and the right culture.

Culture and processes need to be aligned to get the very best result.

In this case, that alignment has to include the caregiver treating the patient like “us” and not “them.” Any care system that treats the patient as “us” is more likely to provide patient friendly service and care — and more likely to have a patient focused culture of care for the care determined in those sites.

I believe to the core that you can’t have an unhealthy culture for your care team and still deliver great care or great service to your patients.

Health Care Leaders Should Create Great Core Cultures

My personal belief for my old day job is that creating the right culture should be a key tool for any health care system leader. My observation has been that too many health care leaders in too many care settings simply let the cultures for those settings spontaneously develop.

A few very capable leaders — like the Mayo brothers who founded the Mayo Clinic — very intentionally and deliberately defined, taught, implemented, and enforced the cultures of their organizations and those leaders did that work with great focus and great intensity.

Those organizations have clearly benefited from that legacy of deliberate and clear cultural architecture done at the most senior leader level. The cultures of those organizations continue to support great care even when other care organizations do not even list great care as an aspiration — much less a goal or a reality.

We Can Build Cultures Of Peace Into Intergroup Interactions

It has been very useful for my own learning process to be in work settings where I had the personal leverage and the positional vantage point to experiment in various ways with building both alignments and cultures with multiple sets of people.

As the chair and CEO in various settings over the past three decades, I have had the lovely ability to be able to make decisions, create rules, and to allocate resources in the directions that helped me create the cultures that I believed our organizations needed.

As chair and CEO, I also have had the flexibility to be able to fix my mistakes and the ability to learn from my successes with a flexibility that often doesn't exist for many people.

That learning process has given me the confidence to incorporate basic culture building strategies into the Art of Intergroup Peace. We all need to understand that our cultures need to function as our tools in each setting. We need to shape our cultures, rather than having our cultures shape us.

We need to create a culture of intergroup Peace for our country.

We need to create the right sense of group alignment as a nation to make our cultures relevant as elements of intergroup Peace. We need to understand where we are now as a country so we can guide ourselves to where we want to be.

We are not to where we need to be — but we are doing a much better job in many areas relative to getting to where we need to be.

One area where we still need our culture to continuously improve relates to all of the ways that our cultures affect women in our society.

Women have been badly served by our cultures in a number of ways. We need to do better for the women in our society if we intend to have a society and a country that extends the best of the American Dream to us all.

The next chapter of this book discusses what I learned when I looked at how cultures have tended to treat women in key areas of our behaviors.