

Chapter Six — We Can Build And Shape Our Cultures To

Meet Our Needs

We can make choices about how to use our cultures as tools to achieve our goals and to make our most enlightened beliefs and behaviors a functional reality.

Understanding that we actually invent and create our cultures gives us significant power over our cultures.

Understanding that we each invent our cultures can also allow us to interact more effectively with other cultures in more inclusive, accepting, and creative ways.

When we understand that each and every culture is invented, then we can utilize our cultures as tools and not perceive them to be either definitional, definitive, or determinative of who we are and what we do.

Understanding the role and purpose of cultures gives us the ability to modify and enhance our own cultures through a set of very intentional and strategic interactions with our cultures, without feeling disloyal or feeling traitorous to our own basic group's culture for changing the culture to make it better.

Leaders in all settings have the ability to steer, use, and modify their group's culture. Culture change can be difficult. But once people in any setting move to a different cultural expectation on key points, the new expectation in the culture on those specific points tends to be internalized in each person and the old expectation on a given issue is not only replaced — it is often even forgotten by the people who used to use that old expectation as a guide.

In the case of organizations, educational institutions, and various work settings, cultures can be designed, implemented, protected, and perpetuated by the people who lead them.

As noted earlier in this book, the very best business leaders often create, define, and use the cultures of their businesses as tools to make their businesses more successful.

Community leaders can also make changes in the cultures of the communities they serve that create better outcomes and better behaviors for their communities.

Our cultures in all of those settings are not locked into rigid manifestations that need to stay in place in their most rigid and inflexible forms. We can change our culture in every setting.

We need to use that ability in very intentional and strategic ways to have our cultures serve our beliefs. We need to use the right set of culture change tools to make our cultures better than they would have been without being changed.

Seven Steps For Improving A Culture

As we build a culture of Peace for America, we need to embed the right set of values and the right set of beliefs in that overall culture of Peace.

We also need to make enlightened decisions relative to some key choices about our cultural beliefs in each group and setting. We need to steer and embed those better beliefs into enlightened cultural expectations and positive collective behaviors in each group and setting that we are in.

Sun Tzu wrote about the five key elements that are needed to create the culture of an army. Similarly, there are seven key steps that can be used to create or shape a culture for any given organization or setting. Those same seven approaches can be used to help put a culture of any kind in place in any setting and they can be used to modify pieces of a culture that is already in place.

The final chapter of this book discusses the specific sets of values that we should all agree on that can function as the shared set of values that can help us all become an American Us.

This chapter is more structural, identifying several things we can functionally do to help change cultures or to put cultures in place in each setting that can do what we need or want the culture to do in each setting.

Those seven steps can help business leaders create better functioning businesses. They can help education leaders create better organizations for making education a more successful process.

They can help community leaders build community cultures that better meet the needs of the community.

(1) Use A Clear Cultural Identity — A Name That Says Who Is Included In The Culture

A first step in the process of building or modifying a culture in any setting is to identify exactly who the culture relates to. That step involves either figuring out who we want the culture to apply to or — if the culture does not have a current name, then giving or assigning the culture relevant group in each setting a group identity and a group name.

Cultures apply to specific groups. They are not freestanding and intellectually autonomous belief systems. To build or modify a culture, we need to identify the group that the culture will apply to.

Group identity is key to our thought process for cultures. Naming the group might seem like a simple or excessively theoretical thing to do, but it is generally a useful and important part of that culture development process. We need to name and identify the group that is relevant to the culture we are building so that people in any setting know who the group culture actually affects.

That group name clearly helps people know if they are or are not members of the culture relevant group.

There is flexibility in the naming process. We can use an existing name for our group or we can create a new name for a new group. Ideally, people should feel good and positive about the name used for the group.

The group identity might say “We New Yorkers.” Or it might say “We school teachers,” or it could say — “We IBM employees.”

Follow-up statements about the culture then might say — “We IBM employees always put the customer first,” or “We IBM employees celebrate innovation.”

Those kinds of statements about the beliefs of the “we” group for each culture are more effective when they identify the exact relevant group.

Naming the group makes the group a tool that can trigger a sense of “us.”

The group name indicates and implies the existence of both a value package and an expected behavior set for that particular identified group.

So that is a good place to start the culture enhancement process in any setting. A clear and functional label for the group can be invaluable to tee up the “us” statements and the “We” statements for group members. “We do things in this way” statements about a culture need a defined “we” sitting at the core of that statement.

In work settings or communities, that group name can be a very specific label for a particular set of people.

As we build an overarching culture of Peace for America, we need to name the group that the culture guides and defines so we all know who the culture and beliefs apply to.

That group for our country is the Americans who became and are an “Us” based on the shared beliefs of the group.

We need to align as a values-driven “American Us” in order to have a functioning us that can be an umbrella over all of the diverse sets of “us” groups that comprise the rich fabric of America.

(2) Delineate the Culture

The second major step in the basic culture creation or culture improvement process in any setting is to identify and clearly delineate the specific key elements of the culture that we want to create, or change, or reinforce for that particular set of people.

To anchor the work of culture enhancement, we first need to know at a functional level very clearly exactly what we want that particular culture to do.

As part of the process, we need to delineate both the core beliefs that we want included in the culture and we need to define the desired behaviors that we want embedded in the culture as tools to guide people in the culture into the future.

That should not be a random process. For maximum success levels, that culture element delineation process should be deliberate, intentional, and highly strategic.

We need clarity on those cultural belief points that we use to build the culture for each setting, because those points define what we want the culture to do and they define how we want the culture to do what it does.

We need to know what behavioral guidance points we want to include in the culture and we need to do that work by understanding the context of other key points that are in place for that culture.

It is much easier to teach a culture and it is much easier to enforce and reinforce a culture when we have both specificity and clarity about the key pieces and elements of the culture.

Generically positive and vague goals about good behavior of some kind are generally not going to create the most effective culture change results in any setting. So identifying a core set of clear and functional goals for the culture is a very important and extremely useful first step.

Honesty, for example, can be chosen by the leaders of a culture to be a core value. Sharing can be a core value. Creating beauty or living in beauty can be a core value.

Continuously improving can be a core value.

The core values explain why things are done in that setting. “We are an honest people here, so we do honest things” is a “why” statement that includes a cultural belief.

“We are a hardworking people, so we work hard here,” is another direct “why” statement.

“We respect one another, so sexual harassment is not allowed here,” is another example of a culturally expected behavior linked to a reason explaining why we expect that specific behavior. Core values anchor that process of identifying the reasons for our behavioral expectations.

The core values of each culture are the key to actually achieving each culture in the real world.

If you are creating a culture, you need to think through the values you decide to use for that culture very carefully. If you are modifying a culture in any setting, you need to think through the core values you will want to use and also take a clear look at the current values that exist now in that culture on that specific issue.

It is often harder to replace values in an existing culture than it is to embed values into a new culture. The paradigm section of this book describes how to substitute new values for existing values in an existing

paradigm. It can be done — but it takes very explicit communication about the new values and it takes a clear change in the old values.

In some areas of behavior change — for best impact — it might be necessary to make the old value and behavior illegal. A culture that has an unfortunate and negative history of allowing sexual harassment, for example, might need to make sexual harassment illegal in order to remove it as an allowed future behavior in that setting.

Once the basic and core set of goals and key values for the relevant culture is established, the implementation process can then use the steps listed below to make that culture real and to use it as a functional tool.

(3) Create Expectations And Rules

Step three in putting the cultural development tool kit in place in any setting is generally to create both rules and clear expectations for the culture. Rules are very useful in many regards. Cultures tend to be rules based. Rules structure cultures.

Rules in a culture tell people in that culture what they should do and what they ought to do. Rules also explain to everyone what the people in a culture should not do.

The expectations of each culture need to clearly explain what we expect people in that culture to do and what we expect people in that culture not to do.

Values and goals for the culture need to be functionally embedded in both the rules and in the expectations. So identifying specific and explicit things that we want people in the culture to do is an important part of the culture-building and implementation process, and identifying things we do not want people to do is an equally important part of that process.

Creating rules that enforce those behaviors can be a key tool to use for many of the expected and forbidden behaviors.

Creating rules that clearly steer people to desirable behaviors and that steer people away from non-desirable behaviors is a key step in that process.

(4) Clearly Communicate The “Shoulds” And “Should Nots”

Communication to people in the culture is a key part of the tool kit that needs to be used to change a culture to put a culture in place and make it a success.

People in a setting need clear communication about the culture in order to understand what the culture cherishes, honors, and values and to

understand what the culture expects people to do and expects people not to do.

The likelihood of success for any culture change in any setting drops significantly if communication about those sets of issues is weak, unclear, and ineffective.

A key step in the cultural relevant process is to communicate very clearly the “shoulds” and the “oughts” of the culture and to communicate them directly, clearly, and often to the people in the culture.

People need to know what should be done as a part of each culture. People also need to know what should not be done.

That knowledge will not exist and that guidance will not influence behavior in a setting unless it is explicitly communicated.

A set of should and ought expectations can evolve for a group in any setting on its own and when that happens, sets of expectations simply emerges on its own power, in any setting, tend to be communicated informally and organically from person to person in the group.

Organic, informal, and sporadic communication of expectations is generally not an effective way to make a culture a success. A better way to

create success is to have the expectation development process and the communication process both done strategically and functionally.

Functionally and systematically sharing key information about key aspects of any targeted culture is more dependable as a communication tool than hoping that the new behavior rules and expectations that are created will somehow be informally communicated to all of the relevant people.

(5) Enforce the Culture

Step five in installing a culture or a culture change and making it real is enforcement of the culture. Rules need to be created for each of the key things we want people to do and for each of the key things we do not want people to do.

Those rules will only be effective and they will only have impact if they are actually enforced — by regulations, vote, law, or by collective influence.

Enforcement of the rules that relate to personal safety, property protection, harassment, or personal freedom is extremely important. Rules that protect people that are actually functionally enforced in the context of any culture very much become part of the belief system and the behavior patterns in any setting.

People tend to very efficiently and consistently internalize the rules that are actually enforced. Rules that are not enforced in any culture tend to be ignored and those unenforced rules do not become core parts of the culture or of peoples' individual belief systems.

In some settings, when rules are outlined and described, and then either ignored by the leaders of the group or violated by key members of the group, the rules that are communicated but not enforced can create both cynicism and dysfunction.

In societal cultures, a frequently used enforcement mechanism that can have significant impact on steering behavior in a group can be peer pressure — with other people in the culture expressing disapproval for specific behaviors that violate the culture. Disapproval by other people in that setting for behaviors can be a Peaceful and very effective enforcement mechanism for some critical expectations.

Actual penalties that are imposed on people for non-compliance can be very effective as a change factor — so first writing and then enforcing laws that enforce cultural expectations can give a culture the highest likelihood of success.

In a work setting, firing non-compliant workers who violate various kinds of harassment prevention rules can help cultural enforcement of those rules. In a community setting, putting people in jail or fining people for non-compliance with rules that protect other people can create new expectations in that community about the need for those particular behaviors to be followed.

(6) Reinforce The Culture

Step six in the culture change roll out and the on-going operational functional agenda for cultures is reinforcement.

The leaders in each organizational setting need to reinforce the expectations, the values, and the rules of each culture by repeating them effectively and sufficiently, and by reminding people at all relevant times what the rules and the values are.

Constant reminders can be very effective to help people in that setting internalize the rules and the values.

Once the rules for any setting have been internalized by people in the culture, they do tend to reinforce themselves. People in any given culture instinctively and voluntarily tend to impose the embedded rules of each culture on other members of the culture.

That only happens when the reinforcement process embeds the rules in peoples' belief systems and values — and that takes both education and reinforcement.

(7) Celebrate The Culture

The seventh step in putting a successful culture or culture change in place is to celebrate success in using the culture.

Celebration can involve formal and public recognition of people in the culture who succeed in ways that are important to the success of the culture.

Awards and public recognition can be very useful celebration tools. Rewards also can work. Promotions of people for compliance send a very powerful message about the values of the values of the culture.

Awarding key titles to people who exemplify compliance can be useful to communicate success as well.

Both icons and heroes can be good tools to use to exemplify, demonstrate, and celebrate the success of the culture. It can be very reinforcing to celebrate the heroes of the culture and to set up both hero stories and iconic teaching opportunities in various ways about cultural successes.

Heroes become models of cultural expectations and culture-linked behaviors in each culture that identifies heroes. The people leading any culture often benefit when they celebrate their heroes because that celebration of the heroes tells other people exactly what is valued, what is respected, what is expected, and what specific and explicit behaviors exemplify the culture.

Icons can be very useful as well. A particularly positive and useful way of achieving impact for tool seven is to create iconic stories about the culture. The leaders of each culture need to create, tell, and retell key stories with both persistency and consistency about the events or behaviors that help people understand what the culture is about and what the culture involves.

Stories are highly effective as teaching tools. Iconic stories help to define a culture. Telling and retelling the culture-reinforcement stories repeatedly gives them impact and credibility.

When a culture is clearly defined, communicated, enforced, and reinforced, the chance of successful use of that culture is significantly enhanced.

Cultures change very slowly and they do not change strategically when they change of their own accord. Strategic change approaches can be extremely useful to speed up the change process significantly.

Those basic culture-building and culture-enhancing tools work for a wide range of cultures.

Those basic steps can be used at a macro level to help create a Culture of Peace for America. We need to define what we want to achieve collectively with a culture of Peace for America, and we need to support that culture with expectations, rules, values, and behavior guidelines.

We need hero stories about Peace and we need an array of our iconic stories to help us understand what Peace behaviors we should celebrate and emulate.

We need to use that tool kit intentionally and well to build our culture of Peace. Chapter Ten explains how we can do exactly that.

All Groups Are Guided By Cultures

Cultures can be extremely useful in all group settings. Business cultures can be combined with business strategies to create behavior patterns that meet the functional needs of any given business. Community cultures

set community expectations and values in ways that can help communities succeed as places to live and thrive.

School cultures help define the students in the school to each other as an us and can give guidance for the behaviors that are expected of the students in the school settings.

Cultures in each setting can be invented, evolve, and emerge on their own, or they can be created by someone as a tool for that setting. The more effective leaders design and reinforce their group cultures rather than having them emerge serendipitously and even haphazardly from the setting, itself.

We Need To Embed Some Key Values In The Culture Of Our Country

We now need to do that same work for the entire country — setting up a culture of Peace very deliberately and collectively, and supporting it strategically — as described in Chapter Ten of this book.

We need clarity about our belief systems as Americans, identifying the key values we share — like democracy, freedom of religion, and economic inclusion — and we need to explicitly outline and describe those values and agree to share them with each other as the foundation for defining ourselves as the American “Us.”

We need to embed those shared values in our overall national culture and in each of our various relevant subgroup structures.

As noted earlier, cultures, once they are well established, reinforce themselves. People in each culture tell other people in that culture what to do in synchrony with the values and with the expected behaviors of the culture.

So when we say we need a culture of Peace in America and when we say we need to link that culture to a broad and clearly defined definition of “Us,” then we need to look at those tools to see which ones will work best to meet our needs.

We need to put in place a belief system for our new culture that says we are inclusive, and supportive, and that we want to see all members of our society able to achieve the American Dream.

We need a culture that believes we should have equal rights for everyone, regardless of gender or race or ethnicity. We really do want everyone to be part of the collective future of the American people.

Sun Tzu Described The Moral Influence

In *The Art of War*, Sun Tzu wrote that the culture and the belief system of an army was a key factor that would determine whether an army would be successful or whether the army would fail. He wrote that the very

basic and most fundamental factor to consider relative to the likelihood of an army succeeding in a war was what he called — “moral influence.”

Setting “moral influence” as a primary, foundational, and fundamental factor for winning a war doesn’t seem entirely in keeping with the spirit and ethics of war until you read further and discover that what Sun Tzu primarily meant by moral influence was whether or not the soldiers in any given army would respect the personal qualities of their general and would follow the general’s lead.

To be effective, Sun Tzu said, the people in an army must respect “the general’s qualities of wisdom, sincerity, humanity, courage, and strictness.”

He further wrote that the general, in order to succeed, must be organized, focused, and in conscious control of the operational functioning of the army — including putting in place the right hierarchy of officers to actually lead the ground operations of the troops.

Sun Tzu basically said that he could predict victory, in very large part, based on whether the officers and the general officers, “administer rewards and punishments in a more enlightened manner,” to their troops.

He actually preached “enlightened” behaviors — but only for the people in his designated us — his soldiers and their leaders.

Sun Tzu urged the heads of countries, in selecting their generals, “to appraise with the utmost care” which generals possess moral influence, “as well as which commander is the most able” in a number of areas — and he said that the people choosing a general should determine which commander has an army “in which regulations and instructions are better carried out.”

So *The Art of War* places moral influence, enlightened behaviors, group functioning, group structure, and the culture and the hierarchy of the army very high on the list of criteria that is functionally necessary for actual military success in times of war.

Peace Can Be The Moral Focus

We also need moral influence, enlightened behaviors, group functioning, group structure, leadership ethics, and the culture of our society to be anchors for creating Peace in this country.

The core of *The Art of Peace* strategy is also built around the need for moral influence. We need people to collectively create a sense of moral direction and moral influence for America.

To get people aligned — and to succeed in overcoming historic stress points and long standing negative interactions between groups of people — it is essential to get the people in all relevant groups to share a sense of

collective “moral influence” — believing collectively that the process and the people engaged in the process for all groups will do the right things and will do them for the right reasons.

We need to communicate both the basic values of Peace and the basic characteristics of our leaders as people who can guide us to Peace and help us sustain Peace — not go to war — when Peace is jeopardized or threatened in any real way.

We obviously need leaders with moral influence for us to succeed in Peace even more than Sun Tzu needed those qualities to succeed in War.

We Need To Understand Why So Many Countries Are Failing

At Peace

One of the most important things we can do to achieve Peace in our own country is to understand why so many other countries are facing major challenges relative to either creating or sustaining Peace in their own settings.

Again, as Sun Tzu points out in *The Art of War*, knowledge is power. Observing what has succeeded or failed for other multi-ethnic countries can provide great strategic insight for us as we deal with our growing diversity here.

We need to have a sense of what is happening in other multi-ethnic countries. We need to look at what those countries are doing badly and we need to understand what they are doing well.

That topic is the focus of the next chapter of this book.