

A Summary of Direct Quotes Selected from 314 Leadership Articles

Collected by Andrew Gibbons

A Chance for Self-Reflection

From: THE LEADER'S GUIDE TO CORPORATE CULTURE

Boris Groysberg et al.

Harvard Business Review January/February 2018 Pages 44-52.

Questions to challenge yourself with when reading these quotes:

Do I understand the culture within my organisation?

What are its real values and not just the ones pinned on the board?

How do my behaviours align to the culture?

Will the culture here, enable change or block it?

P 46

“Leadership goes hand in hand with strategy formation, and most leaders understand the fundamentals. Culture, however, is a more elusive lever, because much of it is anchored in unspoken behaviours, mindsets, and social patterns”.

“The best leaders we have observed, are fully aware of the multiple cultures within which they are embedded, can sense when change is required, and can deftly influence the process”.

“The first and most important step leaders can take to maximise (culture's) value and minimise its risks is to become fully aware of how it works”.

“Culture is the tacit social order of an organisation: It shapes attitudes and behaviours in wide-ranging and durable ways. Cultural norms define what is encouraged, discouraged, accepted or rejected within a group”.

“Culture can also evolve flexibly and autonomously in response to changing opportunities and demands”.

“We have identified four generally accepted attributes of culture:

1. Shared
2. Pervasive
3. Enduring
4. Implicit”.

P 47

“Understanding a company’s culture requires determining where it falls along these two dimensions:

1. People interactions
2. Response to change”.

“Whereas some cultures emphasise stability – prioritising consistency, predictability and maintenance of the status quo – others emphasise flexibility, adaptability and responsiveness to change”.

P 48

“When aligned with strategy and leadership, a strong culture drives positive organisational outcomes”.

P 50

“Mergers and acquisitions can either create or destroy value”.

P 51

“A strong culture can be a significant liability when it is misaligned with strategy”.

“We have found that four practices in particular lead to successful culture change:

1. Articulate the aspiration
2. Select and develop leaders who align with the target culture
3. Use organisational conversations about culture to underscore the importance of change
4. Reinforce the desired change through organisational design”.

“Because of culture’s somewhat ambiguous and hidden nature, referring to tangible problems, such as market pressures or the challenges of growth, helps people better understand and connect to the need for change”.

“Some people move on because they feel they are no longer a good fit for the organisation, and others are asked to leave if they jeopardise needed evolution”.

“Various kinds of organisational conversations such as roadshows, listening tours, and structured group discussion can support change”.

“Influential change champions can advocate for a culture shift through their language and actions”.

P 52

“Leading with culture may be among the few sources of sustainable competitive advantage left to companies today. Successful leaders will stop regarding culture with frustration, and instead use it as a fundamental management tool”.