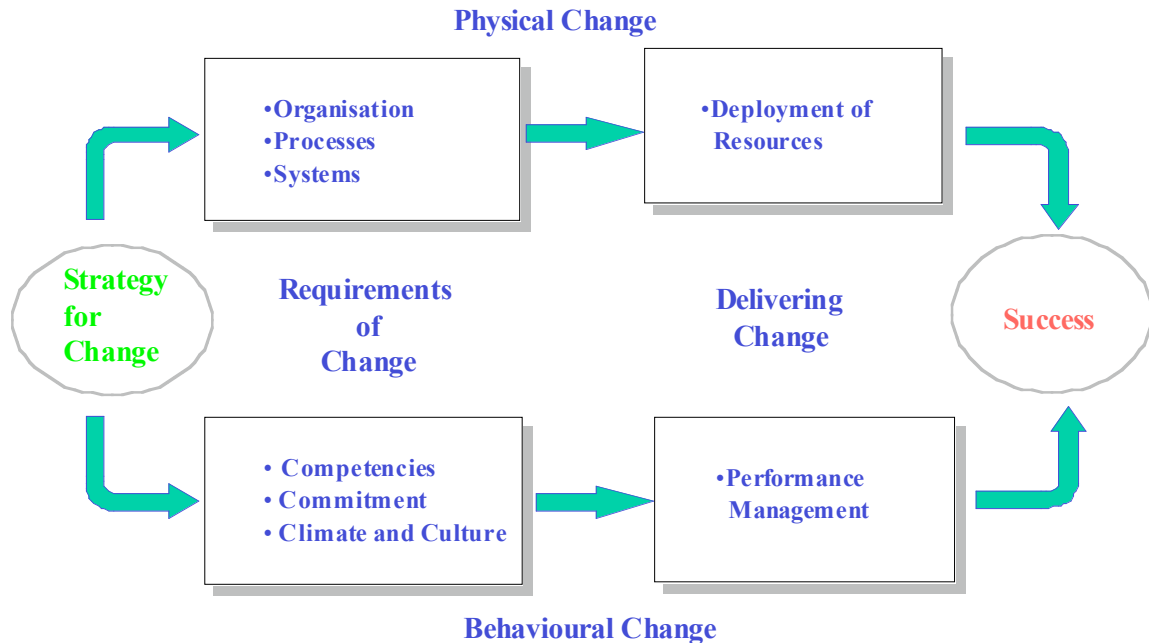


## CULTURE AND CLIMATE

### Introduction

Organisations contemplating change are faced with the knowledge that something like 70% of change initiatives fail. The failures are probably best explained using a simple diagram:



This model implies that successful organisational change requires an emphasis not merely upon physical aspects of change (such as re-structuring) but also upon behavioural change (competencies, climate and culture). Conventional change programmes have tended to focus upon physical change to the extent that some 80% of resources are usually expended in this 'hard' area with 20% reserved for those 'softer' aspects of change mentioned earlier. The key lesson learned is that at least half the resources should be focussed upon behavioural and cultural change and in many organisations behavioural aspects of change will require a greater investment than structural aspects. Organisations, especially established, traditional organisations, tend to be inherently resistant to change. This has led to a view amongst many change consultants that organisations setting out on the 'step change' journey must first of all be de-stabilised to the extent that staff become uncomfortable and dis-satisfied with the status quo. At this stage people are more inclined to accept the need for behavioural, as well as structural, change.

Ideas about Organisational Climate and Culture have developed as a result of observations of organisation and individual behaviour, particularly in the context of change or required change. There is frequent confusion about the differences between Culture and Climate and to add to that confusion, methodologies and approaches have largely progressed along separate (if parallel) lines.

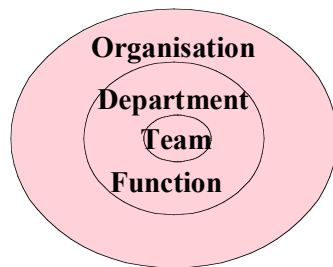
**Organisational Climate** has been seen over the years as anything from a broad concept describing in a generalised way, 'the personality of the organisation', to representations of individuals' or groups' motivation and job satisfaction. More specifically, Climate has been typified as a phenomenon derived from people's feelings and attitudes about particular events or situations. In this sense Climate is likely to be a transitory, constantly changing aspect of an organisation and more frequently, some parts of an organisation.

**Culture** on the other hand, has more often been presented as a 'values' based concept, created by, and expressed through, the behaviour of groups of people. It seems to be a more tangible, longer lasting characteristic of the organisation (or parts of the organisation) generated by group 'understandings' or group perceptions. Culture is concerned with group norms and beliefs and what some experts refer to as 'system sanctioned behaviours' - these are often seen as 'taken for granted' or 'learned' responses. These behaviours and stances are often driven by professional, functional, status or occupational group, values. In the past, such factors as, management/non-management, professional/non-professional, white collar/blue collar, religious or ethnic, divisions have resulted in particular cultures with their associated sets of group norms and behaviours. At the extremes, individuals will suffer group disapproval and exclusion, if they fail to behave in culturally approved ways.

## WHAT IS CULTURE ?

It can be described as:

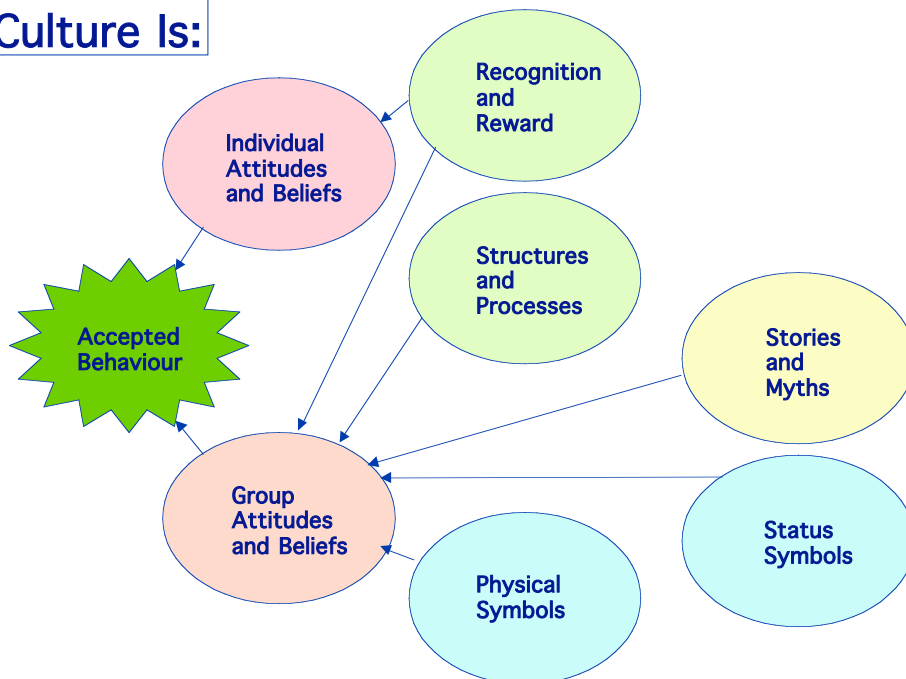
**'The distinctive product of a group of people's shared values and accepted behaviours'**



**Internal cultures may be inconsistent and not all may fit  
with values**

**In change, there may be very few that fit !**

**Culture Is:**



# WHAT ARE VALUES ?

Values are seen as:

‘Sets of over- arching principles and beliefs that bind people and organisations together

Values guide people’s behaviour towards one another

## WHY DO AN ORGANISATION’S VALUES MATTER ?

The crucial questions are:

1. Do the values within our organisation (expressed through the behaviour of our people) support the delivery of our current Strategy, Goals and Brand ?
2. Will our current values and behaviour support the delivery of our Mission, Strategy and future Brand/Values ?

Debate over the last twenty years has led to the idea that Climate Mapping picks up and defines only the immediate, surface, conscious levels of people's relationship(s) with the organisation; and that Cultural Audit accesses and defines deeper underlying behavioural determinants - group constructs, norms and values.

For the purpose of this discussion paper I will assume that:

*Climate refers to the measurable product of attitudes, feelings and reactions to particular events, regimes or situations.*

*Culture refers to the measurable product of enduring, group behaviours and stances sanctioned by the group and generated and conditioned by the shared values and beliefs of group members.*

### **Methodological Background**

To compound the confusion, research methodologies around Organisational Culture and Climate have developed from different philosophical backgrounds.

The tools and methods adopted by those measuring Climate have generally been 'quantitative'. Researchers have focused upon 'scientific rigour' and the concerns of professional psychometricians, that is: construct and predictive validity of questionnaire designs and dimensions; and inter rater agreement and reliability. Their solutions have been sets of rules not only around questionnaire design and administration but also application and interpretation of psychometric scores. In common with other methodologies based upon the use of generic questionnaires, Climate 'Mappers' have been dogged by challenges around:

- applicability across different organisations, sectors, etc.
- the extent to which the questionnaire design shapes people's responses
- and how relevant to this business/ organisation, are the assumptions and organisational model which underpin both the questions asked and the format and interpretation of the outputs?

Culture researchers have tended typically, to concentrate upon more 'qualitative' data derived from interviews, focus groups, case studies and observations. Information 'emerges' (or is extracted through questioning and probing) at three levels:

**Surface** - language, symbols and myths;

**Behaviour** - rites, rituals, norms and attitudes;

**Core** - values, assumptions and premises about the world.

Oddly enough, the 'Cultural' approach has been subject to much less challenge than the 'Psychometric' approach described earlier. Generally speaking, data gathered in an open and less pre-structured way, within the organisation, does tend to have a much greater 'face' and 'content' validity than data collected through generic questionnaires. That is, the information generated tends to fit much more with managers' feelings and instincts about the situation on the ground. A major consequence has been that the outputs from Cultural research have enabled managers to establish much clearer linkages between Culture, Values, Behaviour, Competence and Individual Competency.

### **CCDU's Approach**

In our view, designing a project that is primarily concerned with understanding Organisational Culture(s), without recognising and distinguishing the impact (however transitory) of Climate, is a recipe for confused outcomes. Similarly, approaching such a project from one rigid methodological perspective or another equally rigid viewpoint, is likely to result in a simplistic, uni-dimensional model defining Culture without reference to Climate, or vice versa.

Accepting the benefits and dis-benefits of the two extremes described above, our approach is to be very flexible, utilising the full range of tools and methods tailored to the organisational context. We will therefore normally gather, analyse and use, both qualitative and quantitative data - in this way we aim to access information not only about the organisation's Culture(s) but also its Climate(s).

Our preference and style as a Consultancy is to work with clients in client project teams. Our role in these teams will vary according to the day to day needs of the Project, from Team Leader/Facilitator, through to 'Expert', Team Member and Team Worker.

Similarly, activities will be undertaken in a variety of formats, formal and informal workshops, facilitated team and individual working sessions. Where interviews or Focus Groups are required, whenever appropriate we will train client staff to facilitate these sessions, where analysis is required we will involve and share understanding with Project Team Members. In this way we seek to maximise the transfer of learning and expertise to the client Project Team members.

### **Potential Benefits from Culture Audit and Climate Mapping**

- Establishment of clear linkages between Culture, Climate, Values, Behaviour, Competence and Individual Competency
- Quantification of Organisational progress towards delivery of Values related Behaviour in the workplace; and identification of the gaps
- Quantification of Cultural differences/similarity between Organisational Groups
- Understanding of the underlying Drivers of Cultural differences within the Organisation
- Positive, valid information about the Culture, Values and Behaviour of specified Organisational Groups, to provide a basis for Individual, Team and Organisation feedback, challenge and development
- The development of a shared, internally derived language to enable a dialogue about Culture, Climate and Cultural difference
- Identification of potential blockages around Organisational Climate e.g. low levels of motivation, job satisfaction, dis-affection etc.
- A strong basis to design, target and plan the implementation of specific Organisational Change initiatives