

# Why Companies Fail at Cultural Change

By Gabriel Lawson

It is said that culture eats everything else (process, mission, etc.) for breakfast. Then why don't companies focus more on improving their culture? While changing your company's culture is simple in concept, it is difficult to do because it involves changing human behaviors – a practice few managers understand, and few companies successfully accomplish.

## Three Steps to Successful Cultural Change

Human processes are the foundation upon which your business processes reside. Trying to implement accountability business processes in a finger-pointing culture will fail as long as finger pointing continues to be rewarded. So, quit rewarding finger-pointing and start rewarding accountability. Sounds simple enough, but human behaviors are controlled by your brain's limbic system, not your cognitive brain. It's why over 80% of new year's resolutions are broken by January 20<sup>th</sup> and it's why most companies fail at changing their cultural behaviors. Here are the three elements required for successful cultural behavior change.



### *Step One: Evaluate and Identify Good and Bad Behaviors.*

Most companies undertaking a cultural transformation realize you must identify what behaviors to create. Thus, the first step is to evaluate your current behaviors, both good and bad to determine those behaviors you wish to

keep, what behaviors to eliminate, and finally what new behaviors you wish to create.

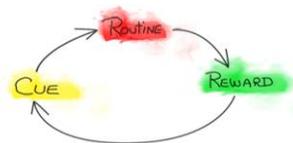


### *Step Two: Reward Desired Behaviors and Quit Rewarding Bad Behaviors.*

People behave according to how they are rewarded, so figure out how to reward your desired behaviors and stop rewarding the bad behaviors. Bad behaviors in an organization are there because they are being rewarded in some way, so it is critical to stop those rewards.

### *Step Three: Create a Watching Mechanism to Reinforce New Behaviors.*

Step three is the most critical. In order to train your brain's limbic system to perform a new behavior you must be constantly reminded to do the new behavior. Remembering on your own rarely results in a new behavior and is the main reason why new year's resolutions rarely succeed. A behavior (routine) must be rewarded (reward) and then there must be a mechanism (cue) to instigate the routine again until the behavior becomes a habit. Without this watching mechanism the human brain cannot develop a behavior that works at the subconscious level.



Human process improvement will dramatically increase productivity and effectiveness in your company. It's the new frontier in productivity. Isn't it time you got on board?

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