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## Replace the word 'Culture' with 'Purpose' every time you speak

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A strong sense of shared purpose is better than a shared sense of culture.

There are so many divides in our lives today; socio-economic-political. There are also the divides we experience in our work lives: Old vs new, change vs status quo or digital vs natives. It is much easier to bridge these divides with clear sense of purpose.

Consistently across conversations the word culture comes up as if to imply that culture supersedes the reason why a corporation exists to its stakeholders. We have seen a company's pride override the necessity for a sound business strategy. Or a trickle down self-perpetuating or self-serving "this is how we work" or "this is our culture" results in tripped wires. GE, Wells Fargo, Facebook, We Work, Boeing are some of the more discussed examples.

**“Purpose is a verb. Culture is a noun.  
People prefer verbs.”**

Uber is a verb, 'you Uber it'. If your brand cannot be a verb then what is the point?

If leaders, managers or supervisors in your company are spending the majority of their time discussing culture as commonly understood then it is a sign that you are in trouble. Successful companies have a habit of discussing purpose the majority of time. This ensures a strong commonly understood sense of purpose that in turn drives work methods, processes, behaviours or habits.

When a job candidate asks "what is the culture of our company?", try responding "our Purpose as a company is..... and therefore this is how we go about delivering on the purpose....".

This could be for new employees or in all meetings or even with customers.



The issue is we talk about culture as a holy grail which gives it the impression of something more permanent than a purpose (or strategy).

Yes, how we do things is culture. But how we do things has to be directly driving the purpose. When we see business models change on an average of every 4 years you have to wonder what is the point of viewing culture as more permanent when it also has to change every 4 years.

As an example we know every company needs go digital. This is a given. But we often don't hear the why of going digital. The purpose of going digital is very different for each company even though some of the technologies or methods may be similar or even the same.

I meet a lot of people in my travels across countries. All of them are mostly very proud of the companies that employ them. When asked why they provide a laundry list of things they like about their company. When compiled these lists contain very good reasons and the top reasons across companies are also similar. Yet in none of these discussions do I hear the purpose of the company as an explanation of why any particular company does things differently. Don't mistake me, I agree with their laundry list of reasons and I think they matter. But I would bet that purpose is far more well shared, understood and permeant in successful companies.

Agility needs a great sense of purpose with an organization that understands it and embodies it.

Are you priding yourself on your parental leave, gender equity, diversity, respectful workplace etc? These are not cultural elements, they are the qualifiers to be in business. They are standards that must be met to be a human enterprise.

Next time you are in a situation where you have to say, 'our culture' in any line you speak, try saying 'our purpose is' and then explain how what you do links up. Focus on the purpose. Culture is just a follow through.

**“Try it, replace the word culture with purpose in your conversations. Be a verb yourself.”**