

# Designing Exceptional Organizational Cultures



# Designing Exceptional Organizational Cultures

*How to develop companies where employees  
thrive*

Jamie Jacobs  
Hema Crockett



**Publisher's note**

Every possible effort has been made to ensure that the information contained in this book is accurate at the time of going to press, and the publishers and authors cannot accept responsibility for any errors or omissions, however caused. No responsibility for loss or damage occasioned to any person acting, or refraining from action, as a result of the material in this publication can be accepted by the editor, the publisher or the authors.

First published in Great Britain and the United States in 2021 by Kogan Page Limited

Apart from any fair dealing for the purposes of research or private study, or criticism or review, as permitted under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, this publication may only be reproduced, stored or transmitted, in any form or by any means, with the prior permission in writing of the publishers, or in the case of reprographic reproduction in accordance with the terms and licences issued by the CLA. Enquiries concerning reproduction outside these terms should be sent to the publishers at the undermentioned addresses:

2nd Floor, 45 Gee Street  
London  
EC1V 3RS  
United Kingdom

122 W 27th St, 10th Floor  
New York, NY 10001  
USA

4737/23 Ansari Road  
Daryaganj  
New Delhi 110002  
India

[www.koganpage.com](http://www.koganpage.com)

Kogan Page books are printed on paper from sustainable forests.

© Jamie Jacobs and Hema Crockett, 2021

The right of Jamie Jacobs and Hema Crockett to be identified as the authors of this work has been asserted by them in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

---

**ISBNs**

Hardback 978 1 78966 723 3

Paperback 978 1 78966 721 9

Ebook 978 1 78966 722 6

---

**British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data**

A CIP record for this book is available from the British Library.

---

**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

[to follow]

---

Typeset by Integra Software Services, Pondicherry  
Print production managed by Jellyfish  
Printed and bound by CPI Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon CR0 4YY

# CONTENTS

*List of figures* ix  
*About the authors* x  
*Acknowledgements* xiv

**Introduction: C is for conscious** 1

**01 What is organizational culture?** 9

What is culture anyway? 10  
The biggest challenges you face 18  
Common pitfalls 21  
Questions to ask 22  
Moving to action: what you can do next 23  
Lessons from the real world 24  
Final thoughts 25

**02 Why top-performing cultures don't happen by accident** 27

Culture is a feedback loop 29  
The role of leadership in culture 30  
Building self-awareness 32  
Establishing a baseline 35  
The toxic culture lifecycle of a non-self-aware leader 38  
The high-performing culture lifecycle of a self-aware leader 40  
People are watching 41  
Common pitfalls 42  
Questions to ask 44  
Moving to action: what you can do next 45  
Lessons from the real world 48  
Final thoughts 49  
Endnotes 49

- 03 Organizational structure 51**
- Types of organizational structures 52
  - What's structure got to do with culture? 54
  - If you build it, they will come 56
  - Redefine your project 59
  - A new kind of team 61
  - Leadership expectations and structure 64
  - Whose job is it anyway? 65
  - Burnout 67
  - Common pitfalls 68
  - Questions to ask 69
  - Moving to action: what you can do next 71
  - Lessons from the real world 72
  - Final thoughts 73
  - Endnote 74
- 04 Identifying and defining core values 75**
- What are core values? 75
  - Why are core values important? 76
  - Defining your values 78
  - Checking in with your values 86
  - Bringing your core values to life 88
  - Core values lead to core behaviour 92
  - Common pitfalls 94
  - Questions to ask 96
  - Moving to action: what you can do next 97
  - Lessons from the real world 98
  - Final thought 99
  - Endnotes 99
- 05 Skills for now and the future 101**
- Natural born leaders? 109
  - Customizing competencies 111
  - Consistency is key 113
  - Infusing core competencies 113
  - Core competencies revisited 114

- Welcome to the dark side 115
  - Common pitfalls 116
  - Questions to ask 117
  - Moving to action: what you can do next 118
  - Lessons from the real world 119
  - Final thoughts 122
  - Endnotes 123
- 06 Attracting and retaining the right talent 125**
- Why should someone work for your organization? 126
  - Using the EVP to attract the right talent 134
  - Opting out is okay 135
  - A values fit is more important than a culture fit 137
  - But what about the values questions? 138
  - Recruiting leaders 140
  - Common pitfalls 140
  - Questions to ask 143
  - Moving to action: what you can do next 143
  - Lessons from the real world 144
  - Final thoughts 146
  - Endnotes 146
- 07 Engagement and motivation 147**
- To do or not to do: engagement surveys? 149
  - Using surveys for good 151
  - Other sources of feedback 154
  - The simple art of listening 158
  - Connecting skills to each employee 159
  - Ideal state for engagement 162
  - Measurement through metrics 163
  - Common pitfalls 164
  - Questions to ask 165
  - Moving to action: what you can do next 166
  - Lessons from the real world 167
  - Final thoughts 168
  - Endnotes 168

**08 Total rewards 171**

Components of TR 172

The role of TR in designing and exceptional organizational culture 174

Personalized rewards 176

What do your rewards say about your organization? 180

Beyond pay and benefits 184

Common pitfalls 186

Questions to ask 188

Moving to action: what you can do next 189

Lessons from the real world 190

Final thoughts 192

Endnotes 193

**09 Diversity, inclusion, and belonging 195**

DI&B is not a quota 196

Walk the talk 198

Measuring the ROI 199

Employer brand and diversity 203

So you have diverse leadership, now what? 204

Bringing it back to self-awareness 205

Common pitfalls 206

Questions to ask 208

Moving to action; what you can do next 209

Lessons from the real world 210

Final thoughts 212

Endnotes 213

**10 Moving to action 215**

The importance of change management 224

Final thoughts 227

*Index* 229



## LIST OF FIGURES

### FIGURES

- Figure 1.1 The intersection of culture 12
- Figure 3.1 Most commonly used structures here 52
- Figure 4.1 The Golden Circle revisited as adapted from Simon Sinek's The Golden Circle (04 May 2010) 77
- Figure 4.2 Core values best practices 82
- Figure 4.3 Core values categories 83
- Figure 4.4 The what and how of performance evaluations 92
- Figure 6.1 Creating an EVP 129
- Figure 8.1 CSR categories 185

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Hema Crockett and Jamie Jacobs joined forces in 2018 to co-found High Performanceology, a management consulting firm that shows enterprising organizations how to build and sustain leadership cultures to cultivate and retain talent and produce optimum results. Synthesizing decades of combined experience as business and HR executives across a broad range of companies and industries, Hema and Jamie also provide their vast client base with esteemed reputations as coaches and HR community leaders. With a team of forward-thinking professionals specialized in talent and HR, High Performanceology can help transform any company's organizational infrastructure into 'a place people want to work'.

Hema and Jamie also founded Gig Talent, a modern talent agency that has cultivated a vibrant community of first-class HR consultants and coaches and created the first HR Consulting Certification Programme.

## FOREWORD

Before I talk about Hema Crockett and Jamie Jacobs' latest book, *Designing Exceptional Organizational Culture*, let me talk about values and culture in general.

When I was given the privilege to lead as CEO of WD-40 Company nearly 23 years ago I realized that we needed to undergo a cultural transformation. We needed to breakdown the silos of knowledge and transform them into fields of learning. We needed to create a learning culture, one in which there were no failures at all, only learning moments. What we needed was a culture built on people. Seeking inspiration from the Aboriginal tribes of Australia I discovered the bonds and attributes of a tribal culture. Attributes such as knowledge, celebration, a strong sense of belonging and, above all else, values.

As Hema and Jamie convey right at the onset, culture starts with the self-awareness of leaders and our ability to take a close look at our own values and behaviors. If there is misalignment, the repercussions can be felt throughout the organization, undermining the culture. Perhaps one of the most important points that resonates so closely with me and the work we do at WD-40 Company is the fact that culture is intentional. It doesn't just happen by accident. As mentioned, I started on this journey to transform the WD-40 Company culture over twenty years ago. Since we started, not a day goes by that we don't tinker or tweak or review some aspect of our culture to ensure it is still meeting our needs and the needs of our customers. We have been intentional, and like Hema and Jamie state, 'In businesses where culture is paramount and made into a business priority (or even a goal or objective), it becomes everyone's priority'. Culture is our priority at WD-40 Company.

In order to create a tribal culture at WD-40 Company, we needed to start with our organizational values. I greatly believe that values have always been the foundation upon which any culture is built and, as Hema and Jamie outline in Chapter 4, identifying and defining

core values help build the framework by which all other decisions are made. The WD-40 Company values are:

- We value creating positive, lasting memories in all our relationships.
- We value making it better than it is today.
- We value succeeding as a tribe while excelling as individuals.
- We value owning it and passionately acting on it.
- We value sustaining the WD-40 Company economy.

Often leaders forget that values need to be meaningful. They aren't just words written on a wall, but they are woven into the fabric of the culture; they are part of every layer. Our values, in conjunction with our four pillars of Care, Candor, Accountability and Responsibility became the basis of our new culture. I deeply appreciate Hema and Jamie's ability to use values as a guide throughout *Designing Exceptional Organizational Cultures*. They have beautifully connected the criticality of values with how you pay employees, how you engage them, how you build trust and loyalty. Hema and Jamie present an invaluable guide on how organizations can intentionally build a culture that not only results in high engagement but in business results as well. What they present is timeless, relevant and practical.

For us, our values and culture have helped create an amazing tribe of individuals who come together as one united team. As a tribe, we've created a culture in which each tribe member is considered a leader, a developer of people, whether themselves or others. Each is also an important contributor to the business. The people, our tribe, is what makes us successful.

Our progress can be measured in multiple ways. Our March 2020 global engagement survey saw a 95 per cent completion rate and showed an overall engagement of 93 per cent. Among our highest scoring items, at 97.5 per cent, was 'I feel my opinion and values are a good fit with WD-40 Company culture'. While these numbers are great, they only tell half the story. Our financial success is further proof of the importance of a strong and thriving culture. In the twenty plus years we have committed ourselves to a learning culture built on a solid

foundation of values, we have seen our sales quadruple. Our market cap increased from \$250 million to nearly \$2.5 billion in that time.

I love the progress we've made, the stories we've shared, the success we've experienced as a tribe. I know the importance of a thriving culture. And I know cultivating a healthy and long-lasting culture is a journey. The work is never done. This is why I am delighted to be writing the Foreword to this book.

My hope is that you enjoy it as much as I have. Even if you have an amazing culture today, I guarantee you will pick up something new when reading this. This book provides insights for any business and HR leaders who are looking to transform their organization by creating and cultivating an award-winning organizational culture. It also provides a roadmap or blueprint that, when followed, will get you the high-performing organization you are looking for. I am confident that, after reading this book, you will feel as energized as I am and be left with a deeper understanding of yourself as a leader, a clear definition of what culture looks like for your organization and the motivation and determination to go out and build it.

With that, I leave you to read and internalize *Designing Exceptional Organizational Cultures*.

And don't forget, the amazing product in the small blue and yellow can with the red top that can make a difference in your world if you need it.

G'day.

Garry Ridge  
Chairman and CEO  
WD-40 Company

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

First and foremost, we would like to thank our husbands, Michael Crockett and Josh Jacobs, for supporting us in this endeavour. We love you both! We would also like to thank our families for their encouragement as we took this on. To our dear friends and colleagues from whom we've learned throughout the years and were kind enough to contribute their insights, thank you for taking the time to contribute. A special thank you to Rea Frey, who has been with us on this journey for nearly two years now. Thank you for guiding us and steering us when we needed it the most. And last, but not least, thank you to Lucy Carter, Anne-Marie Heeney and everyone on the Kogan Page team for allowing us to be part of the Kogan family.