



Ethical Foundation & Culture Mapping

Organizational Culture Mapping encourages the full expression and exploration of an organization's foundational ethics which guide the operational activities and relationships of an organization. These elements can be distilled into a set of accessible frameworks and key phrases that will help to shape the stewardship of an Organization's operational culture.

Going beyond Mission and Vision, Culture Maps help to make visible the beliefs, values and principles that when embodied through disciplines help determine the practices and tools that define how a project functions and approaches the world.

Establishing the North Star - or the shared purpose of a project or organization - along with the "non-negotiables" of an organization will help stewards or leaders assess what the priorities are, what is core and unwavering about a organization, where there is room for influence from other perspectives, where there is agility to shape-shift operations, processes and policies to fit the ever evolving needs and relational dynamics of a organization.

All Culture Maps are living documents, evolving to adjust to new influences, needs, wisdoms, etc.

There is value in continuing to rhythmically review and adjust an organization's Culture Map as needed to continue to ensure alignment through the inevitable growth and evolution of personal, collective and operational processes. It is encouraged to ritualize the adoption of any current iterations of an organization's Culture Map- celebrating the renewed commitment to an organization's coherence.

Guidelines for Culture Map Elements

Beliefs & Philosophies

What we accept as true and real, concepts that shape our experience. The bedrock foundations of our evolving belief structures. Our "givens". Our unshakable truths.

Guiding Principles

Principles are core fundamental propositions or rules that serve as the foundation for an organizational system of behavior- guidelines that help shape & inform our behaviors. Ethics are principles.

Values

Values are qualities that govern our character and behavior and are essential to our internal guidance system, helping us determine if we are on the right path, creating cornerstone guide posts to return to in order to continue to align with our own truths.

Behaviors

Observable responses and actions, our conduct that is guided by what we believe and value. Our behaviors can express as the patterns of our personality, demeanor and mannerisms. Behaviors that one perceives will uphold principles and values.

Practices

Beliefs, Philosophy, Principles and Values are translated into actions such as practices that cohere a group to a common way of operating and behaving together. A practice is the carrying out of an exercise based on a belief or value.

Tools

Tools are used to effect a purpose, helping to facilitate an activity or process towards achieving an aim or upholding the behaviors, principles, values, beliefs, etc. Tools help us enact disciplines and practices.

Inquiry to generate Cultural Map Elements

This process is best done with the primary influencers and stewards of an organization or project answering the questions below from their personal perspective about the project or organization. After answering the initial questions comprehensively, the next step is to distill 2-3 key words or phrases that encapsulate the essence of the answer.

This process can then be replicated by other key influencers or stewards of a project/organization and then compared to other stewards to find commonality, divergence and integration.

The goal is then to synthesize the answers that have the most common ground as the representation of the organization or projects foundational ethics. For the culture map, the group synthesizes the key phrases and determines the answers that most represent the common ground of the organization or project. These key phrases become can then be added to a graphic or image that is then an easily referenced “culture map” outlining the group’s ethical and cultural foundations.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS TO ANSWER:

What is the project's or organization's North Star or shared Purpose? This is the organization's "reason for being".

Key Phrases:

What are some of the fundamental beliefs or philosophies that inform the project?

Key Phrases:

What principles guide the project?

Key Phrases:

What are the core values of the project and how would you translate those values? Can you distill this list into the essentials?

Key Phrases:

What behaviors take place within the project (through either the players or activities of a project) ?

Key Phrases:

What are some practices or disciplines that ensure the project coheres to values and beliefs?

Key Phrases:

Are there any tools useful to supporting the success of the project's activities or players?

Key Phrases:

What are the “non-negotiables” of the project? Those values, practices, beliefs that are so fundamental to what the project is that they are unwavering and rooted at the core?

BASIC EXAMPLE GRAPHIC of CULTURE MAP

This is an example of a graphic that a group might create to organize the key words or phrases that make up the group's cultural foundations. Customizing this artifact so that it represents the project or organization is essential. This becomes a visual reference to guide to support alignment to the shared cultural agreements

