

Company culture as a *strategic force*

There are three areas that should be continuously inspected and worked on to create an inclusive culture that makes a company a place where people want to work and a part of their identity. In these environments, people, perspectives and success bloom like flowers.



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Good company culture is a factor of success and long-term survival for a company. People and healthy relationships between them are a key to reaching objectives effectively, expressing the potential of each individual and building a long-lasting state of equilibrium.

Company culture is the substrate that defines the identity and conduct of a company, and it is made up of various dimensions and effective methods that help it grow and mature. Inclusion is one of the main pillars that allows us to express ourselves and best contribute to the creation of a *raison d'être* and a cohesive and reliable team.

Company culture is an expression of all that is important to us, a concept that encompasses both individual and collective perspectives.

WHERE IS THE STARTING POINT FOR CONSCIOUSLY IMPROVING WORKPLACE CULTURE?

A great place to start is at the root of the culture, with everything that is invisible that still guides our behaviours: what is important to us, what motivates us and what do we value.

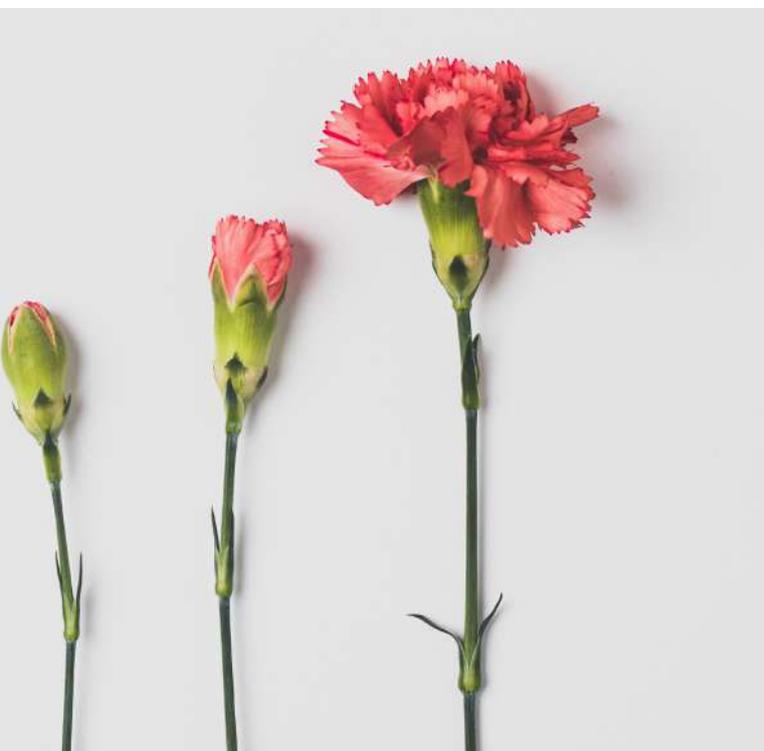
"Inclusive culture makes a company attractive, a place we want to work and stay."

To improve and thus embark on a journey that takes a company's culture through an evolution, it is important to see, address and evaluate three areas: to what extent do people bring themselves to work and what is important to them, how do they experience the current workplace culture and what would do they want in order to improve how they work together.

The first area is about people. Who are the people in our company and what is important to us starts with needs and personal values. Why do we start with the culture of the individual? Because we can't create a company culture that is different from the people we have.

The second area identifies how we experience today's culture in the present and how we might describe the way we interact. What are the values and behaviours we adopt? What are those that limit us? Often sharing how we experience the culture comes as a surprise to managers.

The third area is about the culture we want. What do we as people within the company want the culture to be to get better results? To take this step, it is essential to be present and to bring the best of ourselves and our listening abilities to the table. Because the true value of starting a process of cultural transformation is listening. And since culture is a competitive factor, it's in our best interest to listen.



COMPANY CULTURE IS A GARDEN

Listening means putting yourself and another on the same plane, fostering a relationship in which just hearing the other person is not enough, but you must actively and empathically listen to them. It is an exercise that often requires support from leaders in their leadership and the result is a journey of development as much for the leaders as for the team. This includes learning to create trust, delegating, listening, communicating, ending judgment and applying methods of inclusive decision-making in meetings.

There are various tools that one can adopt to put inclusive culture into practice, like “low-hanging fruit”, or simple solutions with a big and immediate impact on people.

A good culture allows people to bloom. Like a well-tended garden makes its flowers to bloom, curating company culture needs consistency in order to be truly effective.

We can't think about planting seeds and then forget to water them. Likewise, we must be aware to understand what can grow in the soil we have prepared. In summary, developing culture is strategic. It is a manageable journey and offers great results. First, we must evaluate (yes, it is possible), then we discuss the results

and, depending on what emerges, we can start to address the everyday behaviours. Often this naturally leads to a review of the corporate purpose and values.

WHAT HAPPENS IF WE BRING OUR TRUE SELVES TO WORK?

Committing with consistency and trust implicitly creates a “safe” climate in which every person feels comfortable bringing themselves to work. Is this really possible? Yes, if there is inclusive leadership that distances itself from a culture of control. It's important to guarantee healthier behaviours to make decisions from multiple perspectives that are forward-thinking and creative.

It is also complex because we live in an era of separation. The workplace fosters a bubble in which there are different rules and ways of being from outside the office. This ends up separating the private self from the work self, and sometimes this separation can create toxic environments.

This was depicted in *Severance*, a recent TV series on Apple TV: a company has the memories of its workers surgically divided to separate their personal lives from their work lives. Thus, when they enter the office, the inside is nothing like the outside and vice versa.

"Company culture is like a garden that must be consistently cared for."

Severance





Framework of Inner Development Goals.

Fortunately, there is growing awareness that true change needed to act collectively with more responsibility and sustainability is found through inner development.

In the past three years, initiatives like “Inner Development Goals” have appeared which propose a framework for the necessary inner development to accelerate the achievement of the UN's 17 Global Goals, of which DE&I (diversity, equity and inclusion) is an important part.

Learning to bring ourselves to work is a complex practice, a development journey that starts with the personal actions of leaders and affects the whole company culture. The more responsibility you have, the greater the need to work as yourself. After all, great athletes have a trainer and a mental coach. So, why not top managers?

This framework starts with self-awareness (Being) as one of the five pillars of personal growth:

- BEING (knowing yourself), ● THINKING (awareness of the complexity and long-term thinking), ● RELATING (relationship with others and nature), ● COLLABORATING (cross-company and cross-sector collaboration) and ● ACTING (courage and resilience).

