



## What's the difference between Engagement and Culture? ... and how do they work together?

**Employee Engagement** is the level of positivity that employees feel – it is the “Can-Do” mentality and the “Want-to-Do” mentality combined.

It derives its strength from how well employee motivations are being met by the Tangible Benefits, the Intangible Benefits, and the Work Enablers that employees encounter in the organisation.

**Culture** is the way things are done in an organisation.

It derives its character from the assumptions and beliefs that people have about what should get attention (and what can be ignored); what should get prioritised (and what can be tolerated); what should get resourced (and what can be left under-resourced).

For example,

- If people feel that it is normal to go to a lot of trouble to do their work properly, then Quality is a big element in the Culture.
- If people see that there are no consequences for failing to meet deadlines, then Performance is NOT a big element in the Culture.
- If people see that it is normal to band-aid over problems, or leave them to someone else to fix, then Problem-Solving is NOT a big element in the Culture – but Buck Passing is!
- If people are constantly helping their work-mates when high workloads occur, then Teamwork is definitely a big element in the Culture.
- If people see that it is normal to own up to their mistakes and push hard to rectify them, then

Responsibility and Accountability are major elements in the Culture.

- If people see that ranting, raving, shouting, belittling, and ridiculing are tolerated, then Bad Behaviour is a big element in the Culture and the Value of Respect is mere hypocrisy.
- If people see that Executive are prepared to visit front-line workplaces and ‘put themselves out there’, then Trust in Executive is a key element of the Culture.
- But, if people see that Executive stay ‘holed-up’ in their executive suite and have to google them to find out what they look like, then the Executive will become de-humanised in the eyes of employees and trust in them will drop to negligible levels.

An organisation’s Values are normally an attempt by the organisation to identify the most important of these elements in the Culture and then try to encourage people to put them into practice.

Engagement and Culture can be blended and will often move in lock-step, either spiralling up:

- Higher Engagement makes the Culture more effective
- A well-run Culture gives people more reason to become more Engaged

Or spiralling down:

- Low Engagement will undermine the Culture
- And an inappropriate Culture will undermine Employee Engagement.

**Would you say that your organisation’s Engagement + Culture are climbing the upward spiral ... or sliding into the downward spiral?**