



# WHO ARE WE?

*The Story of your Company's Past, Present, and Future*

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As a leader, you need to understand not just your personal Leadership Narrative, but the narrative of your organization. You must ask the question "Who are We?" to understand where your company currently stands and how it needs to evolve. This narrative will be discovered by examining all aspects of your company's culture.

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## Intent and Purpose

In order to discover the narrative of your group, you must be willing to share your own narrative and listen to those of the people around you. Before entering this exchange, take some time to reflect on who your audience is and what you expect to accomplish with the sharing of your narrative in this particular situation.

- 1 What is my *Overall Purpose* as a leader? What are my "big picture" intentions and goals? What do I aim to accomplish?
- 2 What is the *Current Situation* I am facing as a leader? What does this specific situation require of me and my team?
- 3 Who is my *Current Audience*? What do they care about? What do they hope to accomplish?
- 4 How would I describe my audience's *Current Mindset*? What is their intellectual and emotional state at this time?
- 5 What do I hope to achieve as a *Result* of my telling this story?

## Examining the Roots of your Organization's Culture

Lying beneath any organization's culture is a root system made up of seven elements. In order for your organization to blossom, each of these roots must be healthy. Examining each of these elements will help you see and understand the overall culture of your company: Where are its current strengths? What needs to be improved? Where is it going? How will it get there?

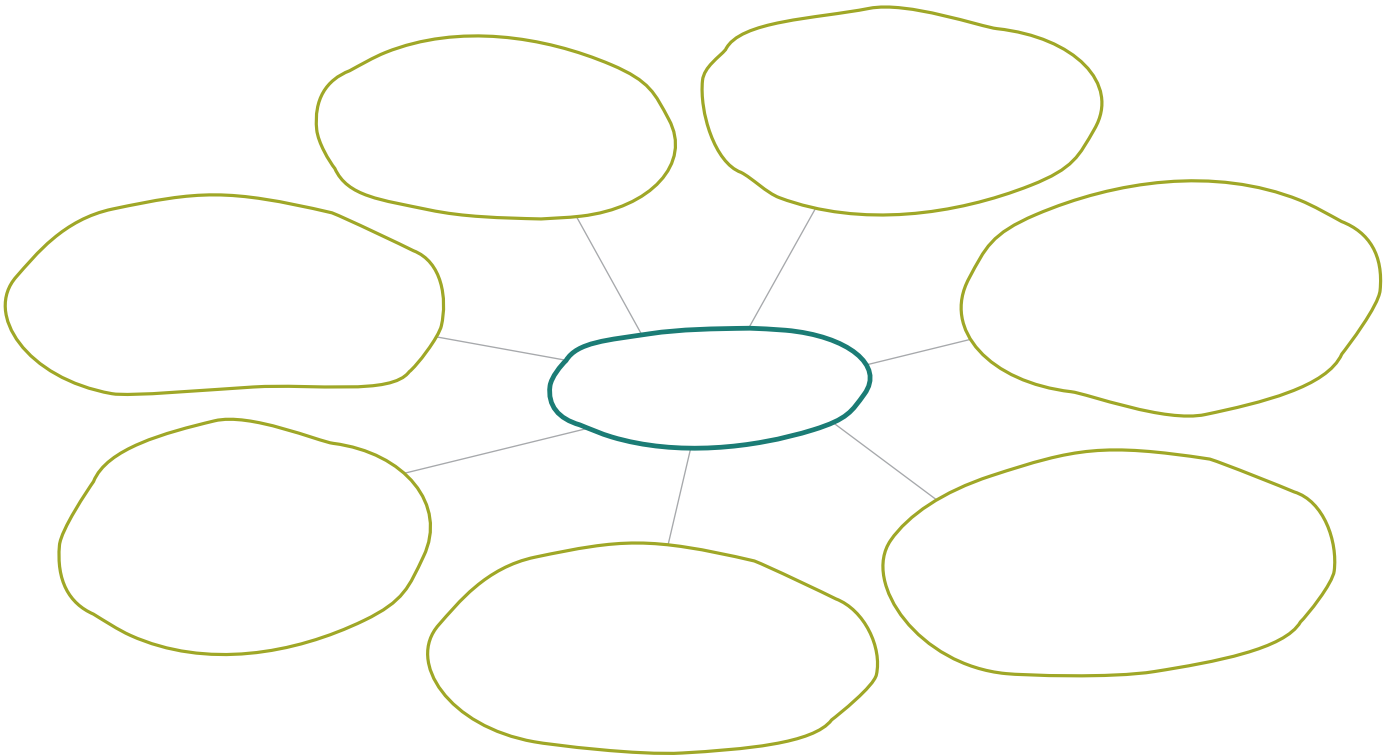


# 1

## Element #1: Narratives

*Who from the past are members of this culture still talking about? The people your organization has chosen to immortalize tell you a lot about your company's values and behavioral expectations.*

- Think of one person from the past that everyone continues to talk about in a positive manner within your organization. Write that person's name in the center circle of the Bubble Map below.
- On each of the bubbles branching from the center, record the phrases you hear about this person as you listen to the stories of others. Why do they think this person was great?
- Then in each of the four corners of the box framing your Bubble Map, write down what you feel this information tells you about the values of your organization.



## 2

**Element #2: Customs**

*The daily behavior and actions of people that signal acceptable behavior. This determines what is expected to happen in given situations, and what is valued by management.*

Take a moment and create an exhaustive list for each of the columns below.

CUSTOMER EXPECTATIONS	EMPLOYEE EXPECTATIONS	WHAT WOULD BE NOTICED RIGHT AWAY IF IT WERE TO BE CHANGED?

What core beliefs do these rituals reflect?

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### 3 Element #3: Image

*The visual representations of the company including logos, how plush the offices are, and the formal or informal dress codes.*

- 1 What emblem is associated with your organization? How is this image viewed by all stakeholders, workers and customers?
- 2 Describe your company using four metaphors in the space below.

YOUR VIEW	CO-WORKERS' VIEW	CUSTOMER VIEW	COMPETITION'S VIEW

### 4 Element #4: Arrangement

*How is the company organized? Who is in charge? Where does the authority come from? Who do people turn to when questions arise? This includes formal organizational structures and the procedures that aren't always within the procedural boundaries, such as unwritten lines of influence that indicate whose contributions are most valued.*

Draw a visual representation of your company's organizational structure in the space below: is it flat or hierarchal? Is it organic or mechanistic? Is it formal or informal?

Where are the formal lines of authority v. the informal lines of authority?

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## 5

**Element #5: Management**

*The ways that the organization is controlled. These include financial systems, quality systems, and rewards (including the way they are measured and distributed within the organization.)*

- 1 What reports do you share with the people in your company to let them know how progress in the company is going?

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- 2 What process is used to maintain control of the organization?

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- 3 List the ways you currently reward good work.

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**Element #6: Jurisdiction**

*This is seen in who decides what or where the real power in the company resides vs. where the organization's design indicates the decision right should exist. Who has the greatest amount of influence on decisions? Is this consistent with where the organization says decisions are made?*

- 1 Who makes the key decisions within the company?

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- 2 What factors influence how those decisions are reached?

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## 7

**Element #7: Networks**

*Key groups, constituents, partners outside of the organization that influence the culture of the company. They may provide ideas, funds, or customers that direct the culture. It is important to ask, "Who are we connected to outside of the organization and what influence on the culture do they have?"*

1 Whom do we serve?

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2 With whom do we share a common past? Why?

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3 With whom do we share a common future? Why?

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**Considering the Present and the Future**

Through these steps, you have begun to build a picture, piece by piece, of what is influencing your corporate culture. The next step is to integrate what you have learned into a complete picture of the culture and make some generalized statements about "Who are we and who are we becoming?"

In one overall statement, write where your organization stands "As Is." Consider the following questions when constructing this statement:

- What are the company's priority values?
- What are the most powerful stories framing your company's current status?
- What is working best for your company now? Where are the company's weaknesses?

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AS IS

Complete this same step for your company's ideal future. Write one overall statement that expresses where your company wants "To Be." Consider the following questions for constructing this statement:

- How do you envision your company's ideal future?
- What specific pieces of the cultural web will be improved?

## Begin Writing the “Who Are We?” Narrative

This narrative will synthesize the space between your "As Is" and "To Be" statements. To be believable by those in the organization, it is best to use positive aspects of the "as is" state to bridge into the aspirational "to be." The following questions will serve as your guide while creating this narrative.

- Where is our company's genesis?
- What are our greatest strengths?
- What changes are coming for our company?
- What parts of our organization's history needs to be remembered/recovered/reignited?
- How can we accomplish this?

## Story Template

**Quote or Title** – *Something that catches the essences of the story.*

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**The Story** – *Key aspects of the situation. What was the conflict faced?*

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**Best Practices** – *What successful actions are demonstrated that could help others succeed?*

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**Demonstrated Desired Values** – *Link this section to established behaviors connected to the group's values.*

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**Insight** – *What can be taken away from this story?*

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