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أفيريوس للإستشارات وتطوير الأعمال  
Business Advisory and Services

# Fostering a Culture of Innovation





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## Editorial

Averroes Advisory believes that organizational culture is the cornerstone of business success. It is a dynamic interplay of values, beliefs, and behaviors that shape the identity of organizations and drive their performance. As culture evolves, it plays a critical role in fostering innovation, enhancing adaptability, and achieving strategic goals.

This publication delves into the intricacies of organizational culture, focusing on its significance as a driver for innovation and performance. It sheds light on methods to measure and assess culture, providing actionable insights for organizations aiming to build a sustainable competitive advantage.

Join us as we explore how organizations can align their culture with strategic objectives to create an environment of growth, collaboration, and innovation.



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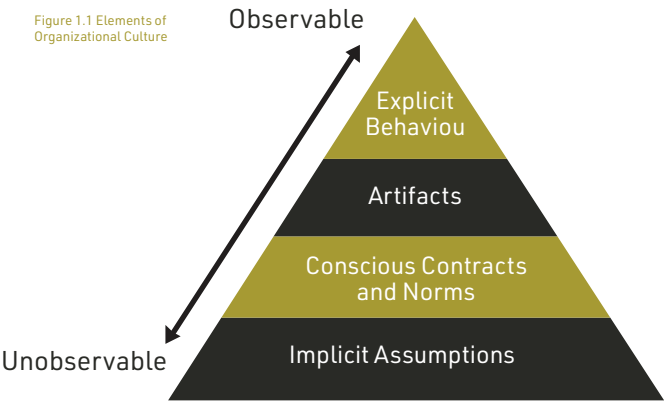


02

# Understanding and Decoding Organizational Culture

Culture is the fundamental element of any organization that defines its identity. It is driven by a set of shared assumptions, values, beliefs, expectations, and definitions which establishes patterns and expectations. Many times, we may dismiss company culture as a mere business buzzword or an elusive concept that is hard to measure or manage. However, the reality is that culture influences both internal and external components of any organization. Researchers agree that culture is a socially constructed attribute that binds an organization together and acts as a social glue. Several questions could arise in one’s mind regarding an organization’s culture. Is culture a conscious choice on the part of leadership? Does and should culture change with changing circumstances and strategies?

Figure 1.1 Elements of Organizational Culture



**Defining culture is always a challenge for organizations as it is highly dependent on individual perspectives and biases. There are many different definitions for organizational cultures. Some define culture in terms of some features such as “innovative”, “performance-based” or “traditional”. Some views take dynamic perspectives, defining organizational culture as the interplay of different invisible forces within the organization. Therefore, organizational culture acts as a hidden hand that subtly influences and shapes an organization’s outcomes.**

Geertz (1973) highlights culture as a web of significance that we have spun for ourselves which is interactive. Therefore, every organization has its own unique culture in which the meaning of things is shared between individuals. At a much deeper level, employees are indoctrinated into some shared beliefs that form a basis of them acting together and this can operate in both conscious and unconscious forms. Edgar Schein defines culture as a pattern of basic assumptions-invented, discovered, or developed by a given group as it learns to cope with problems of external adaptation and internal integration- that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think and feel concerning those problems. Many people are unaware of their organization’s culture unless they are challenged or when a new framework is introduced. The essence of organizational culture can be reflected in many areas including but not limited to shared organization values, vision and mission, processes and procedures, overall work environment, employee experience, etc. According to Cameron and Quinn, several elements constitute organizational culture and they range from unobservable elements to more overt and observable elements.

Culture goes beyond perks and fancy workspaces. It is a deep-rooted belief system that influences behaviors and shapes operations. The most unobservable level of an organization's culture is its implicit assumptions which is the human behavior based on their relationship with the organization's environment. Conscious contracts are a result of an organization's implicit assumptions. They are the basis for rules and procedures that govern human interaction. For example, Policies in an organization are framed based on the assumptions on how to build teams, improve productivity and performance, recognize and reward employees, etc. Artifacts are observable, overt, and an expression of organizational culture and they communicate the organization's story. It is represented by the office design, workwear, themes, logos, mission statement, etc. The explicit behaviors of the members of the organizations are the most visible manifestation of an organization's culture that aligns with its core values. Change of culture involves addressing each of these different levels including implicit and underlying assumptions, procedures, outward expressions, and daily behaviors.

Often people use the terms organization culture and organization climate interchangeably. However, it is important to understand the clear distinction between the two. While organization climate refers to more overt and observable characteristics that often consist of temporary attitudes, feelings, and individualistic perceptions, organizational culture is an enduring, slow-to-change, core characteristic of organizations that includes core values and unspoken assumptions and beliefs. Additionally, climate reflects the current state and experience based on cultural norms such as long-term values and beliefs. Therefore, organization climate is a subset of organizational culture and they must be aligned for the well-functioning of an organization. A healthy climate thrives only when it aligns with an organization's core culture.



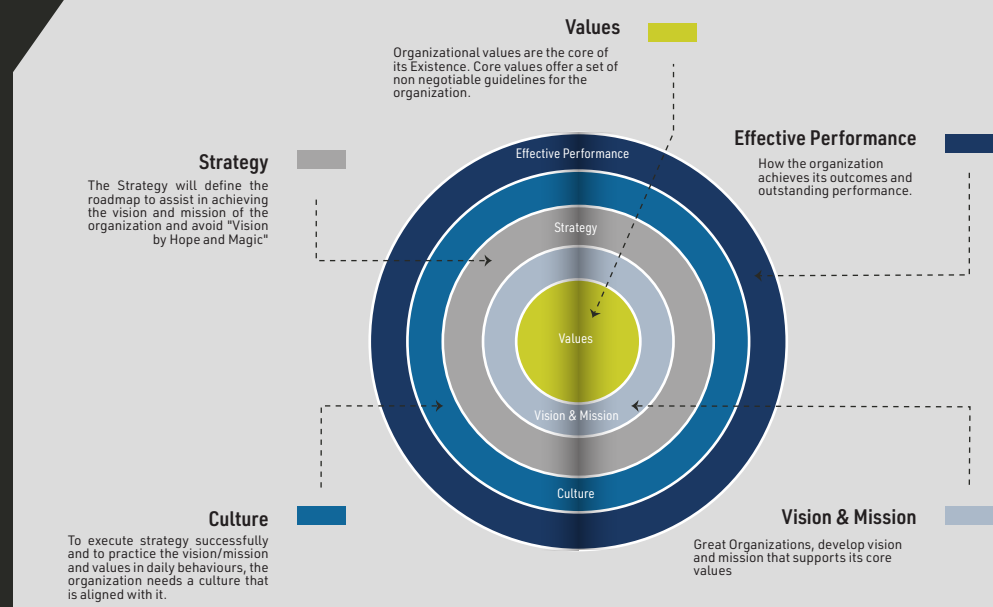


03

# Organizational Culture as a Driver for Performance

A focus on organizational culture has been relevant for more than a decade as it affects all aspects of an organization and performance has been perceived to depend on it. Organizational performance defines the capacity of the organization to accomplish goals effectively and efficiently using human and physical resources. As Peter Drucker famously said, "Culture eats strategy for breakfast," and it has been further added by others that "at lunch, it brings about organizational excellence and for supper, it is good for everything else". While this emphasizes the significant impact that culture has on strategic outcomes, it is also important to note that culture also shapes the ability of an organization to operate well and be sustainable. Many senior executives believe that the human resource department is responsible for the culture of an organization. However, in reality, culture has become more than a "soft" HR topic and an important differentiator of how and why organizations outperform. The links between culture and performance are extensive. Numerous studies establish a close connection between organizational culture and performance variables, such as productivity, processes, and employee output. While some researchers emphasize that financial profitability and growth are valid measures of performance, others have a different opinion, arguing employee productivity is more important. Strong organizational cultures act as catalysts for better performance because of their substantial social impact, which drives success. Our experience with numerous clients helps us conclude that the culture-performance relationship is more than just a story; there exist strong positive correlations between a good organizational culture and improved internal indicators. Hence, a highly engaged workforce translates into better results.

The above diagram illustrates the relationship between other components of an organization and its culture. At the core are the values, which are fundamental to the organization's existence and guide non-negotiable behaviors. Surrounding the values are the vision and mission, which define the organization's purpose and goals, aligning with its core values. The strategy is built on the vision and mission, serving as a roadmap to achieve these goals. Culture encircles the strategy, reflecting the behaviors and practices needed to execute the strategy effectively. Finally, all of these elements contribute to effective performance, which represents the organization's ability to achieve outstanding outcomes.

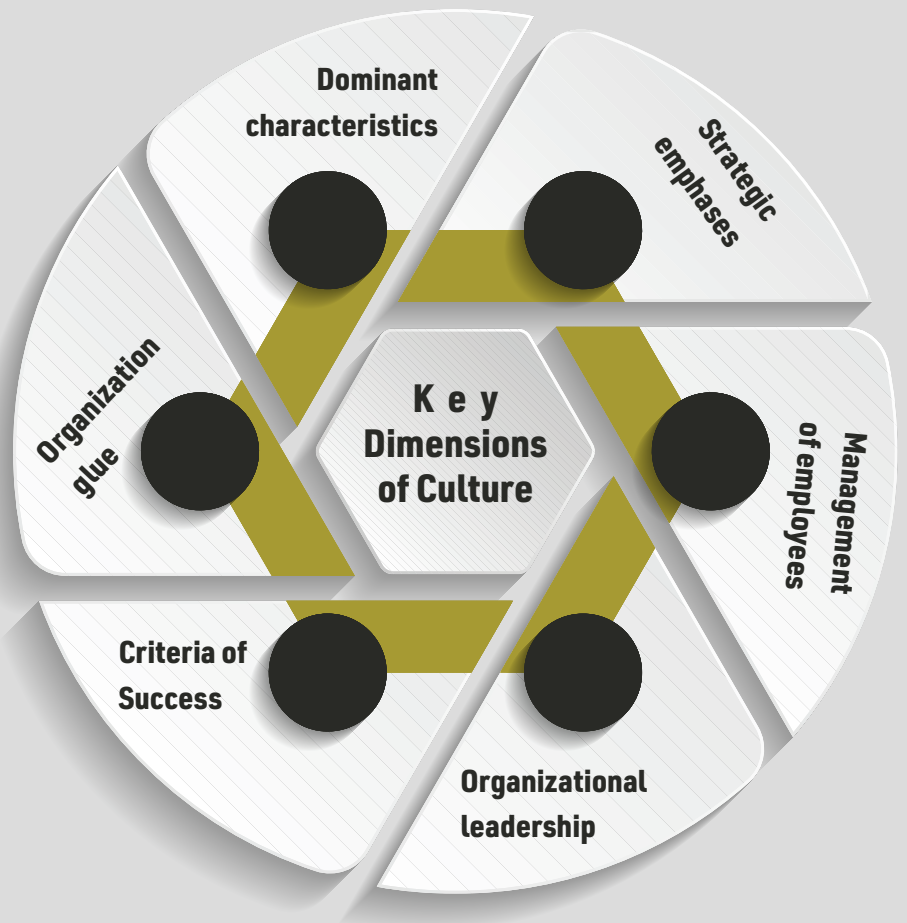




A good organizational culture strengthens employee engagement and creates a space for employees to take calculated risks to perform better. The three important dimensions that constitute culture are mindset, behaviors, and structure/processes. Conventional culture management focuses on making employees aware of the existing culture and encouraging buy-in to achieve tangible performance results. However, it is imperative to close the gaps of all three dimensions simultaneously, and the effect of this action should be considered multiplicative and not additive to get the right culture alignment. According to a Gartner report, the average organization can improve performance against revenue goals by up to 9%, and boost other business outcomes significantly with a well-aligned organizational culture. However, it is important to have a culture that fits with the demands of the organization's environment, e.g.: In a hi-tech industry, having a culture of innovativeness and adaptability will support its performance rather than a culture characterized by stability, and a preference for upholding rules and procedures. On the other hand, for a financial services or legal industry, strict adherence to established procedures and rules is necessary to ensure consistency and compliance with regulations.

Let's dive into the other side of the coin. According to a McKinsey report, more than 60% of negative workplace outcomes are due to toxic workplace behaviors. Toxic workplace behavior is the biggest predictor of employee burnout and turnover. Therefore, having a cultural fit between professionals and employers is extremely crucial. Most researchers suggest that employees are less likely to leave the organization where they are a good cultural fit and they will outperform compared to other employees.

The Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument (OCAI), developed by Kim Cameron and Robert Quinn, identifies six key dimensions of organizational culture. These dimensions reflect fundamental cultural values and implicit assumptions about the way an organization functions. Each of these dimensions including dominant characteristics, organizational leadership, management of employees, strategic emphases and criteria of success establishes a profile or a pattern for an organization's culture, enabling them to identify strengths, weaknesses and areas for improvement. This would subsequently promote high performance, innovation and employee satisfaction, ultimately leading to better results.



# Culture of Innovation

When organizational leaders hear the term "innovation", they often think about industry giants, who are renowned for their substantial investment in research and development and cutting-edge advancements. However, in this dynamic landscape, a culture of innovation has become an indispensable factor for any organization that is aiming to thrive and deliver innovative outcomes. Innovative culture or culture of innovation can be described through multiple facets. From creative workspaces, creating new products and services, flexible processes that encourage employees to take risks, solving organizational challenges and many more. A culture of Innovation as the term suggests is an organizational culture that fosters innovation



## Culture of Innovation

Adding Value Creatively



## Culture

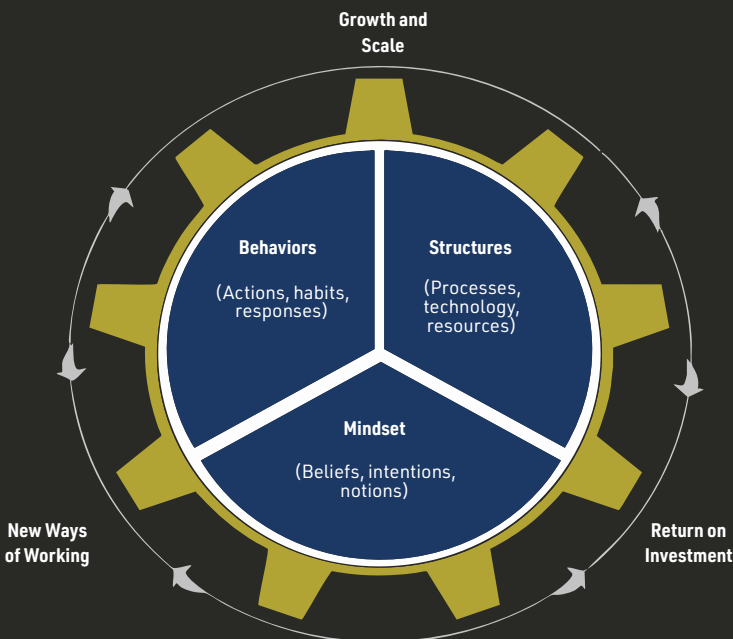
The way of thinking, behaving and working that exists in an organisation



## Innovation

Nurturing an environment that continually introduces creative ideas and ways of thinking and acting, then translates them into action to add value

As depicted in the above diagram, innovation is the practical implementation and creation of value in a creative way. On the other hand, culture, as mentioned earlier, is the organization's way of thinking, behaving, and working. When both aspects are combined, an environment that constantly introduces creative ideas, and different ways of thinking and acting is shaped. Innovation is not just about digitization, incorporating the latest technological tools in the current processes, or even spending huge amounts of money to transform the existing systems. Rather, innovation is about any creative course of action to achieve any organizational goals and add value.



The factor that differentiates the culture of innovation from an ordinary organizational culture is that a normal organizational culture may be more risk-averse, hierarchical and focused on control and stability. Furthermore, employees may feel less empowered to share ideas or take initiative which leads to a mindset of working by the book or according to rules. Such an environment is more likely to stifle creativity and may leave the team members with the impression that only flawless, highly actionable and low-impact ideas are welcome at the table. As mentioned previously, the culture of innovation is driven by three main dimensions including behaviors, structures, and mindset. Together, they constitute the Innovation Flywheel that catalyzes growth and scale in the organization, new ways of working among employees, and higher returns on investment.



# Behaviors

Organizational behaviors are the actions, habits, and responses exhibited by the members of the organization, and that mostly originate with the vision and strategy of the leaders. Organizational behaviors can be analyzed from the perspectives of both employees and leaders. While leaders should demonstrate the willingness to embrace new ideas and take calculated risks, employees should trust one another and have open communication that enables them to experiment and innovate.

# Mindset

Mindset is the amalgamation of beliefs, intentions, and notions that play a pivotal role in embracing continuous improvement in any organization. Both the mindsets of the leaders and employees are essential in nurturing a growth mindset across the organization. Mindset is often revealed when challenges are embraced, customer needs and preferences are well-valued, and new ideas are tested. The right mindset creates an environment where the employees perceive failures as valuable learning experiences rather than setbacks to create a safe environment for innovation.

# Structures

Every organization has its unique structure, systems, and processes with the available resources and technology that help in creating a holistic and comprehensive framework for innovation. A well-structured system ensures that ideas are systematically nurtured from conception to execution and are recognized. Thus, the combined effect of structured processes, proactive organizational behaviors, and an inclusive mindset can stimulate a culture of innovation, leading to sustainable growth.

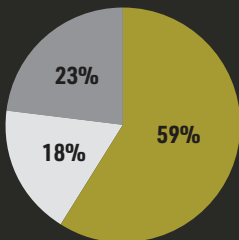
## How does an organization know if they have a culture of innovation in a broader aspect?

The most common characteristics of such an environment are the spaces that encourage creativity, risk-taking, and experimentation, embrace diverse backgrounds and perspectives, promote open communication and collaboration, see failures and ambiguity as learning opportunities, and focus on continuous learning while empowering employees to voice their opinions and ideas.



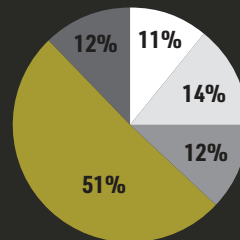
# Perceptions of the Culture of Innovation

Creating a culture of innovation is a journey rather than a one-time task. Research analyzing the culture of innovation was conducted in the State of Qatar where several government organizations, private and other entities participated. This research underlines the perception of innovation and culture of innovation among leaders and employees of different organizations. Furthermore, the main dimensions of innovation including mindset, organizational behavior and structures were examined.



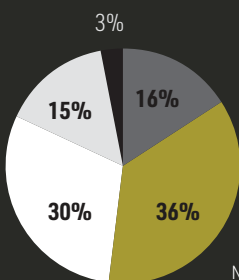
Do you think your organization have the required resources and skills for innovation?

YES ■ NO ■ Not Sure ■



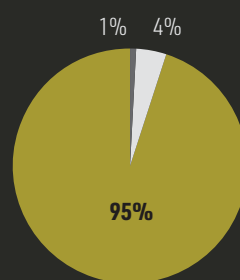
The most important obstacle innovation faces in your organization is:

Organizational Culture ■ Leadership Support ■ Skills ■ Time availability ■ Finance ■



Are you currently involved in any innovation program or project in your organization?

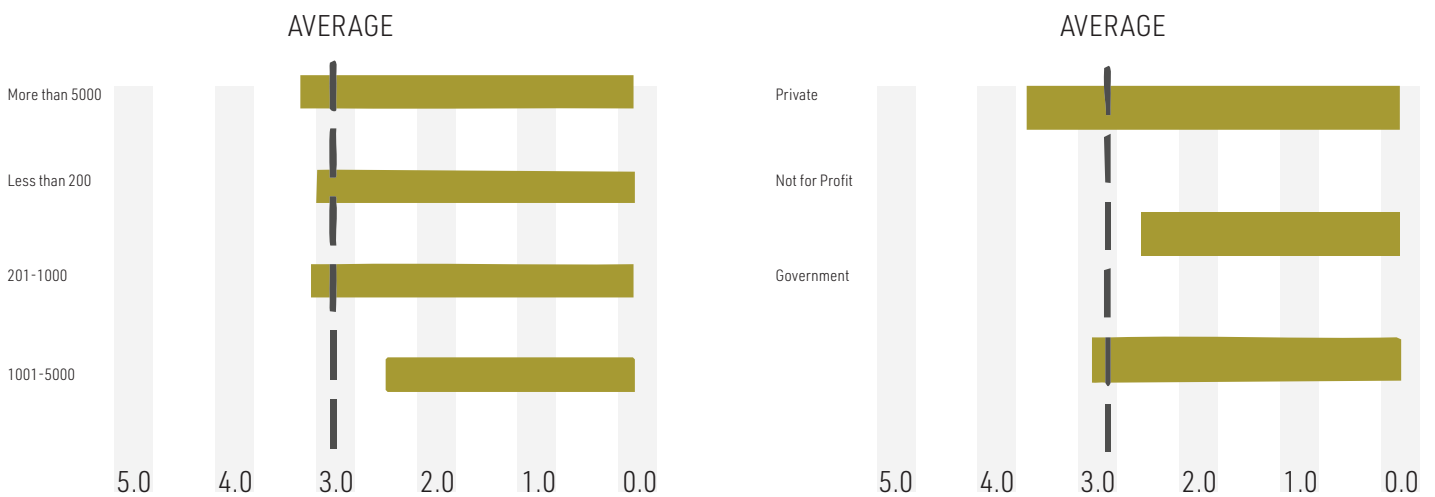
Non Government ■ Non private ■ Yes private ■ No non-profit ■ Yes Government ■



Do you think innovation is/should be one of your organization's strategic priorities?

YES ■ NO ■ Not Sure ■

A noteworthy 45% of respondents are actively participating in innovation programs and 66% are from government entities, indicating a substantial engagement in innovative activities across various sectors. However, the 54% not involved suggests there is still a considerable portion of organizations that have not yet embraced innovation initiatives. The majority of respondents (59%) believe their organizations possess the required resources and skills to support innovation, which highlights a positive outlook on the potential for innovative development. However, 23% of the participants disagree and 18% are uncertain, which underscores a need for more strategic alignment and confidence-building within organizations. The primary obstacle to innovation, identified as organizational culture (51%), highlights a critical barrier that requires attention. This suggests that many organizations may need to undergo significant cultural change and transformation to cultivate an environment conducive to creativity and innovation. Additional challenges include financial constraints (14%), lack of leadership support (12%), insufficient skills (12%), and limited time availability (11%), all of which are significant but secondary to organizational cultural support for innovation.



Furthermore, both leaders and employees rate their culture of innovation with an average score of 56%. Surprisingly, based on the size of the organization, the average rate of the current culture of innovation is 60% and there is no significant difference between the segments of the organizations. This suggests that while there are some positive aspects, there are also significant areas for improvement in their current organizational culture. On the brighter side, around 95% consider that innovation is and should be one of the organization's strategic priorities. This shows the awareness and appreciation of the importance of innovation in organizations regardless of its size and type.



**The survey analyzed three dimensions of innovation culture: mindset, behavior and structures.**

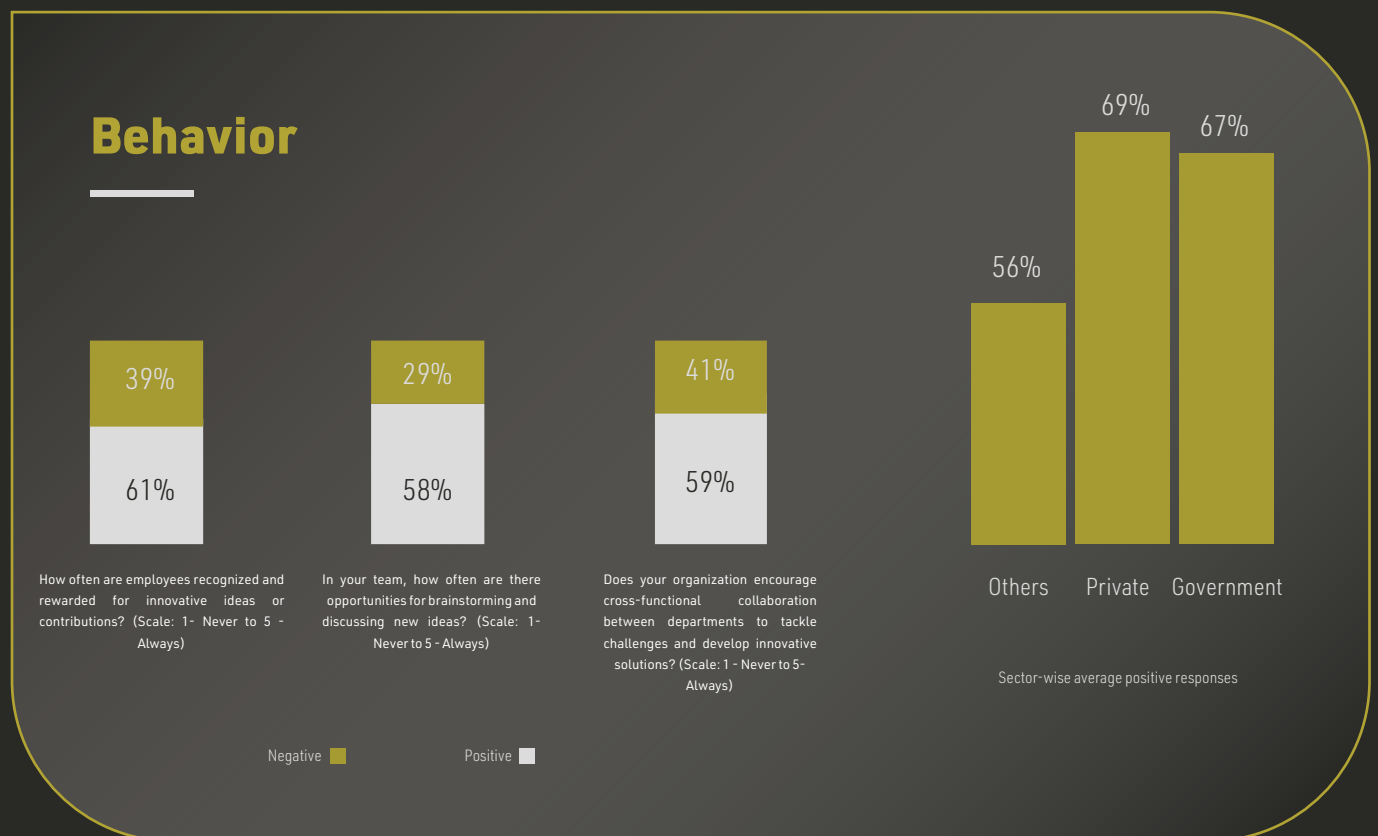
The mindset section delves into risk-taking, openness to new ideas and learning from failures. Most respondents have a positive outlook on the mindset in their respective organizations. Additionally, 74% have a positive response regarding their organization having an open outlook on new ideas from employees of all levels. Conversely, 42% of respondents do not consider failure to be a learning opportunity, which is an area for improvement. Furthermore, 60% are comfortable taking calculated risks in trying new things.

In comparison with the government sector, the private sector believes that their organizations have a more positive mindset (80%). There are more than 80% of people who are comfortable taking calculated risks, who believe failure provides a learning opportunity, and who believe that their leaders listen to and consider new ideas. More than 64% of respondents believe that their organization has the right mindset for innovation, which serves as a good starting point for developing an innovation culture.



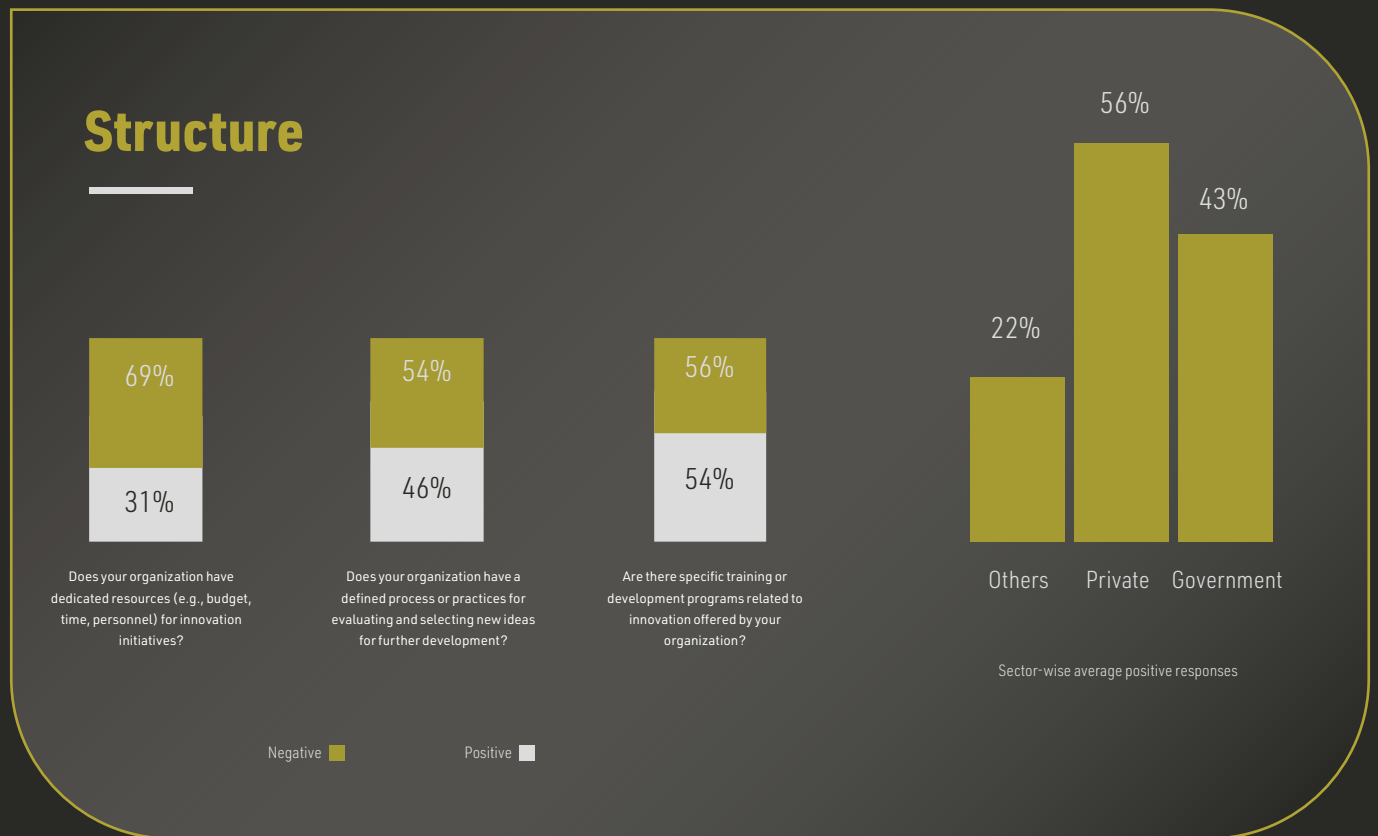
Organizational Behavior is examined through recognition, brainstorming and cross-collaboration within the organization. About 61% of respondents are confident that their employees are recognized for their innovative ideas. Both private and government organizations report that 71% of their employees brainstorm and discuss new ideas. Furthermore, the majority of respondents (59%) believe that cross-department collaboration exists within their respective organizations, mainly between government and private sectors, and less between other sectors.

Additionally, both private and government sectors have a tie on the sector-wise average positive responses of 67% and 69% respectively. In ideation and cross-collaboration behaviors, the government and private sectors have a similar stance on an average of 72%. However, only 54% of the government sector respondents have a positive outlook compared to 63% of the private sector. This means that new ideas are recognized and rewarded more in the private sector compared to the government sector. On the whole, both government and private sectors have a similar perception (about 68% positive responses) of the behaviors of their respective organizations.



The last leg of the Innovation Flywheel is the structure dimension, which is analyzed through resource support for innovation, idea evaluation processes and capacity building programs. Broadly, the positive responses for structure are much less than for mindset and behavior dimensions. Most of the organizations (69%) do not have dedicated resources for innovation initiatives. 54% agreed that their organization doesn't have a defined process for selecting and evaluating new ideas. This leads to discouragement among the active and participating employees. Similarly, 56% of responses indicated that there are not enough specific training and development programs related to innovation in organizations.

Furthermore, sector-wise, the private sector seems to have a better structure based on resources, ideation process and capacity-building programs than the government sector. The lowest positive response of 50% among the private sector is regarding the lack of dedicated resources for innovation initiatives. This indicates that some organizations practice setting aside resources for innovation initiatives. On the other hand, 60% of respondents in government organizations perceive that they do not have capacity-building programs and training workshops related to innovation initiatives.



According to the responses, although there is a positive attitude towards innovation and satisfactory organizational behavior, structural support remains a significant area that needs to be addressed. Organizations, particularly those in the public sector, should allocate dedicated resources, establish clear evaluation processes, and enhance capacity-building programs. To translate positive mindsets and behaviors into tangible innovative results, it is crucial to address these structural gaps. A culture of innovation can be better supported and sustained by strengthening these areas, thereby driving growth and adaptability in an environment that is constantly evolving.



## Tools and Techniques to measure Organizational culture

Often articulating a desired culture does not make it a reality. Culture can be fully reflected in the everyday employee experience only when the target culture is aligned with business realities. Most organizations have now considered culture as the key factor for gaining a competitive advantage and improving organizational performance. Therefore, it is essential to measure and assess the current organizational culture to analyze the best course of action to reach the preferred culture. The first thought most leaders might have is whether their current organizational culture has the innovation potential. In the preliminary stage, organizations can observe whether current leadership models innovative behaviors, mindsets, and structures that enable idea generation and experimentation, psychological safety for employees to take calculated risks, and identify failures as learning opportunities. Additionally, an innovative culture encourages collaboration across departments and aligns innovative efforts with organizational strategic objectives.

Organizational culture assessment comes with finding the right assessment tool. Organizational culture is a culmination of different visible and invisible aspects that may be difficult to measure in detail. Since each organization has its own distinct culture with different weighted attributes, measuring culture based on a common tool might seem unreliable. The most common culture assessment tools are surveys, questionnaires, interviews, or observational techniques to gather data that constitute culture within the workplace. The primary objective of these tools is to assess the alignment of organizational goals with the existing culture, identify strengths and weaknesses, uncover cultural barriers, measure progress or track changes, and strategize culture development and improvement.

## There are a couple of questions to be answered before measuring the current organizational culture.

**What are your organization's core values?**

**What decision-making process do you expect in the future?**

**What employee behavior do you wish to encourage in the future?**

Answering these questions will assist in defining your ideal, preferred culture or innovative culture. Once your ideal or preferred organizational culture is defined and pictured, the next step is to assess or measure the existing culture a have a detailed look at every aspect that is unique to your organization. The best source for organizational assessment is your existing employees.

### **The Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument (OCAI)**

is a tool developed by Kim Cameron and Robert Quinn to understand and assess an organization's current and desired culture. The tool is based on four main types of culture, namely; clan, Adhocracy, Market and Hierarchy. The tool leverages a survey method and scoring based on six dimensions of the organization's culture. 100 points are divided among four statements describing the four types of culture for each aspect from the participant's responses. Two rounds of scoring yields are conducted for the current and preferred cultures, one following the other. The gap between the profiles of the two scoring yields would be the desired direction of change. This tool is a validated research method that has been used in various organizations of all sizes and industries, including profit and non-profit. The OCAI tool may be used in conjunction with other methods, such as interviews, focus groups, and workshops, to incorporate an all-invisible aspect that would not otherwise be captured.





Although there are other tools to measure organizational culture such as the Denson Organizational Culture Survey (DOCS), a 15-minute survey consisting of 48 standardized items that describe different aspects of an organization's culture, and the Barrett Values Center assessment that focuses on values and vision within the organization, the OCAI assessment is considered one of the easiest and most accurate, especially if it is combined with other qualitative tools such as interviews and focus groups.

Despite the accuracy of the OCAI survey, it serves as a useful starting point, where conducting a series of interviews and focus groups can be highly beneficial. Using focus groups or interviews provides qualitative insights into employees' experiences and cultural issues, which can reveal deeper, context-rich information that quantitative surveys may miss. If the survey identifies an area for improvement within the organization, focus groups become a valuable tool for engaging a wide range of organizational groups to better understand and contextualize the underlying issue.

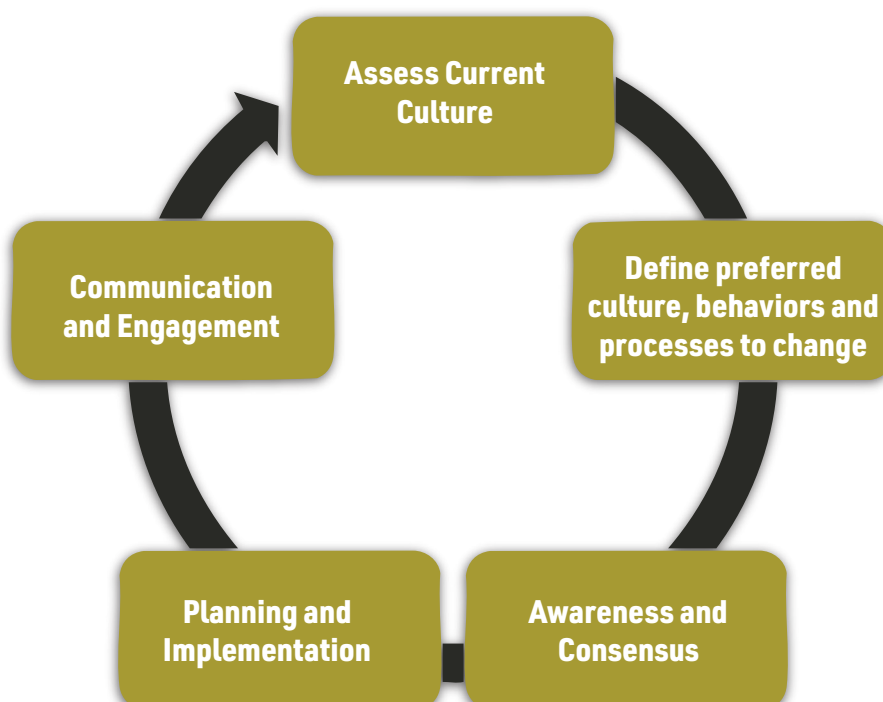
The process begins by involving the relevant departments to keep the discussion focused, followed by inviting a diverse group of employees from various departments to gain multifaceted perspectives. It is important to organize several small focus groups to ensure everyone has a chance to participate. The final step involves practicing empathetic listening to encourage openness, understanding, and collaboration, and to make employees feel valued and appreciated.



# The way forward: Roadmap to organization culture change

As mentioned in the previous sections, the culture of most organizations is invisible which makes it difficult to identify, describe and measure it. Each organizational culture profile reflects attributes such as management style, strategic plans, climate, reward system, means of bonding, leadership, and basic values of the organization. Therefore, it is imperative to understand various elements of organizational culture to enable a seamless transition to the preferred culture.

This section of the paper describes a culture change roadmap that aligns with the organization's business objectives, priorities, guiding actions, and decisions to transform the values, beliefs, and behaviors of the organization. Transforming an organization's culture is a challenging but rewarding journey that requires a clear roadmap, commitment from leadership, and continuous effort.



## Assess the Current Culture:

The organization should initially identify the current culture. This involves leaders and key individuals, who have a perspective on the overall corporate culture to understand and measure the current state and the factors, specifically the innovation aspect, that impact it using the tools mentioned in the previous section. Employee responses should be representative enough to ensure accuracy. Culture sub-profiles of sectors, departments and groups such as gender, age and job positions can also be identified to more accurately determine the extent of change required in each of these sectors and groups.

## Define Preferred Culture:

Defining the desired culture, values and behaviors that foster innovation, which the organization wants to achieve. This stage involves setting clear goals and objectives for the culture change by providing a broad idea identifying what needs to change in an organization's culture and developing a strategy to initiate change in key elements. After the first step of communicating and measuring the current organization culture, start discussing the preferred culture so that the two are not reflections of each other. Every element of the preferred culture should be based on a discussion about informed projections, innovation practices, and verifiable information.

## Awareness and Consensus:

Ensuring consensus among employees should not be a one-step process that is short-circuited rather it should be incorporated at all the stages of the culture change process, especially in an innovative organization. This step involves engaging employees in the implementation of the initiatives. Their acceptance is crucial for ensuring a successful change effort. In each of the above steps, employees and leaders have been in consensus, which makes the next steps more fruitful because it builds understanding and open lines of communication..

## Planning and Implementation:

In this stage, organizational culture change strategy and process are defined, including the actions, allocating resources and establishing timelines specifically on innovation culture initiatives. This involves asking questions such as what should be started, what should be stopped, and what must be done for the culture change process to begin and incorporate innovation. This requires the entire team to identify behaviors, mindsets and processes that will be undertaken as a part of the culture change. Additionally, culture shift plan should be customized depending on the fit with the organization's strategy and performance gap needed to be bridged.

## Communication and Engagement:

Every step of the organizational culture change roadmap has relied heavily on communication. To maintain momentum and commitment to the new and preferred innovative culture, it is necessary to provide regular updates and timely feedback, prepare for obstacles, provide mutual support, and recognize progress. Effective communications, both among small and big groups, ensure trust and alignment with the organizational change process.

These steps provide a broad guideline for a successful organizational culture change that fosters innovation and ensures that the organization is well-prepared for the transformation. It also highlights if the stakeholders are aligned and committed to their new and innovative organizational culture.

## Conclusion

Culture is one of the most crucial and underrated aspects of an organization. It creates a space to nurture and grow its employees or make their thoughts stagnant. A culture of innovation uplifts the conventional concept of culture and enables the creation of a space for being creative and encouraging the employees to approach circumstances differently without the fear of failing, which eventually adds value to an organization. Even if most organizations have the mindset and practice few innovative behaviors, they lack the formal support and structure that can foster innovation at a faster rate. Therefore, leaders and management should have a solid, innovative mindset to embed innovation into the organization's structures and behaviors.

Measuring the current culture and designing a roadmap to achieve any organization's culture of innovation are the first signs of transformation. There are many types of tools and approaches, such as OCAI that organizations can leverage to achieve their preferred culture of innovation. Nurturing a culture of innovation is a conscious, deliberate and sustained effort that has the potential to reap long-term benefits and create an innovative ecosystem across various organizations.

## About Averroes

Averroes Advisory is an international consultancy firm offering services across various sectors, focusing on strategic excellence, organizational design and innovation, transformation, and business development. Our expertise also extends to financial consulting, beneficiary experience studies, and research. We pride ourselves on executing projects with the highest standards of global best practices.

Our team is passionate, experienced, and diverse, with regional and international expertise that equips us to tackle the toughest challenges for our clients. We tailor innovative and practical solutions that align perfectly with their unique environments and needs. Our flexible and customized approach ensures that every solution is as unique as our clients, maximizing the value we deliver

At Averroes Advisory, we aim to leave a lasting impact through knowledge sharing, capacity building, and sustainable improvements within our clients' organizations. We believe in empowering our clients to achieve remarkable, enduring results.

Let me know if there are any additional sections you'd like translated or refined!

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