

# The Value of Cultural Alignment

## Four Real-World Experiences

An Aligned Culture Breaks  
Down Organizational Silos

Culture Shift Improves  
Customer Experience and  
Staff Satisfaction

Turnover's No Match for  
an Aligned Culture

Reframing and Aligning  
Around Accountability Boosts  
Engagement and Growth



Until you put the power of culture behind your efforts, you'll struggle to fully achieve desired outcomes. This ebook shares the stories of people who once were clients of Culture Partners and witnessed firsthand how the right workplace culture can amplify results.

Those results were impressive, including attaining:

**3X the target**  
for a key result in 18 months

**A 10% increase**  
in employee satisfaction in six months

**A 14-point improvement**  
in YoY engagement, when a 5-point increase  
would have been considered phenomenal

And they're a major reason why these past clients joined Culture Partners, where today they're helping other organizations make similar gains.





**John Henry Scott III**  
Former client/Culture Partners  
Keynoter & Consultant

# An Aligned Culture Breaks Down Organizational Silos

Before John Henry Scott became a keynoter and consultant at Culture Partners, he worked in the technology industry. There he experienced many of the challenges others face when working in large, siloed organizations: not just a lack of communication and miscommunication, but often different workstreams and beliefs about how things should get done.

*“Those differences in beliefs came to light when we were rolling out new technology for a client and getting stuck in the pilot phase,” explains John Henry. “Our leadership realized that if we wanted to meet our targeted go-live date, something would have to change.”*

## Alignment Gets Underway

With Culture Partners, the executive and senior leadership teams participated in a cultural alignment session. Together they identified a core set of cultural beliefs that would guide the organization going forward, as well as key results and how they would track performance over time.

**Communication problems and different cultural beliefs throughout the company impeded solution delivery. With Culture Partners, the organization aligned on:**

- A core set of cultural beliefs
- Key results
- Specific metrics to track performance

In addition, Culture Partners helped them understand the value of seeking feedback. In some cases, feedback wasn't happening at all, so there was frequently a "wait and see" attitude to problem resolution. To remedy this, the team embraced a new feedback mechanism designed to foster positive accountability and accelerate results.

*"These efforts helped our teams work better cross-functionally," says John Henry. "And when people got engaged in not just providing, but seeking, feedback, it was a real game-changer."*

But equally influential in paving the way to better results was the CEO's shift in mindset and commitment. "Going through this whole process created space for talking about culture when discussing strategy," says John Henry. "Culture is leader-led, and never in my career had I seen a CEO consistently emphasize core elements, like cultural beliefs and their connection to key results."

## Results Hit Unexpected Highs

Following the cultural alignment workshop with the leadership team, Culture Partners trained some 40 Culture Champions who would roll out culture workshops to nearly 2500 employees located at different sites throughout the U.S. Part of the culture transformation from the outset, John Henry became certified by Culture Partners as a Culture Lead so he could oversee the rollout to his organization's locations, which was completed within two years of the first workshop.

So, how did it all work out? According to John Henry, cultural alignment had an impact from Day 1, starting with a CEO who was all in.

### **Just as impressive, he saw people:**

- Seek and share feedback more regularly
- Recognize those who were consistently exhibiting these cultural beliefs
- Tell stories about how employees were applying their new cultural beliefs to achieve key results

**Those efforts added up in hard numbers, as well, with the organization achieving:**

**3X**  
its target for a key  
result in 18 months

A nearly **8%**  
YoY increase in  
employee retention

Leading and sustaining culture change became John Henry's full-time job after the rollout, one he felt well equipped to handle thanks to his training and certification in Culture Partners tools and methodologies. And seeing what was possible for organizations to achieve was a key reason why he eventually made the move to work for Culture Partners.



**Katy Amaya**  
Former Client/Culture Partners  
Senior Culture Strategist

## Culture Shift Improves Customer Experience and Staff Satisfaction

What are the main priorities of your organization? What specific results are you trying to achieve, and how effectively have you communicated them? When answers to these questions remain unclear to most employees, progress stalls and the customer experience suffers.

The restaurant industry is no exception. Now a senior culture strategist at Culture Partners, Katy Amaya says that inconsistencies and undesirable impacts arising from a situation like this are what led her previous organization to seek a better approach.

*“While some of our operations were thriving, other were losing business, revenue, and staff,” explains Katy. “And this misalignment prevented us from reaching company goals overall.”*

While leadership at some facilities tried to solve the problem on their own, ongoing burnout and turnover sometimes led to a short-cut mentality in an attempt to keep up with the fast pace of business. "There was an ideal way to do things, but it wasn't always followed," says Katy. Meanwhile, business results hung in the balance.

## Reassessing Existing Workplace Culture

When the organization engaged Culture Partners, they began with two important steps: clarifying desired results and reassessing which systems and processes were or weren't working. According to Katy, coaching people on the Results Pyramid® model was a pivotal step in the culture transformation effort.

*"The use of the Results Pyramid kept managers focused on what customers would think or say after experiencing their leadership and teams," says Katy. "So, if results were out of sync, managers understood what to look for and how to respond to improve the experience."*

### **To embed desired changes into their culture, the organization also:**

- Established a common language to foster behaviors leading to improved results, including leveraging Focused Storytelling®. Using this tool, all employees were able to be more strategic about the stories they told and what it meant to live the organization's cultural beliefs based on their specific job functions.
- Applied Focused Recognition®, which manifested as a "connection board" used during every shift by both customer-facing and indirect team members. Through this activity, team members acknowledged best practices for serving customers at every touchpoint, starting fresh with updates on their key results each week.
- Encouraged employees to regularly share and request Focused Feedback® to promote open communication at all levels while accelerating the adoption of behaviors aligned with cultural beliefs.

Some 65,000 hourly team members learned and embraced these skills over a three-year period. "As a culture transformation leader, I promoted and sustained successful change management by keeping these tools front and center at every meeting," explains Katy.

## Impressive Near-Term Results

While fully embedding this culture change was a multi-year process, Katy says the organization saw major improvements within six months. This included:

- A dramatic decrease in staff turnover within 90 days
- A 10% increase in employee satisfaction
- A noticeable jump in business and revenue

*"The training we received focused our efforts on what we could control, so we didn't get stuck in a box," say Katy. "That approach plus the tools at our disposal helped us come up with more collaborative and creative solutions for saving both jobs and the brand during the pandemic."*

Katy credits leadership with showing up the right way. For example, in front of employees, the COO committed to hold herself accountable to this approach. And by modeling the approach to thousands of people leaders—those with boots on the ground—she encouraged everyone to perform in a way that collectively shifted results.

*"Going through this transformation process has changed how I lead every single day."*

Katy Amaya

Former Client/Culture Partners Senior Culture Strategist





**Betsy Thomas**  
Former Client/Culture Partners  
Senior Consultant

## Turnover's No Match for an Aligned Culture

With a 20-year background in HR and other management positions, Betsy Thomas, senior consultant at Culture Partners, knows what it's like to face daily challenges in workplace culture. And perhaps none of these concerns was as pronounced as during the pandemic.

*"I worked in an organization staffing 24/7 operations where turnover issues were common," explains Betsy. "Worries about safety and exposure to the virus made retaining and replacing employees even more difficult."*

**According to Betsy, some roles saw vacancy rates reach 80%. In this situation, negative impacts built up quickly:**

- Every employee—from front-line workers to supervisors—experienced higher levels of stress.
- With people simply trying to cope, undesirable behaviors—like being late—became more acceptable.
- A skeleton staff left remaining employees taking on more responsibilities, so both communication and practices to keep people in sync with what was happening between shifts were inconsistent.

Efforts to attract more employees through increased recruiting events and in-house recruiting staff failed to bring in the number of employees needed. And attempts to develop current staff so they could move up to address gaps in higher-level positions also fell short.

## Tackling Turnover By Improving Workplace Culture

With everyone working so hard to solve the problem, why wasn't it enough? According to Betsy, "Everyone wasn't aligned in the same direction to get results, and there were trust issues among front-line, second-level, and third-level staffers because they just didn't know what was going on."

Tasked with addressing the situation, the organization's chief of staff reached out to an existing partner, who recommended they contact Culture Partners. The leadership team began its culture journey by engaging in a Culture Equation® workshop to align its purpose, strategy, and culture.

After that exercise, Betsy says even naysayers changed their outlook about what was possible to achieve through a better aligned culture. An Accountability Workshop for Leaders followed, providing a new, more positive approach to changing behaviors and encouraging ownership of problems.

With the highest-level leaders now equipped with culture management and accountability tools, the organization undertook a plan to roll out similar training to every employee at each of its 50+ facilities.

## Seeing Signs of Improvement

It didn't take long before management and employees began to see a shift in workplace culture. "Soon after training, supervisors began focused storytelling in weekly meetings to relay how actions employees were taking aligned with new cultural beliefs established as part of the organization's unique Culture Equation," says Betsy. "They also made sure that core methodologies related to accountability training, like the Steps to Accountability®, were visible everywhere—even painting them on walls in places."

Reinforcement like this was essential to making initial and ongoing progress. But Betsy says that demonstrating commitment to change was even more important. "The fact that employees at every facility saw their management go through the training sessions really made a difference. Their leaders modeled the new desired behaviors and were open to feedback, themselves."

**By regularly using tools like Focused Storytelling®, leaders exhibited a commitment to change—contributing to greater employee engagement, satisfaction, and retention.**

## Sustaining Success

Steps like these are what have contributed to greater employee engagement and satisfaction, which has begun to reduce turnover, and in turn, make the organization more attractive to potential new hires.

"Previous ways we had tried to introduce change weren't as hands-on. Plus, they never got to the root of what was needed to change the employee experience for the better," says Betsy. She credits this approach, combined with Culture Partner tools and methodologies, for successful change management.



**Tracy Dodd**  
Former Client/Culture Partners  
Senior Culture Strategist

# Reframing and Aligning Around Accountability Boosts Engagement and Growth

From turf wars that led to a lack of alignment to finger-pointing when things went wrong, former client Tracy Dodd is well aware of what happens when organizations are not leading culture with intention.

*“One organization [where I worked] had a command-and-control style of management,” says Tracy. “In this environment, there was a lot of tail covering and very little psychological safety.”*

While involving only a few employees, the situation had come to a head when the company was cited for contracting improprieties. The independent examiner assigned to help the organization remediate findings noted that “tone at the top” was a major contributing factor.

Shortly afterwards, the company began work to improve accountability as the first step in a multi-year culture journey. “One of my reports had learned about and attended a free Accountability Workshop from Partners in Leadership (now Culture Partners),” explains Tracy. “When she shared the content with me, I knew this was exactly what we needed.”

## A Case for Culture Change

Most closely associated with the citation, the Finance and Operations team became the starting point for the transformation effort. With poor morale in the department, top talent leaving, and difficulty attracting new hires, it was important to get culture right. At the same time, the company needed to show it was improving internal processes and workplace culture to restore confidence among both existing and prospective customers.

*“A goal in improving accountability was to help shift mindsets so that people would be willing to ask questions and take ownership, instead of being afraid to do anything they weren't told to do,” says Tracy.*

Meanwhile, the urgency to make this shift was compounded by the need to drive more growth organically, as the company was moving away from a strategy of growth by acquisition.

## Accountability Leads the Way

Thanks to Tracy's experience in change management, she saw the value of the accountability-related frameworks and tools right away. “Culture Partners grounded us in the fundamentals and provided us with guidance and advice in the first year of our culture journey. Afterwards, we were able to continue embedding related changes in different processes, including every touchpoint from hire to retire.”

## Greater Accountability Drives Better Results

While earlier consultants had recommended specific process-related changes to improve operations, dealing with the root cause of problems in workplace culture is when the company began to see things shift significantly.

“By taking this approach, we were able to successfully shift behavior and create the types of employee experiences that not only encouraged speaking up, but recognized and rewarded it,” confirms Tracy.

### **At the same time, the company saw other benefits:**

- A 14-point improvement in YoY engagement, unheard of when experiencing only a 5-point improvement was considered high at the time
- A corresponding drop in unwanted attrition
- Increased customer renewals in Y2, with increased sales and organic growth in Y3.

“Both the approach to accountability and the frameworks align with how the brain works and what motivates people. This helped our employees understand why they needed to do things differently,” says Tracy.

*“If you want to have motivated and passionate workers, create conditions where they can thrive. The way to do that is through culture.”*

Tracy Dodd

Former Client/Culture Partners Senior Culture Strategist

# About Culture Partners

Using human industrial-organizational psychological methods, Culture Partners helps organizations achieve record-breaking results by connecting experiences, beliefs, and actions to those results through culture. Our culture management frameworks and tools help thousands of top organizations realize their potential by owning their growth.

**CULTURE  
PARTNERS**

Create a *Culture* That Means *Business*