

## Transcript - Organisational culture matters a lot

People who come and join an organisation, usually there is some reason why they want to be there. Sometimes it's just a job, but often it is about connecting to the purpose of the organisation or the values of the organisation.

The big why - why does this organisation matter, why does it do what it does. Those things can be attractive. But the way that things get done, which is really what the organisational culture really is. How do things happen here? That can matter even more than the Why.

Culture is lived out by people in an organisation. It's the way that people experience the organisation, and it's the way that staff experience the organisation as well. I think you can talk about and write things down in an organisation, about what the culture is expected to be. But that's not necessarily what people experience. So what's written down can pale in comparison to what people actually experience in the workplace. The informal culture can be more important and more influential than the formal culture, or the formal expectations that might be written in a manual.

New staff learn a lot more about the organisation from what other people, what other staff tell them, and what they see other staff doing in their first few weeks in the workplace. The formal organisational orientation or induction process may not be as strong as the informal process that people experience and observe. Sometimes the organisational orientation process is a little bit too late in the process - if it's a few weeks after the person has started. It's actually working in a way which is actually counter to what they've actually experienced in the first few weeks.

I had a really interesting experience myself quite a long time ago. A person who joined the organisation I was working with at the time she told me a story after she'd started. What she said was that she'd come to drop off her job application and she wasn't sure where there is really the right job for her but she told me her experience as she walked through the car park up to the office really made her think that this was the place she wanted to be. There was a gardener working in the grounds and she asked him the way to the office and he was really helpful, he was respectful, they ended up having a bit of a chat and apparently they spoke for 4 or 5 minutes. And she said that the way that he treated her and the way that she experienced him and what he did and what he said was just so helpful for her because she said look if a person who is working in the gardens in this place can treat me in this way then this is the type of place I want to work because obviously he is being treated well and he feels good about his work.

And that reflects on a process which is called the "parallel process". And part of that is that one of the ways that the organisation can influence culture is by knowing that the way that people are treated often influences the way that they treat people. So if senior people in the organisation are respectful then it's more likely that other people in the organisation will be respectful as well. If senior people in the organisation are not respectful then it is

more likely that that will flow through the organisation. And more importantly that that will flow through to the customers or clients of the organisation.

I think that process is so important in terms of working out what can senior managers, and managers, do in terms of their work and how can they influence organisational culture. It's an opportunity to improve client outcomes, so even people at the highest levels, even the board of an organisation, can influence the way that clients experience the organisation, by being mindful of what they do and the systems that they set up and the processes that they set up, and the relationships that they have with people. Because those things will flow through that's the way that the parallel process works. So if all staff in the organisation are aware of how they relate to other people wherever they are in the organisation then there can be a way of influencing culture and ultimately that's why organizational culture matters.

So from the top-down or bottom-up it doesn't really matter but in the way that we treat people that will actually flow through to other people that are connected to the organisation. So organisational culture matters. We can all do something about it. But particularly if you're in a leadership position, know that the way that you relate to people will be reflected in the way that other people treat people in the organisation and also the way that they relate to and work with clients and customers of the organisation.