



Maintain a Strong Cultural Foundation

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Cultural Fragility

Each business has a unique culture and it can be fragile. Changes within and outside your organization can threaten the culture of your company. A merger or acquisition may alter the existing cultural landscape. A respected leader may go astray, upsetting the company's cultural trust. **It is important, therefore, to be vigilant about building habits that maintain and protect your company's cultural foundation.**

Key Cultural Building blocks

Here are three key ways to build a strong cultural foundation for your business.

1. **A humble heart – A truly self-assured leader doesn't need a pat on the back. He needs to be humble, but this is not an innate characteristic.** It is something that needs to be developed over a lifetime of practice. I live in Denver where a local sports superstar leads with a humble heart. For the first time in the history of the Denver Nuggets, the basketball team won a

national championship this year. Nikola Jokic is the Nugget's superstar yet, he consistently reports his success is attributable to specific plays made by other team members. In his sincere and humble way, Jokic demonstrates that the Nuggets are a team not a group led by one superstar.

2. **Personal accountability** – In Christopher Klein's piece, "[*Winston Churchill's World War Disaster*](#)," he illustrates the importance of personal accountability. "The price of greatness," said Winston Churchill, "is responsibility." Klein relates that in 1915 under Churchill's leadership, the Allied World War I forces suffered a major defeat at the Dardanelles (the Strait of Gallipoli). Churchill took full responsibility for this failure, but it haunted him politically for decades. Churchill became prime minister in 1940 with Great Britain once again embroiled in war. Upon taking office, he wrote, "All my past life had been a preparation for this hour and for this



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trial.” That included his defeat at Dardenelles, which helped him become a stronger leader.

Authentic leaders must assume responsibility for their decisions, including their failures.

A leader does not inspire confidence if he demands that others take the fall when his idea fails. In the event of a merger or acquisition, a good leader doesn't say (as I have heard many times), “Nothing is going to change.” A true leader empowers change by taking personal responsibility for necessary actions, even when there is the possibility that these will be unpopular. You lead by example and that requires personal accountability.

3. **Aim for virtue** – The ancient Romans used the Latin word [virtus](#) to refer to all the “excellent qualities of men, including physical strength, valorous conduct, and moral rectitude” (wikipedia). These are virtues to aim for when building your business' culture. **Pay attention**

to the moral positioning of your company's leaders. Does it make them, and those around them, more courageous? A leader needs to be confident and resilient in the face of stress. She needs to be able to meet unexpected challenges and adjust quickly to change. People who aim high in the virtue department model their integrity for others in the workplace. This enables a company to build and maintain a strong cultural presence.

Measure Up

People want to join a company with a clear mission that aligns with their idea of a strong cultural institution. They want to be led by people who are humble, accountable, and demonstrate strength of character. I suggest that you make a practice of regularly measuring (using a scale of 1 to 10, 10 being excellent) your progress with these 3 key cultural motivators. Your business will profit from building a solid cultural foundation.

5 KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Be vigilant about building habits that maintain your company's cultural foundation.
2. A truly self-assured leader needs to be humble.
3. Authentic leaders assume responsibility for their actions, including their failures.
4. Pay attention to the moral positioning of your company's leaders.
5. People will join a company with a clear mission and a strong cultural foundation.