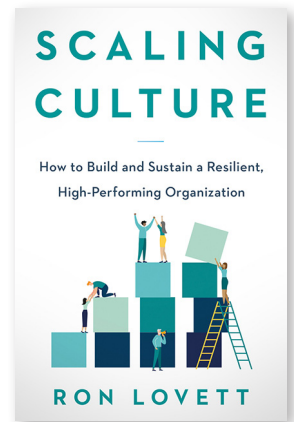


Scaling Culture

How to Build and Sustain a Resilient,
High-Performing Organization

by **Ron Lovett**



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THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

Culture is present in every company – even if you didn’t intend for one to be. This culture is at the very core of your organization; you can’t leave it up to chance – you must scale it and create a plan with actionable steps that create alignment and generate a results-driven team of employees and stakeholders.

In his book, *Scaling Culture: How to Build and Sustain a Resilient, High-Performing Organization*, Ron Lovett provides insight into the key components necessary to create an organization that is successful and lasts. Founders and other members of executive leadership are given the strategies and framework needed to build an organization that thrives in the future. It is apparent to most that culture is valuable in any organization, but it often seems more like a moving target as opposed to the drive that creates the fundamentals of any great organization. This book is the perfect guide for anyone looking to use their company culture to their advantage instead of sweeping it under the rug, creating potential dismay.

IN THIS SUMMARY, YOU WILL LEARN:

- How your company’s culture is indicative of your organization’s future.
- How to formulate the core values necessary to address your organization’s purpose.
- The strategies necessary to build warm, authentic relationships that nurture success.
- The ways to change management and innovation with specific processes to make them work.

Introduction

Your company's cumulative personality can be defined by your corporate culture, which is also the foundation (ground zero) of acceptable behaviors to drive business results. Many leaders don't know how to embrace culture in a way that works in their favor; instead, they leave it to chance, creating an unstable, volatile, and unpredictable environment.

For any organization looking to scale the company, culture must also be scaled. Culture in an organization is critical in creating a resilient and high-performing organization. For this to occur, though, there must be passionate stakeholders in the mix. These are the stakeholders that not only bring their A-game to the table but they are also the cheerleaders who express their loyalty to the organization with every chance they are given.

What Is Corporate Culture And Why Is It Important?

In the beginning, I didn't think much about corporate culture – only considered it a distraction from real business. Having several remote offices, I centered my focus primarily on the people directly in front of me, policing their actions and not paying any mind to the other offices' behaviors or expectations. It wasn't until I visited these remote offices that I realized ignoring the corporate culture of all the offices across the board was a mistake. Without a clear definition, behavioral guidelines, and expectations, I had allowed every location to have a different culture – which was not conducive to the organization's success.

As previously stated, every organization has a culture, whether planned or not, and this culture is either a product of design or default. Core values are what guide the team's behaviors – they lay the foundation for how people should behave, and culture in a perfect world is how those values come to life. When you have a culture by default, they are often competing cultures within the organization. These can result in aggressive, risky environments and cause a lot of instability within the structure. On the other hand, culture by design creates more harmony and keeps everyone on the same page. That is what needs to happen if you want your business to grow, and everyone has to live with the organizational values for it to succeed – even when you are not watching.

Create Core Values

Before I was a believer in culture, my company was in a bad place; upon reflection, so was I. After reading *Nuts!* By Jackie and Kevin Freiberg, I learned how Herb Kelleher at Southwest Airlines created a culture that his whole staff was in alignment with. I was so intrigued by the story that I even approached a Southwest Airlines employee and asked how they liked their job – it rocked me when he said it was the best company on the planet to work for. This encounter boosted my spirits that maybe culture was not nonsense after all.

In order to get in line with what it takes for a cohesive culture, it requires core values to be implemented. These values are the words and clarifying language that describes behaviors and expectations for your team. Your core values are what drive your team's accountability and allow you to praise or coach them according to a very clear set of standards. One of the best exercises you can do with your employees is creating a company eulogy – what would someone say about your organization (especially ex-customers and former employees)? Use this to help shape and develop the core values you want to be instilled in your business and employees.

Core Value Activation: Strategies For Any Leader

If, at first, you don't succeed (I didn't), try again. The first time I tried to roll out the values in our company, it was a total disaster. Part of the initial rollout included a checklist of our core values to go over during the onboarding process – it lacked the “experience” necessary to make the culture a reality.

As a leader, you have to address everyone at once when you want to implement something new. Everyone needs to be on the same page, and they need to know that you are behind the words you are saying. If you are introducing your core values like you mean it, your employees are going to feel more empowered to do the same. Leaders have to take charge – talk is great, but the action has to be equally visible. Your team's most powerful motivation is when they see your own transformation and enforcement of the culture. Identify and deploy culture champions to be involved in the bigger picture and help identify the next leaders.

Culture-Based Screening And Onboarding

Core values are something that cannot be force-fed during the onboarding process. Culture is not something that can instantly be activated company-wide, not without a nurturing drive behind it. Just because someone is a great hire on paper doesn't mean that they will instantaneously fall in stride with the culture you have cultivated within your business.

Shifting to a culture-based screening of employees can help ensure that those you onboard are more in line with the company's current culture. Something to consider when promoting your job vacancies is The Employee Value Proposition. The Employee Value Proposition puts you in the shoes of the potential candidate with the question – “What's in it for me (the candidate)?” You can use this model to think about what might be more important for your candidate beyond the salary requirements. This is your opportunity to stand out to the best client and reflect on what your company offers to the potential clients you interview.

Consider the three levels of employees that create your environment:

- **A-Players** – Your passionate shareholders – those who see the company's purpose from 10,000 feet away and understand where your organization is headed and how their roles function inside of it.
- **B-Players** – These players understand the company's purpose, values, and goals and work toward them intelligently. These employees are resourceful enough to overcome obstacles in their role and bring creative thinking and innovation to the job. Not everyone was made to be an A-Player, but the B-Players should not be underestimated.
- **C-Players** – Those who fall into the C-Player category require direction on what to do and when to do it. That stays the same no matter how well aligned the company is, and ideally, you have to screen out these players or manage them out if they already exist – they do not function with autonomy.

Even though there is diversity, it doesn't equal inclusion. It is part of it, but if you only focus on that, it won't get you all the way there. You have to foster it by including safety and trust, building up listening skills, increasing vulnerability and empathy, and also creating a space with no judgment.

Building And Strengthening Relationships

Accomplishing anything with culture in your organization requires you to take the first step and build a relationship with your people. Much like your culture is the foundation of your company, your relationships with your employees are the core of accomplishing anything in your organization.

In *Unleashed*, Frances Frei outlines a beautiful process for building trust. She says that everyone has one of three areas where they struggle (wobble) on trust-building, including authenticity, logic, and empathy. If you take a look at yourself and your relationships with your team, where do they find you wobbly? There are some obstacles when approaching trust – interruption, speaking too quickly, humor and jokes, dismissing, rescuing, and asking the wrong questions. Remember – everything you do in dealing with another person will either bring you closer together or create distance between you. You can strengthen your team by using a format centered on intention, outcome, and experience.

Coaching

Coaches have an incredible impact on our lives. They believe in us, see the possibilities that we can't see, and encourage us to push our limits and go further than we would have on our own. They enable sustained change, and if someone is setting goals or resolutions that do not stick, then the coaching strategy is not working as intended.

It is important to remember:

- A coach is not a friend, consultant, therapist, counselor, mentor, trainer, or teacher
- A coach is not a manager
- A coach is not a guru

Operating As A Team

When a team is a top performer, it can be a life-changing experience. This only works when the team works together – they have to put the team's success ahead of their own desires to shine or dominate others. There is a unification within their purposes. The creation of peer forums creates a bond among team members. The benefits of these forums include relationship building, revealing gaps in team systems, raising issues quickly, creating trust and belonging, saving time, identifying your company's future

leaders, finding the internal experts, transferring information, and fostering inclusivity.

Organizational Alignment

Being aligned in your company's culture is a hard task to accomplish. As you evolve in your understanding of cultural alignment, you will realize that you have to make big changes. There is a need for clear and direct communication – transparency that requires strategic input from everyone involved.

There are three things that you must communicate with every person in your organization:

1. Your Core Values
2. Your Purpose
3. Your “BHAG” – big, hairy, audacious goal

Alignment happens on several different levels – ranging from individual to global levels. The goal is to create transparency on all the levels necessary to achieve the alignment you require in your culture.

Change Management

Although I love change, there is a pain in change management. There are always ways to change and improve things – keeping with the mindset “if it ain't broke, don't fix it” is only a path that will lead you nowhere. Change this adage to “even if it isn't broken, break it apart, and put it back together better than you found it” and tackle the entire idea.

As a leader, you need to decide when change needs to

happen. Once you decide, present why it needs to happen and begin working on it from the ground up. You can build change into your values and implement them throughout your whole organization. Use your A.B.C's – “always be changing.” Change will become a force that empowers your people to grow and be empowered.

Learning And Innovation

As leaders, many of us tend to push what works best for us onto others. Each person has different ways of learning, and for many of us, not using the right learning techniques for the individual can hinder everything. I am a visual learner – if something isn't visual, I'm toast. The same types of things happen with your employees – you have to be able to grow, change, and adapt to your organization's learning needs. As a leader, there is a time to invest in pushing your team to learn and think creatively. You should provide support for innovation and lead by example. Expect your team members to lead innovation because you can't scale it by yourself.

Conclusion

No matter how far you have come in creating the cohesive culture you want in your organization, it is important to remember not to stop because you are comfortable. Always look for ways to change things, improve them, and more. Your organization will thrive in this type of culture, especially if you want to implement strategies and techniques that build the warm, authentic relationships you need and the ability to coach the people in your life when you want to succeed. The bottom line – just don't stop.



Ron Lovett is an entrepreneur and globally recognized author, speaker, and corporate culture thought leader who is passionate about change. He transformed the physical security industry when he founded Source Security, a national firm that grew to more than 3,500 staff and enabled Ron to exit at a 24x multiple. His unorthodox leadership style is characterized by going back to the drawing board, disrupting the status quo, and acting swiftly on new information. He lives in Nova Scotia with his wife and their three children.

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