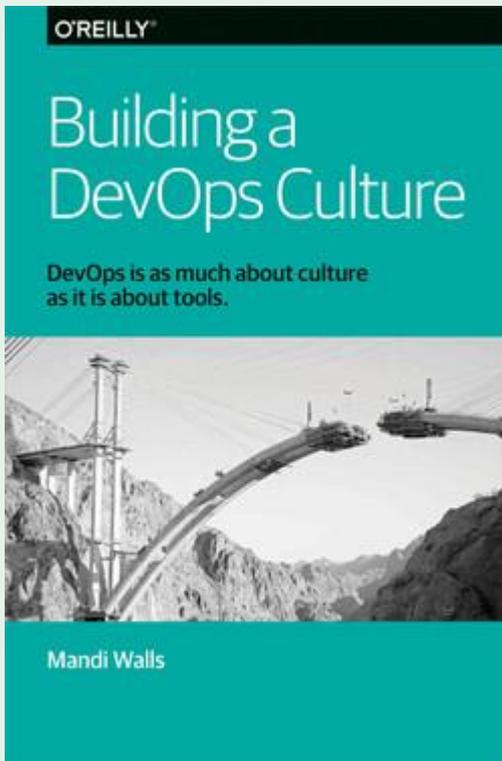


PagerDuty

Culture is Still a Challenge

Conf42 DevOps 2025





Mandi Walls

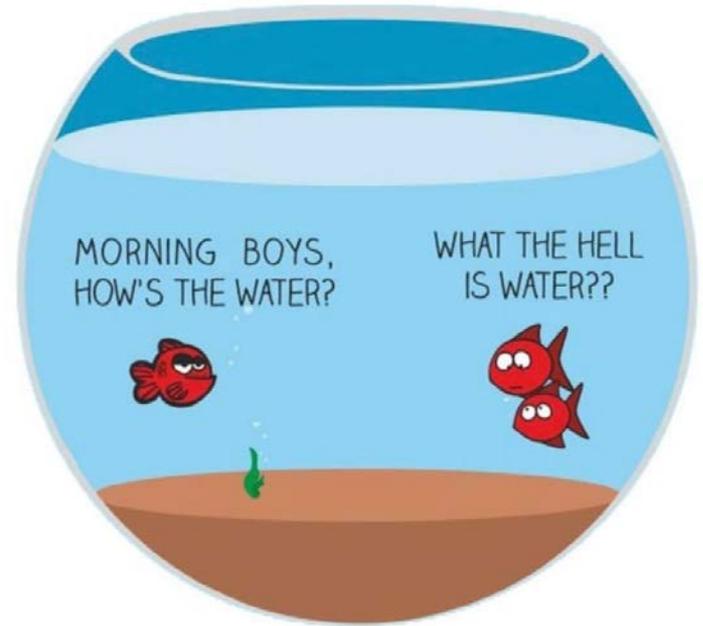
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What is culture?





The Battle of Crécy

What's so hard about culture

McKinsey finds that

1. **Culture correlates with performance.** 60% higher returns for top quartiles over median, 200% over bottom quartile
2. **Culture is hard to copy.** Products and services are easily replicated. Culture is not.
3. **Healthy culture facilitates adaptability.** 70% of change initiatives fail. 70% of those are for cultural reasons.
4. **Unhealthy culture leads to underperformance or failure.**

**Retaining the Best of Your
Culture Amid
Organizational Change**

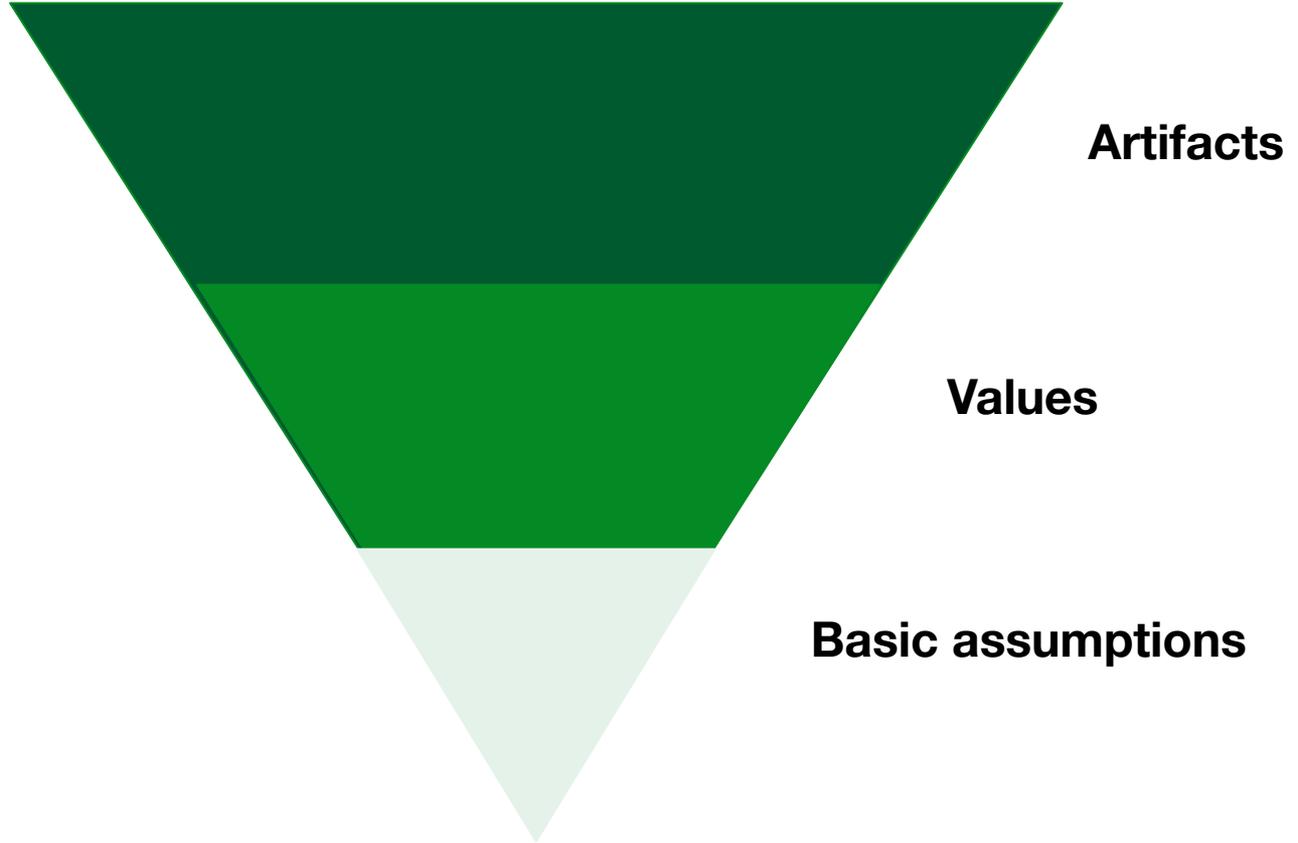
**Build “Hardiness” Into
Your Organizational
Culture**

**4 Phrases That Build a
Culture of Curiosity**

**3 Ways to Build an
Organizational Culture
That Supports Mental
Health**

**The Future of Mental
Health at Work Is Safety,
Community, and a Healthy
Organizational Culture**

Components of Culture - *Edgar Schein*



Occupational vs Organizational Culture



Westrum Model

Pathological

Power Oriented

Low cooperation

Messengers shot

Responsibilities shirked

Bridging discouraged

Failure leads to
scapegoating

Novelty crushed

Bureaucratic

Rule Oriented

Modest cooperation

Messengers neglected

Narrow responsibilities

Bridging tolerated

Failure leads to justice

Novelty leads to
problems

Generative

Performance Oriented

High cooperation

Messengers trained

Risks are shared

Bridging encouraged

Failure leads to inquiry

Novelty implemented

Focusing on Influence

Culture

Automation

Metrics

Sharing

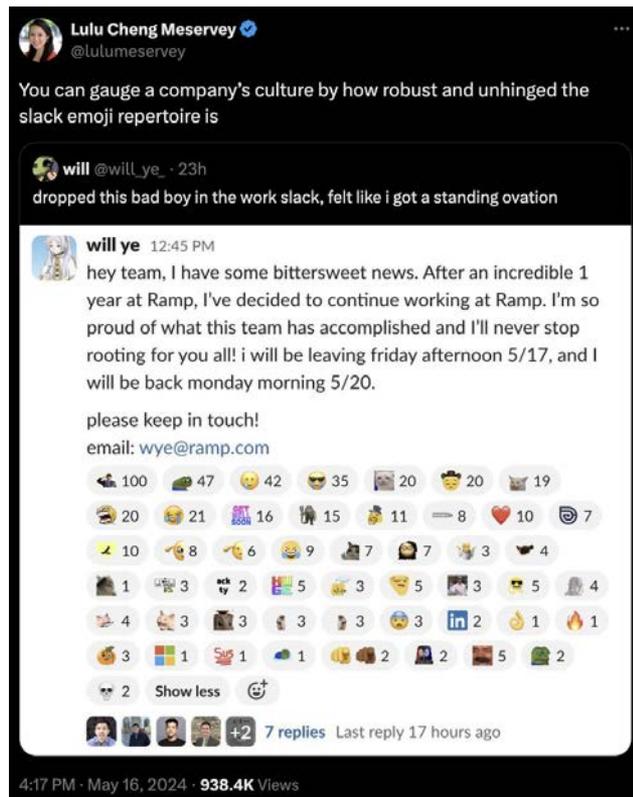
Recent research suggests that *microcultures* are highly influential in professional settings

Summary

Culture exists as human connections

Culture is built on assumptions, values, and artifacts

Culture can be improved, but not always across the entire organization



Resources

- *Cautionary Tales: The French Knights Guide to Corporate Culture*. Tim Harford: <https://timharford.com/2022/06/cautionary-ales-the-french-knights-guide-to-corporate-culture/>
- *And Blood and Gold* <https://timharford.com/2024/04/cautionary-ales-blood-and-gold-with-dan-snow/>
- Organizational Culture and Leadership Institute <https://www.scheinocli.org/>
- *Culture: 4 keys to why it matters*. McKinsey: <https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/people-and-organizational-performance/our-insights/the-organization-blog/culture-4-keys-to-why-it-matters>
- *Westrum's Organizational Model in Technology Organizations*. IT Revolution: <https://itrevolution.com/articles/westrums-organizational-model-in-tech-orgs/>
- Westrum's original paper, 2004: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1765804/pdf/v013p0ii22.pdf>
- *What is organizational culture and why should we care?* Michael D. Watkins, HBR: <https://hbr.org/2013/05/what-is-organizational-culture>