

## Rock Your Culture Worksheet #1: Define Your Culture

Okay, so if you are interested in actually using your culture for anything, you have to define it. One of the best ways I've done this in the past is to sit with a small group and look at our employee base. Here's how to kick it off:

"If we could take one of our employees and clone them to work for us, who would it be?"

Employee Name	Why We Want to Clone Them

Then the discussion ensues. Some people like employee A for their hard work. Some people like employee B for their technical competency. Others like employee C for being a great manager and leader. If necessary, define tiers of employees and pick one from each or one per department. To keep it simple, though, try to choose one and work from there. Once you've done this exercise you can start over with sample groups to fit your size and needs. The next question will help you delve further:

"Okay, say we could clone employee A. What skills, attitudes, ideas, etc. do they bring that we would specifically like to be cloned/repeated?"

<b>Behaviors</b>	<b>Skills</b>	<b>Other</b>

Start listing. Try to get at least five, but if you get up to ten, that works too. We'll just pare them down as we go along.

Take that list of characteristics that the team wants to see cloned. Those should be the basis of your culture-the attitudes and behaviors that define your organization. If not, then your organization's culture is probably not being used in internal decision-making processes, and that needs to be a priority. With that list of characteristics that everyone agrees upon, it's time to start hiring, rating, and terminating employees based on those items. This is how you propagate the desired culture through the organization.

For example, if one of the characteristics is “innovative,” then you need to start asking interview questions about innovative ideas the person has developed. Find out the last time they challenged an established rule and what the result was. Ask about a time they made a new process improvement suggestion. Your goal is to find people who fit the culture and bring them in the door. That’s much easier than changing your existing workforce, which we’ll look at next.

That takes care of the front end, but what about current employees who might not align with the desired culture? Start rating their performance based on the values/behaviors you defined earlier in this exercise. Sticking with innovation, you need to include innovative goals when starting the performance review period, such as “find ways to reduce departmental costs by 10%” or “scrap and rebuild a process, reducing waste in the form of time, labor, or materials.” Make it something people think about often, not just at annual review time.

Finally, the tough one is terminating those who can’t or won’t fit in. Sometimes people resist changing their behaviors because they don’t believe it is going to benefit them in the long run. However, when you make it clear that the person either changes or leaves, you will sometimes get people who choose the hard path of change over the easy path of walking out the door. Just as these values are tied in with the performance review process, they should carry further and determine if the person is going to stay or go. This sounds like a good idea, but the hardest time will be when you run across a technically proficient employee who does not fit with the culture. The rule I’ve learned on this (learned the hard way, of course!) is that even if the person produces significant results, if they do not fit with the team and culture, then they are still a net drag on the workplace. The team/department/organization will never move beyond that person as a bottleneck for progress.

Once you’ve defined what cultural aspects you want to see in new hires, you can use that information to decide how to rate their performance. And once you’ve set acceptable performance levels for those aspects, you can make termination decisions on them. That’s how you define your culture and reinforce it through every employment action you take!