



WILSON AND ASSOCIATES
COACHING AND CONSULTING



BUILD A GREAT COMPANY CULTURE

***With These 12 Essential
Elements***



Workplace
Culture

Introduction

Organizational culture can be defined as the social systems and practices that govern interactions between the organization and its employees, stakeholders, clients, and community. It is a demonstration of the core identity of your organization.

An organization's culture is shaped by the company's history, values, vision, stories, beliefs, norms, and expectations. Though it can be hard to define, and is often intangible, the impact of a company's culture is felt by every stakeholder: employees, clients, partners, and the public.

If you want to get a sense of your company's culture, you can see it reflected in:

- How people communicate with each other
- How frequently and easily employees collaborate
- How decisions are made and communicated
- HR policies and initiatives
- The workplace environment
- Approaches to compensation and recognition
- Employee engagement
- Overall employee experience

The health of your organization's culture is crucial to your organization's success. In Wilson and Associates' experience leading culture change efforts for clients across sectors and industries, unaddressed toxic culture leads to low morale, inefficiencies, financial loss, employee turnover, and in the worst cases, lawsuits.

To make it easier for leaders to build workplaces where employees thrive, we identified 12 essential elements of great company cultures.



About This Guide

At Wilson and Associates Coaching and Consulting, we understand the critical role that workplace culture plays in the success of any organization. That's why we've developed the "Periodic Table of Great Culture Elements®," a comprehensive framework designed to help corporate leaders foster supportive, positive, and productive work environments.

In this guide, we offer insights and recommendations from nearly 2 decades in service of building great organizational cultures.

Here we reference innovative findings related to the field of organizational culture, including recommendations from the Surgeon General of the United States. In doing this, we aim to offer interdisciplinary and comprehensive strategies for improving workplace well-being and creating great places to work.

With this guide, our goal is to provide you with actionable steps and guiding questions that will fuel your efforts to transform your workplace culture, making it more inclusive, engaging, and supportive.

Whether you're looking to boost employee well-being, enhance professional development, or foster a culture of respect and dignity, this guide offers the tools and strategies you need to make meaningful change.

This guide provides an overview of the **12 Essential Elements of Great Culture** and offers reflection and implementation questions designed to help leaders like you reflect upon, and effectively integrate, these elements into their leadership and culture change practices.

Use this guide to help you explore ways to create a thriving workplace culture that attracts and retains top talent, drives innovation, enhances productivity, and creates an environment where employees thrive.



PERIODIC TABLE OF "GREAT CULTURE" ELEMENTS ©

1 We Employee Well-being	2 FI Flexibility	3 Pd Professional Development	4 R Relationships	5 Co Communication	6 E Equity
7 CR Compensation & Recognition	8 I Innovation	9 Le Equitable & Inspiring Leadership	10 Be Inclusion & Belonging	11 Re Respect & Dignity	12 P Psychological Safety & Trust



1. Employee Well-being (We)

Definition:

Prioritizing and supporting the physical, mental, and emotional health of employees.

Why It Matters:

Employees who feel cared for and experience well-being at work are more engaged, productive, and loyal.

What You Can Do:

- Structurally & culturally encourage work-life balance.
- Implement wellness programs.
- Offer mental health support.

Reflection and Implementation Questions:

- What are employees saying they need in order to feel physically and psychologically safer at work? How can we regularly and objectively assess their safety?
- How can our company better support the physical and mental health needs of all employees? How are we contributing to *(or diminishing)* employee well-being?

Consultant Tip

Employee well-being programs and initiatives should be directed by the needs and requests of your current workforce, not by ideas imposed by leadership.

For well-being initiatives to be utilized and to be impactful, it has to be resonant, relevant, and accessible for employees.

2. Flexibility (FI)

Definition:

Allowing employees to have flexible work arrangements and autonomy over how & when they complete their work.

Why It Matters:

Flexibility & autonomy leads to higher job satisfaction, increases in confidence, and can reduce turnover.

What You Can Do:

- Create flexible working hours.
- Introduce remote work options.
- Offer employees the ability to choose tasks that match their skills and interests.
- Respect boundaries between personal and work time.

Reflection and Implementation Questions:

- How are we ensuring that employees aren't expected (or need) to work during their off hours?
- How might we provide employees with more autonomy or more voice in the execution of their duties?
- How do we create space for employees to share their interests and expertise?
- How do we match employee expertise to their assigned tasks?

Highlight on Work-Life Harmony:

In the 2022 Framework for Workplace Mental Health and Well-Being, the U.S. Surgeon General acknowledged that when organizations:

- *increase worker autonomy,*
 - *provide greater flexibility on how and when the work gets done, and,*
 - *allow employees to work when and where is best for them,*
- they are more likely to **minimize employee turnover**.

*That report also invites organizational leaders to promote **Work-Life Harmony** as an aspect of Flexibility. This can be achieved by making work schedules as flexible and predictable as possible, increasing access to paid leave, and respecting employees' non-work time.*

3. Professional Development (Pd)

63% of millennials (employees aged 28-45) believe they aren't receiving adequate leadership development opportunities from their employers.

-Forbes, 2022

Definition:

Providing opportunities for employees to grow their skills and advance their careers.

Why It Matters:

Continuous learning keeps employees motivated and prepared for future roles.

What You Can Do:

- Provide training and educational programs.
- Create mentorship opportunities
- Develop clear career progression plans.

Reflection and Implementation Questions:

- How can we equitably provide learning and development opportunities to our employees?
- Have we made it clear to our employees how they can grow their careers in the company? Where and how is it communicated?
- How can we facilitate more opportunities for timely and fair feedback for employees and leaders?

Highlight on Opportunity for Growth:

Opportunities for professional development include anything that can help employees build their knowledge and skills including: training, educational stipends, coaching, and mentoring.

Additional steps organizations can take include developing clear and equitable pathways for career advancement that are communicated to all employees. And finally, timely, relevant, and actionable feedback.

4. Relationships (R)

Definition:

Fostering strong interpersonal connections between employees.

Why It Matters:

Positive relationships enhance teamwork and communication.

What You Can Do:

- Organize team-building activities.
- Encourage open communication.
- Provide platforms for social interaction.

Reflection and Implementation Questions:

- How do employees describe feeling included (or excluded) in their team(s)?
- What do employees say is needed to make collaboration possible and/or more effective?
- How might we create moments for social connection before or after our formal meeting agendas?

Insight for Building Relationships and Collaborative Teams

*In 2007, Lynda Gratton and Tamara Erickson published their findings on team-building and collaboration in Harvard Business Review. After studying team culture dynamics across 55 large teams, they identified **8 “success factors”** that, when employed, can foster collaborative teams with strong relationships in-tact.*

8 Ways to Foster Collaboration and Relationship-Building:

1. Create signature practices that facilitate bonding among team members.
2. Invite leaders to rolemodel collaboration.
3. Cultivate a culture where managers regularly support and mentor their employees.
4. Train employees on interpersonal skills, *such as effective communication and conflict resolution.*
5. Sponsor community-building activities so employees can get to know each other outside of their titles and work contexts.
6. Develop leaders to be both task-oriented and relationship-oriented.
7. Leverage the positive relationships of employees when forming teams.
8. Define clear roles and allow flexible approaches to completing tasks.

5. Communication (Co)

Definition:

Ensuring clear, open, and honest communication at all levels.

Why It Matters:

Effective communication helps prevent misunderstandings and builds trust.

What You Can Do:

- Implement regular check-ins and feedback sessions.
- Use clear and transparent language.
- Encourage active listening.

Reflection and Implementation Questions:

- How can leaders ensure all team members feel comfortable and encouraged to openly share their ideas, feedback, and concerns?
- What strategies can the company implement to improve transparency and clarity in our communication, ensuring that everyone on the team understands our goals, expectations, and decisions?
- What practices and behaviors can you adopt to create an environment where team members feel safe and valued when providing feedback?
- How can you actively encourage others to act on the feedback received?

The Costs of Ineffective Communication

In 2023, Grammarly published a report on the State of Business Communication.

Their research found that we are communicating more in a variety of ways (in-person, email, video conference, team communication apps, and project management platforms), but the quality has declined.

Grammarly found that both efficiency and employee well-being are have suffered as a result. Additionally, they reported that ineffective workplace communication costs U.S. businesses \$1.2 trillion each year.

6. Equity (E)

Definition:

Ensuring fair treatment, access, opportunities, and advancement for all employees, *especially historically marginalized and underrecognized groups*.

Why It Matters:

Equity promotes diversity and inclusion, and drives innovation and performance.

What You Can Do:

- Establish your vision, goals, and plan for equity.
- Conduct equity audits & evaluate your equity practices.
- Examine hiring and advancement practices with an equity lens tools.

Reflection and Implementation Questions:

- Are we using an *equity lens* to identify how a policy or decision that appears fair on-face may have an inequitable impact in practice?
- How are we actively identifying and addressing disparities in opportunities, treatment, and advancement within our organization? What steps can we take to ensure equitable practices are in consistent use?
- What would (or could) equity look like in our organization?

Is Equality and Equity the Same Thing?

In the 2022 Gallup article “*Workplace Equity: The “E” in DEI and Why it Matters*”, they offer an important distinction between equality and equity. Here’s an excerpt:

“

- **Equality** refers to treating each person the same;
- **Equity** refers to allocating resources based on need because everyone has different circumstances. Equity considers historical and sociopolitical factors that affect opportunities and experiences, and it designs policies and systems to meet the unique needs of others without giving an unfair advantage.”

”

7. Compensation & Recognition (CR)

Definition:

Offering competitive salaries, and recognizing and valuing employees' contributions.

Why It Matters:

Fair compensation and recognition boost morale and retention.

What You Can Do:

- Review and adjust salary structures regularly.
- Create recognition programs.
- Celebrate achievements.

Reflection and Implementation Questions:

- What opportunities are there in our company to meaningfully recognize and appreciate employees' efforts?
- How might we create a culture of gratitude and affirmation across all levels of our organization?

Highlight on Gratitude and Recognition:

According to the U.S. Surgeon General, creating a culture of gratitude and recognition is essential for employees to feel like they, and their contributions, matter. This, in turn, creates a sense of dignity and fulfillment for employees and enhances their overall sense of workplace well-being.

Beyond just recognizing workers through compensation or gifts, leaders can cultivate a culture of recognition by offering specific feedback consistently and celebrating achievements publicly. Doing this are just small ways to create a culture where employees feel seen, respected, and valued.

There's also what we at Wilson and Associates call the *Replication Effect*: research indicates that employees who receive consistent recognition and appreciation are more likely to appreciate others, contributing to a positive culture and better team performance.

8. Innovation (I)

Definition:

Encouraging creativity and new ideas within the organization.

Why It Matters:

An innovative culture fosters collaboration, enhances productivity, encourages intra-team collaboration, and helps companies become more adaptive.

What You Can Do:

- Establish innovation labs or teams.
- Encourage idea sharing and brainstorming.
- Reward creative solutions.

Reflection and Implementation Questions:

- How are leaders identifying and addressing potential barriers to innovation within their teams? **Barriers include: resistance to change, fear of failure, poor communication, limited diversity, overemphasis on short-term goals, and de-emphasis on long-term vision.**
- Does our company culture allow employees to be brave enough to defy the status quo and offer a different way of doing things?
- How are leaders creating and supporting an environment that encourages creativity, revolutionary new ideas, and adaptive or responsive solutions?
- Do we have a negative or positive outlook on failure in our company?

Building Cultures Where Innovation Thrives

Pixar has created a culture where employees are encouraged to be candid, experiment, and take risks. They created a cultural expectation that employees offer support instead of judgment on another employee's work. The result: innovation skyrocketed and psychological safety increased.

3 action steps to build a more innovative culture:

1. Invite your employees to think beyond their assigned roles & think *outside-the-box*.
2. Inspire bravery by being brave yourself: take risks and offer new ideas publicly.
3. Admit vulnerability and share lessons you're learning from your mistakes.

9. Equitable & Inspiring Leadership (Le)

70% of workers felt they experienced MORE inclusion and belonging at work when their manager demonstrated inclusive and equitable leadership skills.

-Harvard Business Review, 2023

Definition:

Leading with fairness, inspiration, and emotional intelligence with a commitment to employee growth.

Why It Matters:

Transformational leadership sets the tone for the entire organization.

What You Can Do:

- Train leaders on equity and inclusion best practices.
- Build the emotional intelligence skills of leaders.
- Offer support and mentorship.
- Evaluate leaders on their ability to create inclusive and equitable meetings and spaces

Reflection and Implementation Questions:

- How are leaders demonstrating and modeling the skills, behaviors, and practices that make a diverse workforce feel encouraged, supported, included, and welcomed?

Insights on Equitable and Inspiring Leadership

Researchers published a report in the September 2023 edition of Harvard Business Review on *What Makes an Inclusive Leader*. They found that equitable and inclusive leaders:

- Increased employees' sense of belonging and psychological by **70** percentage points.
- Improved team performance by **17%**
- Increase team collaboration by **29%**
- And decreased employee turnover by **76%**.

People are inspired to stay in their jobs based on their positive experiences with their direct manager. If you want to create great workplace culture, you need GREAT leaders. Your company can develop great leaders with training, incentives, performance measurement, and holding leaders accountable.

10. Inclusion & Belonging (Be)

Definition:

Creating an environment where employees feel valued and included, *especially those from historically marginalized and under-recognized groups.*

Why It Matters:

Inclusion facilitates team cohesion, drives engagement, and facilitates innovation.

What You Can Do:

- Measure experiences of inclusion and belonging.
- Create data-driving inclusion strategies and implement inclusive practices.
- Speak to people respectfully and use inclusive language.

Reflection and Implementation Questions:

- How are we gauging and measuring the sense of inclusion and belonging throughout our organization?
- How are we designing an inclusive culture with intention so that people can feel “we’ve intentionally created space for you.”

Highlight on Inclusion and Belonging

According to the 2023 EY Belonging Barometer 3.0, **75%** of employees report having felt excluded at work.”

Through our culture change consulting engagement, we have found that when employees feel excluded, they often experience an unspoken pressure to assimilate and conform to the dominant culture in order to succeed and experience belonging.

This would explain the stats revealed in the EY report. They found that **56%** of employees are not comfortable disclosing aspects of their identities at work for fear of it holding them back.

- This percentage jumped to **64%** for Gen Z (employees aged 18-27), and
- **77%** for staff that identify as LGBTQIA+.

Disaggregating belonging data helps leaders design intentional strategies to foster inclusion and a sense of belonging by group.

Data shows that achieving inclusion and belonging can reduce loneliness, stress, and sadness at work. There’s a **business case**, too: companies with high levels of inclusion and belonging report strong team cohesion, improved performance, greater engagement, and increased innovation.

11. Respect & Dignity (Re)

Definition:

Recognizing the inherent worth of all employees, regardless of position or background, and upholding their fundamental right to fair and humane treatment at work.

Why It Matters:

Workplaces where people are treated with dignity and respect are more harmonious and productive, and experience less conflict and attrition.

What You Can Do:

- Create culture norms that set the standard for respectful and appropriate behavior.
- Hold employees accountable by addressing disrespect promptly.
- Share stories of employees who demonstrate respect and dignity to others.

Reflection and Implementation Questions:

- How do our current policies and practices ensure that all employees are treated with respect and dignity?
- What actions can we implement to create and maintain a culture where respectful behavior is the norm and disrespect is promptly addressed?

Highlight on Dignity, Respect, and Toxic Culture

According to an *MIT Sloan Management Review* series on Toxic Culture, there are 5 Traits of a Toxic Culture:

(1) **Lack of Dignity and Respect**, (2) **Non-Inclusive**, (3) **Unethical**, (4) **Cutthroat**, (5) **Abusive**

They found Toxic Culture was the #1 driver of the mass quitting movement of 2021-2022 which is known as "The Great Resignation."

While a lack of dignity and respect was identified as a single trait, both are needed to prevent the other 4 toxic traits. In fact, we believe that dignity and respect might be the key antidote to repairing toxic culture.

12. Psychological Safety (P)

Definition:

Ensuring employees feel safe to express themselves without fear of harm, retaliation, retribution, or other negative consequences.

Why It Matters:

Psychological safety fosters trust, innovation, and open communication.

What You Can Do:

- Create a safe environment for feedback and participation.
- Encourage risk-taking and idea-sharing.
- Address signs of a toxic culture.

Reflection and Implementation Questions:

- How are we creating conditions for braver and safer spaces?
- How are we holding people accountable for maintaining the psychologically safe spaces we aspire to create?

Insight on Psychological Safety

Author Timothy Clark wrote *"The 4 Stages of Psychological Safety: Defining the Path to Inclusion and Innovation"* and developed a 4-part framework that examines different ways psychological safety can be expressed and experienced at work. They are:

Inclusion Safety	Learner Safety	Contributor Safety	Challenger Safety
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Here is a summary of these 4 types of psychological safety:

- **Inclusion Safety:** The ability for people to be their authentic self at work.
- **Learner Safety:** The ability to learn and make mistakes as part of a learning and development process.
- **Contributor Safety:** The ability to make contributions towards the team's goals, and the expectation to safely give and receive feedback.
- **Challenger Safety:** The ability to candidly share recommendations and disagree publicly.

Conclusion

At Wilson and Associates Coaching and Consulting, we believe that building a great company culture—one *that is equitable and inclusive*—requires leaders to adopt a comprehensive culture change management approach.

Our Periodic Table of Great Culture Elements© gives leaders 12 actionable levers for culture change that can transform the workplace into one that works for everyone.

By integrating these elements into your team building, leadership development, DEI, and organizational culture change strategies, you will cultivate a company culture that attracts and retains great people while driving long-term success toward achieving the organization's mission and vision.



Ready To Get Started!

To develop a customized consulting engagement that builds a great company culture within your organization, starting with one or more of the 12 elements, contact Wilson and Associates Coaching and Consulting at: www.wilson-and-associates.com/contact



www.recipefortransformation.com

ABOUT WILSON AND ASSOCIATES

ABOUT THE COMPANY:

Wilson and Associates Coaching and Consulting, LLC, is a 16-year-old DEI and Organizational Culture Change Consulting Firm that equips leaders with the skills and strategies needed to develop equitable and inclusive workplaces where employees thrive.

Our brands include: School for Transformation, Disrupt Your DEI, and the Equitable Leadership Table.

We are Black-owned, woman-led, State of California Certified Small Business, and a WBENC-certified Women Business Enterprise (WBE).

We are guided by an unwavering set of values, which are:

- Promote Dignity and Respect
- Embody Integrity and Accountability
- Embrace Authenticity
- Advance Equity and Justice
- Build Relationships and Community
- Cultivate Joy

OUR APPROACH

Our work is guided by *The Recipe for Transformation*®, a proprietary and interdisciplinary culture change management framework centered on three stages:

- **Dream:** Establish a Vision for Change.
- **Discover:** Identify The Barriers To The Vision & Emergent Solutions.
- **Repair:** Implement Meaningful Action Rooted In Loving Accountability

ABOUT OUR FOUNDER

Chrysta Wilson, MPA, PCC, founded Wilson and Associates in 2008 to disrupt inequities and create conditions for everyone to thrive, especially those who have been historically marginalized and excluded.

Chrysta's background in urban planning, administration, organizational psychology, and public policy provides the structural understanding that proves critical for analyzing the root causes of toxic culture and identity-based inequities. Her talent for relationship building and storytelling helps her create cross-cultural connections and alliances that facilitate *people-centered* organizational and systems change.

Recipe For Transformation®

