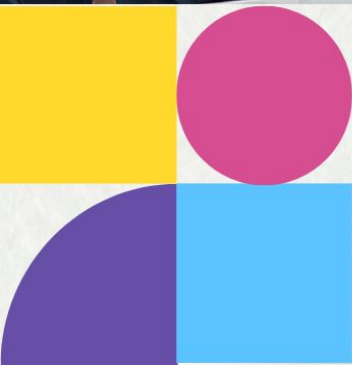




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YOUR GUIDE TO CULTURE CHANGE THAT STICKS



Making culture stick is hard work, but there are some exciting ways to ensure it becomes a reality.

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In our guide [*Intentional Organisational Culture*](#), we talked about **the importance of having an intentional culture in an organisation**. We also went through the challenges at hand when it comes to ensuring the culture is nurtured and maintained the way an organisation desires it to be.

We talked about individuals being resistant to change because often, they do not have the knowledge or support to go through the **five steps to change**. We also talked how in groups of people, networks are a significant aspect to consider in terms of assisting in the adoption of the desired culture. Likewise, structures and processes like **recruitment, appraisal systems, training and development, rewards and recognition and socialisation** are also critical in ensuring culture becomes entrenched in day-to-day interactions rather than something written on a poster.

In this guide, we will look deeper in these to find out **exactly what needs to be done** in each of these areas, in order to help culture be deeply rooted in an organisation.

What is culture again?

As a recap, we take culture to be a **function** of an organisation's mission, vision, values, key beliefs and behaviours, habits and rituals, and norms of interaction.

The **mission and vision** are aspirational statements of what a business does and what they would like to achieve in the long run, whereas **values** are "the operating philosophies or principles that guide an organisation's internal conduct as well as its relationship with its customers, partners, and shareholders." **Key beliefs** are formed based on observations and a person's understanding of how things are done in the organisation. **Behaviours, habits and rituals** as well as **norms of interaction** are either carefully crafted and monitored, or, if left to chance, more organically developed as a supporting system towards the vision, mission and values, or the goal of the organisation (say for example, making profits).

Values, especially, can be particularly tricky to internalise. Understanding how people's personal values develop can help guide you when trying to roll-out company core values. It is important to know this: In one's life, there are generally three stages of developing values, and these are all done before people join the workforce.



According to *Morris Massey*, these are the three stages:

1. the **Imprint Period** (0–7 years old): Children absorb everything from parents or whoever they come in contact with.
2. the **Modelling Period** (8–13 years old): They are copying other people's actions. They are looking up to role models/idols/TV/school.
3. the **Socialising Period** (14–21 years old): Teenagers are influenced by peers or the people whom they spend most time with, mainly their friends. They are trying to impress people and in the process, they change their values.

The issue then is, **how** do you help companies instill certain values that may not necessarily be in place in their employees' personal repertoire of values. The easy way is of course to hire based on the values that you uphold as a company. However, that is not an option or you already have a substantial number of employees that you would like to adhere to a set of values. We will talk more on how we **can mould the desired culture** in this group by embedding intentional activities into organisational processes in the next section.

Embedding culture into critical organisational processes

The way to make sure that the culture becomes entrenched in the fabric of the organisation and that it permeates all interactions, decisions, conversations and actions is to **embed it in critical organisational processes** (see graphic below), so that it becomes part of daily work. The phases post-recruitment are applicable to all old and new employees and we will talk about each of these below.



Critical organisational processes to embed culture.

1. Recruitment:

Think attracting, interviewing process as well as onboarding. The field has ample opportunities **to inculcate the organisation's culture early on**, and to ensure the people coming in are a good match for what you are looking for.

For example, during the attraction phase, what is the information that you are sharing about **who you are as a company?** Giving a good understanding of **the way you work** and **setting expectations right from the outset** will sift through the candidates that are in direct contrast with what you are looking for, and attract the ones closer to it in the way they are expected to work.

During the interviewing process, **what are the attributes that you are looking for?** In addition to skills and expertise, plan for ways to **check on culture fit** for these potential candidates. What are the questions, case studies and/or assessments that you can plan so that they allow for opportunities to observe your criteria of culture fit?

Onboarding is an area that organisations keep reviewing, because it is so hard to get right in the first place. What sort of **activities/tasks** can you have as part of your onboarding that will **introduce and inculcate the culture** of your organisation to your new hires? Think sessions with key leaders, the manner in which people are welcomed into the team and check points for key conversations as examples.

It is important to remember that **role models are critical** in this process. The people you choose to be interacting with these potential hires should be your strongest advocates, because their passion and commitment will show through. They will most likely establish the right expectations for what you are aiming for from the outset in terms of culture.

2. Appraisal system:

Appraisals often focus on KPIs, which in turn focus on hard numbers around performance. Far too often, culture and one's practice of the organisation's culture are left out. This is a big mistake however, because **it is not just about the results, but the way we get there** too. If that wasn't the case, then organisations wouldn't have much room to be concerned with culture, people, relationships, ethics, and all the elements that make it human.

When looking at your appraisal processes, ask yourself what opportunities do you have, to have conversations and assessments on how people are doing in terms of working according to the organisation's culture (or even better, embodying it!). **Having measurable, rewardable behaviours and habits** help to make this a lot easier.

How then can we encourage managers to have such conversations with their team members in addition to performance and goals, and how often? Perhaps **reviewing the frequency of appraisal conversations** is also another area to look into, as the usual once to twice-a-year conversation may not necessarily help much in terms of culture uptake (then again, it may not help much in terms of performance either, so more frequent conversations are definitely needed!).

3. Training and Development:

Far too often company culture is set and employees are just expected to follow accordingly.

Unfortunately, it's not that easy. More often than not, **a lot of training is required in multiple forms in order for the culture to take root**. This could be in the form of formally set training sessions on specific aspects of the culture, regular meaningful conversations between team members and the manager, daily nudges in various forms, reminders of sorts of what is expected, conversations with key leaders and sharing of examples on what to do in certain cases.

A bit of creativity is needed here to go beyond the usual training sessions or leaving it to the managers to figure things out for their teams. The **role of managers is critical**, and extra attention needs to be placed in getting the managers, first of all, to understand and internalise the culture, because they become the missionaries, advocates and custodians of it across the organisation.

4. Rewards and Recognition:

Even though the traditional thinkers flinch when we talk about this, whether we like it or not, **rewards and recognition** push the envelope when it comes to **motivating people to follow a certain desired behaviour**. Having the systems and processes in place to recognise and reward people where recognition is due can help with culture adoption.

Recognition by managers or senior leaders and peer recognition all have a part to play in **positive reinforcement of behaviours** we want employees to be modeling based on the intended culture. Whether setting certain standards or leaving it open for interpretation, **encouraging a culture of recognition and offering rewards** around it can help. Fortunately, there are many creative technology tools out there that help with this aspect!



5. Socialisation:

Our understanding of what is happening in the world **is heavily influenced by the environment we operate in**. The understanding of how the economy works if you are a Wall Street investment banker, a shop owner in a mall in Kuala Lumpur or a train operator in Germany is very different based on the groups that these individuals would be interacting with and their sources of information.

Likewise, in organisations, employees' understanding of culture may also differ (hopefully to a lesser degree) based on **the groups they interact with**. This would happen in a natural state, unless an intervention from the top ensures that this does not occur. Just as we explained that networks are critical in achieving **the tipping point of 25% for any change** in the guide ***Intentional Organisational Culture***, they are equally important in socialising and reinforcing the culture of the organisation, for the same reasons. Having a good understanding of networks in the organisation allows the organisation to **target the right individuals** for more effective training, because they will help get the rest on board much faster. These are not necessarily identifiable by their title or job scope. Sometimes, a non-senior employee who is highly regarded and trusted by many will be a lot more influential in terms of getting an understanding across the company.

Identifying key networks and key individuals within the networks can help have a more targeted approach when time is of essence in terms of getting a higher buy-in and therefore, a higher adoption of the culture.

Additionally, frequent conversations around the culture, issues with its implementation or uptake, sharing of examples and role models to observe also help with the **internalisation**. Using it often for decision-making and talking about it openly, having specific language and terms as part of daily conversations, and essentially living the culture daily is what is required, and all the processes we discussed come together to entrench it into **day-to-day interactions** and **ensure it is not forgotten**.



The role of Employee Intelligence in making culture stick

It does not end at the part of embedding culture into critical organisational processes. **Without data, there is no validation** that the activities performed are indeed beneficial to the cause.

Employee intelligence can **provide the insights** necessary for organisations to make accurate assessments of where they stand with employees. Looking at the **right data** – more related to the case of culture stickiness, this could come from daily insights, recognition reasons, network connections, peer feedback, participation in training sessions, discussion forums and conversations around the culture, volunteering for projects, etc – can allow organisations to identify where their workforce is doing well and where they are struggling, in terms of culture adoption. This will allow for **effective action** to be taken to correct the situation in a timely manner.

By being methodical and consistent in embedding culture in day-to-day work by using employee intelligence, organisations can ensure culture adoption is successful and sustainable. The workforce acts in a uniform manner and where issues exist, these **can be identified and tackled much easier** because everything is planned and monitored well.

Making culture stick is hard work. Once the plan is there and the desire to do so is deep, there are some really exciting ways to ensure it becomes a reality. We at the Budaya team look at culture adoption as a social change, requiring both culture stickiness and employee intelligence to achieve it. To find out more about how we can help, [book a demo with us](#) today.

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