

Shifting Organisational Culture

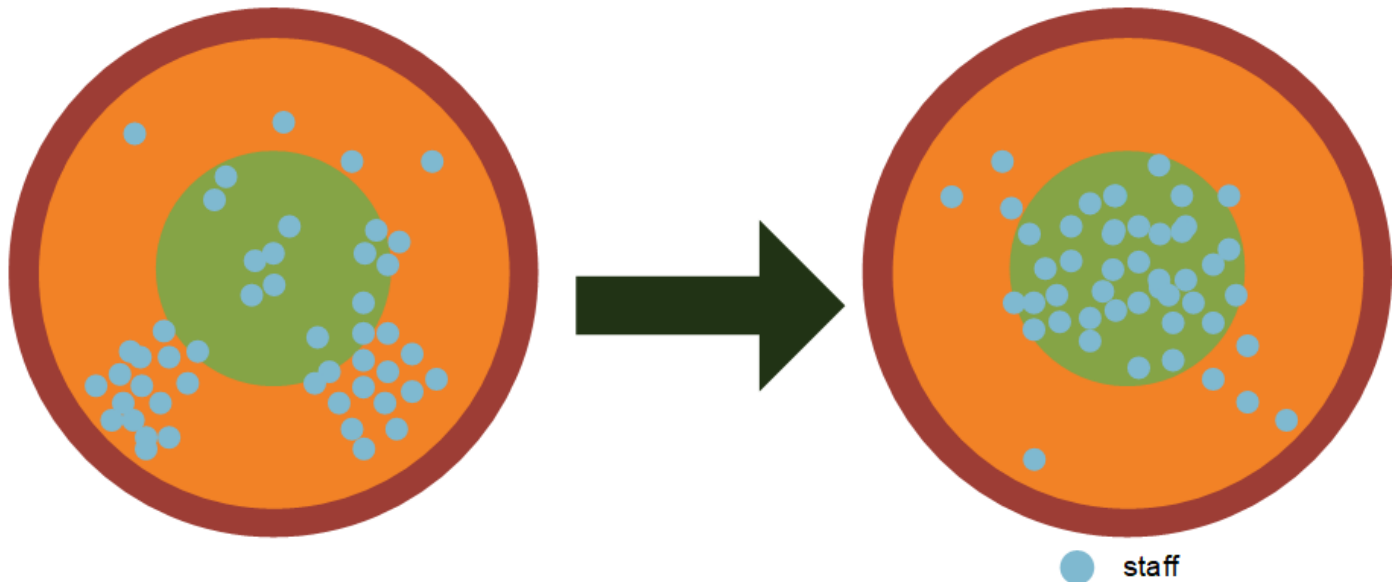
Many people and organisations want to improve their operational capability and recognise the importance of organisational culture. The H4 Consulting Shifting Organisational Culture (ShOC) is a conceptual framework for expressing and analysing organisational culture and shifting that culture toward higher performance.

A high-performance culture in publicly funded organisations is focused on people working together to maximise outcomes. This kind of culture emphasises responsibility and professional engagement with serving the public and creating public value.

Effective leadership and management set the tone for a high-performance culture. However, the performance, attitudes, values, and beliefs of every individual staff member contribute to the culture of a team or organisation. Even in strongly rule-driven workplaces, staff members take most of their cues about acceptable behaviour from each other.

ShOC conceptualises performance as a target, with a desirable high performing centre (green), an underperforming middle zone (orange), and a poorly performing outer zone (red). This representation can be applied to any aspect of an individual's performance or conduct.

A critical mass of staff clustered in any of these zones will establish behavioural norms and values that influence the customs and practices of the workplace. This exerts influence on other staff, and the 'gravitational pull' of a critical mass can shift the whole culture.



Creating a critical mass of high performing staff raises expectations and standards for all staff and draws them closer to the high performing centre. Similarly, a critical mass of underperforming staff can lower expectations and standards for everyone and draw others towards the outer, lower performing zones. This can manifest in a wide range of behaviours including the way staff dress, their attitudes towards each other, their levels of engagement, and the ways they use sick leave.

In a high-performance culture, the formal and informal drivers of staff behaviour and attitudes interact to reinforce and encourage positive behaviour and attitudes, and to maximise outcomes. It is a virtuous circle, in which positive conduct reinforces itself.

Once you understand the culture of your organisation and where its centres of gravity are located, you can adopt strategies to establish more positive behaviours. The costs of ongoing management and compliance are much lower if you focus on building a critical mass that will draw the whole culture towards the high performing centre.

Cohort effects, good or bad, are powerful. Moving the critical mass means you can more effectively target strategies and effort that shift the culture.

The SHoC approach targets both formal and informal drivers of behaviour, attitudes, and culture to encourage, model, and sustain positive changes. Everyone walks a little taller when they're stretching to reach influential peers.