

USING CULTURE TO YOUR COMPANY'S ADVANTAGE

A Guide for When, Why & How to Create Your Culture Playbook



SUMMARY

Now is the time! The workforce is resigning, reprioritizing, and realigning.

Each month last year, Americans left their jobs in record high numbers as the labor market grew hotter than ever this past fall. The [U.S. Labor Department](#) reported that 4.2 million people quit their jobs in October, a decline from the previous month but still close to a record high.

Job openings rose 431,000 to 11 million, paced by a 254,000 jump in the hospitality and restaurant industries. These sectors were pummeled by the pandemic but have recovered a bit as cases caused by the Delta variant of the coronavirus showed signs of easing in some places. At the same time, the number of job openings was also close to a record high.

Fast Company called it the [Great Reprioritization](#). At LinkedIn, it's the [Great Reshuffle](#). The Commerce Department says it should actually be the [Great Recognition](#). On the self-publishing platform Medium, it was renamed as the [Great Realization](#), the [Great Questioning](#) and the [Great Change-Up](#).

Whatever you call it, workers aren't just quitting; they're rethinking what they want out of work and shifting their expectations about professional life. After months of job departures, it's understandable why people have wanted to define and 'redefine' the idea.

Anthony Klotz, a professor at Texas A&M University who studies resignations and [coined the term in May](#) of last year, spotted several trends, including a backlog of resignations from 2020 and burnout among white-collar

workers, that signaled a wave of departures. "Despite everyone wanting to rename it, it hangs on. This is more than a pleasant reshuffling of jobs."

And, we're likely to still see a lot more of it. Quit rates have risen every year since 2010 but broke all records in mid-2021 (SHRM), with 1 in 4 people actively searching for a new job (Workplace Health). Of the workers actively looking,

- 80% are concerned about their career advancement (WSJ)
- 72% say the pandemic caused them to rethink their skill sets (WSJ)

With turnover high, retention down, and a swell of workers both actively and passively looking for opportunities that better fit their professional and personal priorities, it's become difficult to stand out as an employer.

That's why many are turning to their cultures to build their brands and set themselves apart. As organizations vie to become an employer of choice, building, communicating, and promoting the kind of culture that empowers employees to do their best work is the newest and most important weapon in helping companies attract, retain, and engage employees. That means, it's time for a Culture Playbook.

Why Create a Culture Playbook	3
How to Create a Culture Playbook	5
10 Benefits of a Culture Playbook.....	7
Templates & Resources	9
Conclusion	11

ABOUT HUMANTELLIGENCE

Humantelligence is the first agile culture management platform to help you operationalize culture. Improve collaboration, drive team performance, hire for culture, and build inclusion across your company day by day, all in one solution. To learn more, visit www.humantelligence.com.

WHY BUILD A CULTURE PLAYBOOK?



Culture is what people believe, how they behave, and the outcomes they produce. An organization competes on the basis of how people behave. Winning behavior will not thrive in a culture that doesn't support it. Great leaders create a culture that engages hearts and minds, energizes action, and executes with discipline. When that happens, results follow.

As many pioneering companies have learned a long time ago, it is entirely possible to cultivate a thriving company culture at scale remotely or in a hybrid model. Take GitHub, for example, which was recently ranked one of the top remote-first companies. The company operates completely remotely with no office and has managed to build remote-first work norms that are deeply embedded in their "[GitHub way](#)" of working.

What we're learning from enterprises like GitHub, Shipwell, Buffer, Skillshare, Dropbox, and others is that a deliberate strategy to create clarity, interaction, significant connections, and purpose is essential if you want your business to thrive. That's where a Culture Playbook comes in.

In order to build and sustain a strong culture, people need to know what is expected of them. A Culture Playbook is designed to help you communicate your culture with exceptional clarity. It makes clear what culture is at your organization, why it's important, and the role that everyone plays in building, sustaining, and then evolving that culture.

The playbook does something else that is critically important: It links your culture to your strategy. If you ask for behavior in your strategy that is not supported by your culture, you will struggle to execute.

In an organization with a strong, effective, and well-understood culture, everyone works together for the success of the organization. Trust is strong. People communicate and collaborate. They solve problems. They innovate and pursue continuous improvement. They manage change. They produce superior results.

In an organization with an ill-defined, ineffective, or toxic culture, people and business units are not aligned. They pursue different and sometimes conflicting agendas. Communication and teamwork are poor; problems do not get resolved; people resist change; accountability is inconsistent; and achieving goals is a struggle.

What's more, if the core values and principles by which an organization's team members should operate are not predefined, measured, and managed, leaders and team members will behave in ways they subjectively believe to be right. These personal beliefs are usually the product of learned behaviors and experiences that may be misaligned or inconsistent with driving a sustainable and results-oriented culture that is right for your business.

The culture you've created is deliberate – meaning, it's managed. A managed culture ensures that the right values and associated behaviors manifest throughout an organization, and that the right leadership practices and organizational activities are in place to reinforce these values through practical actions and decision-making tactics.

Why focus on culture as a differentiator?

Because it matters to everyone!

88%

of employees believe a strong company culture is key to business success.

94%

of executives say company culture is key to business success, yet only

32%

say their company culture is aligned with their business strategies.

(Source: BuiltIn.com)

In other words, company culture is not well developed and often an afterthought at many organizations despite being viewed as essential to success. It's time to start building your culture and then using it to your advantage.

So whether you've just started focusing on building culture in this way or already have your expected behaviors and strategy aligned, it's in everyone's best interests to begin communicating it. When you create a Culture Playbook for employees, you're better positioned to:

- 1 Articulate a stronger employer brand in order to attract and retain the best talent through a shared purpose.
- 2 Share concretely with employees your clear and differentiated values, behaviors, and expected actions.
- 3 Identify the right behaviors and correct the wrong ones.
- 4 More easily hold people accountable, since expectations around behaviors are established.
- 5 Create rituals that build belonging for everyone and reinforce expectations for certain behaviors.
- 6 Invoke your culture at every touchpoint.
- 7 Go to market with strong workplace culture philosophies around hiring, selection, onboarding, training, and growth.



Reminder:

*Culture is **not** HR, and it's not cool perks.*

Some companies don't even have HR. An HR leader can help you think about the culture you desire, find ways to move the culture in the right direction, and monitor progress, but the culture of a company is set early and is set by leaders. Culture IS NOT foosball tables and free food. Culture IS how the company does its work – the behaviors that lead to desired results, how it communicates, and how it supports and recognizes employees.



Key Action:

Whether your company is established or just starting out, don't neglect culture during planning processes.

Make it a key component of your business planning and reviews because it will influence the work. Set aside time to evaluate what you value when it comes to what success looks like for your team, your company's growth strategy or performance and identity, as well as relationship building, communication, and collaboration. Once you're able to do this, you have a strong foundation in place to develop your Culture Playbook.

A 5-STEP PROCESS FOR CREATING A COMPANY CULTURE PLAYBOOK



It's now time to go beyond theory and into practice, and begin drafting out your playbook. Here are the 5 most critical steps for gathering the inputs needed to develop your playbook.



Step 1: Determine MVV

Gather your leadership, who should come to the table with your company's Mission, Vision, Values.



Step 2: Align MVV

Determine if your Mission, Vision, and Values are aligned? If not, it's okay to take some pivots.



Step 3: Develop culture statement

Ask what your culture statement is? Not sure, let's start with a philosophy around one of your values, perhaps collaboration.



Step 4: Identify values & behaviors

Identify and confirm agreement on the first page of your playbook: the purpose and philosophies /values /behaviors



Step 5: Collaborate across levels & Evaluate

Work together through live meetings, surveys, and interviews to:

- Define your actionable values from your Mission-Vision-Values. You can do this by gathering statements, words, pictures, video from your team members.
- Create word clouds
- Pluck out new themes that arise from your first round of descriptions around a word or statement, like asking your employees to define: WHAT collaboration looks like inside their team; HOW does it show up? WHEN does it show up? WHEN should it show up? WHAT does it feel like when it doesn't show up? HOW does it impact the team when we DO or DON'T collaborate.

Here's what this work looks like visually:

What We Believe	How We Believe	Outcomes We Achieve
Core Belief #1	Key Behavior #1	Desired Outcome #1
Core Belief #2	Key Behavior #2	Desired Outcome #2
Core Belief #3	Key Behavior #3	Desired Outcome #3

From here, you'll then lay out your mission and vision (or Purpose), your cultural pillars/values or the things that you do that are aligned to your purpose, along with the expected outcomes. Some companies get creative in how they showcase these, including employee stories or spotlights and video clips. Your playbook can be as simple or as creative as you'd like.

Simply put, the goal is to provide your current and future employees with an easy-to-read document stating your company's purpose, core values, and examples of how your team members work together in order to get results.

The process of creating your playbook should be a collaborative effort. You will need to involve a cross-functional team in order to get members' of senior

leadership and other employees' feedback and capture collective thinking. You should take data from employee surveys. You may have to create a culture survey or hold workshops or small meetings to be able to capture the core behaviors and expectations that will become a part of your Culture Playbook. You can then even point to the process of developing your Culture Playbook as an example of living out the themes included in the playbook!

And finally, plan to evaluate your playbook each year in order to accurately reflect the journey your company is on. Things change. Pivots are made. It's important to take that along with ongoing employee feedback into consideration. Your playbook is a living document, so as your culture changes, so too will your playbook.

Contributing Sources: *Sprinklr's 7 Step Roadmap; Premier Rapport's Culture Playbook, Aga Bajer's Culture Strategy; Dave Ulrich, The RBL Group*



THE 10 BENEFITS OF YOUR PLAYBOOK



Besides an insightful exercise for the organization to undertake – which should tell you if you have a culture worth talking about or there is still work to do – your Culture Playbook will deliver tremendous value to your organization. Often teams within an organization are siloed, and communication on important unifying elements of the business is lacking.

1. Your Culture Playbook can serve as a unifying element. Because of your playbook, every member of the organization is able to answer the following questions clearly and with consistency.

- **What is our purpose?** ... why does your organization exist beyond money
- **What do we value?** ... Not just words but shared beliefs about what is most important within your team, department, or franchise
- **What kind of behaviors are expected?** ... To better understand the choices made by employees, guided by purpose and values. What the RIGHT actions look like
- **How do we reward?** ... The kinds of recognition programs you have, want, and desire that truly inspire culture-aligned behaviors
- **How do we reinforce?** ... The kind of rituals or group activities you build to strengthen relationships and reinforce purpose, values, and expected behaviors
- **How do we continue building momentum?** ... The kind of training available, needed, desired that increases individual and team effectiveness, efficiencies, and a desire for continued learning

In addition to having all of your employees know the answers to these kind of questions, you're able to:

- 2. Onboard others with greater INTENTION and ACCOUNTABILITY.**
- 3. Help your new hires feel the connection immediately – they belong; they are included and a part of this very special place!**
- 4. Then TRUST begins to form, grow, and stay.**
- 5. Then RETENTION of the RIGHT people becomes the norm.**
- 6. Meaning, turnover is on the decline.**
- 7. Profits are on the rise.**
- 8. Stress goes down or even removed from everyone, across all levels.**
- 9. You are focusing on increased revenue with your high performing teams.**
- 10. You now have several culture champions, not just one or none.**

Your team is soon on its way to becoming the master of your culture domain. Over time, the power of the playbook reveals itself. Employees will even begin to protect the culture. It's your job to continually design and refine the culture as the company evolves – allowing everyone inside the walls greater success because expectations are clear, silos are integrating, and decision-making is more easily understood.



Reminder:

*Work is not where we go,
but what we do.*

Your company culture does not disappear when you work remotely. It's just different because your interactions happen differently. You can still make and reinforce cultural rules and norms when you work from home.

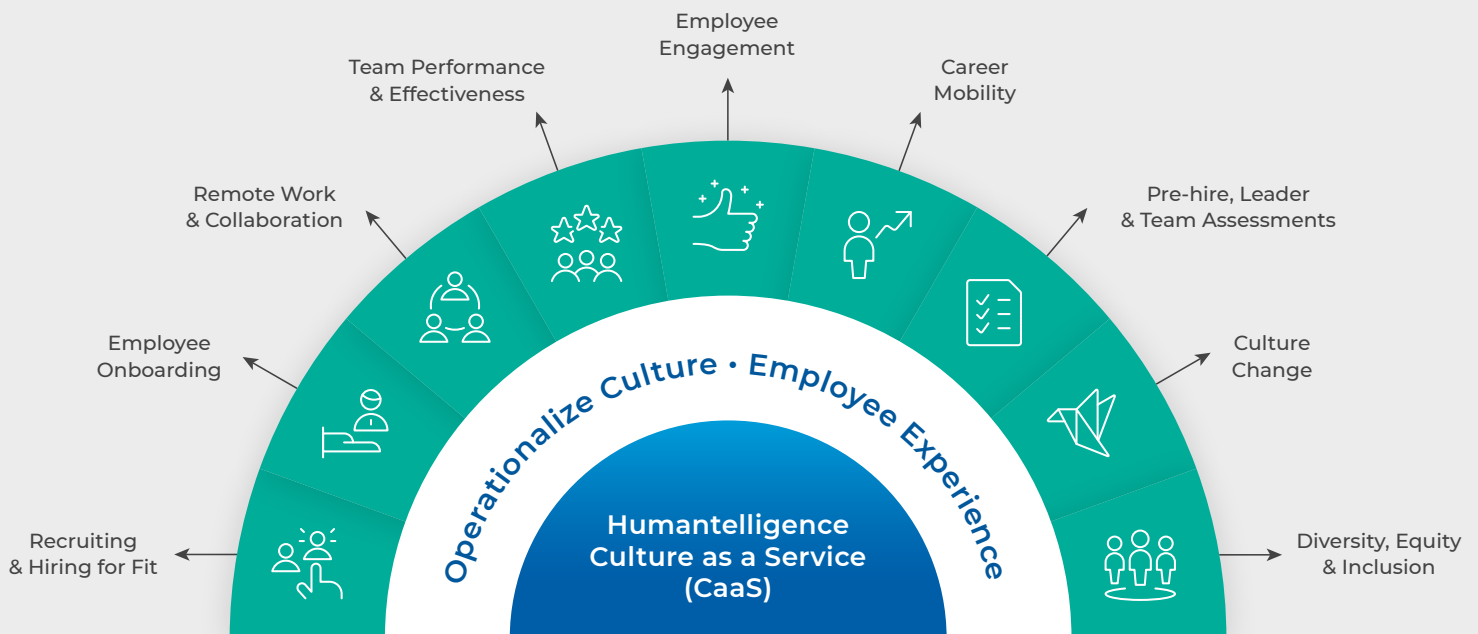


Key Action:

Start collecting everyone's stories.

A company's collective cultural identity is NOT something to be created or designed, as many culture consultants will try to convince you. It's something to be DISCOVERED and EVOLVED. And the best place to start from is with your stories. In many ways, company culture can be defined as the collection of stories people tell about belonging and success there. This is what the playbook ends up capturing.

A Culture Playbook helps you operationalize culture and the employee experience.



TEMPLATE & RESOURCES



One of the prototypes for what we call a Culture Playbook was the famous [Netflix culture deck](#), which was referred to as “one of the most important documents to come out of Silicon Valley” by the COO of Facebook, Sheryl Sandberg.

The Culture Playbook a living, breathing document that guides the reader through how to do business at the organization, what emotional impact the company wants to have on its counterparts, what behaviors and values are expected from employees (and leaders), and most importantly: why this matters for the people, customers, and the world at large.

A good playbook describes the key five elements that serve as a compass for everyone in the company. These must have elements include:

Component 1: Purpose

A good purpose is more of a narrative than a statement. It helps when it consists of at least three elements—your Mission, Philosophy, and Vision. Together, they describe why your organization exists and the fundamental beliefs and mission that guide you in everything you do.

The best approach to articulating the purpose is a cohesive narrative that includes:

- A mission statement: **How do you serve, and what impact do you want to have?**
- A philosophy statement: **What is the core belief that got you in this business in the first place?**
- A vision statement: **How will the world be better as a result of you working on your mission?**

Component 2: Core Values & Behaviors

These are the key beliefs and principles that you uphold at work. In the descriptive part of your core values, it's useful to guide people around specific behaviors you strive to cultivate in your organization and the ones that you absolutely refuse to tolerate.

In this section, you'll answer:

What do we value most? What are the principles that helps us be at our best?

Component 3: Desired Emotional Impact

It's important to make it clear how you want people to feel when they interact with your company and why this matters. This part describes the desired emotional impact that you want to have on your employees, clients, and the world at large.

In this section, you'll answer:

What is the emotional impact we need to have on the employees and customers to be our best?

Component 4: A Good Colleague is...

This part describes the behaviors that are non-negotiable—the ones people must uphold if they truly care about building a world-class organization and being... a stunning colleague, no matter what their role is or where in the company hierarchy they are situated.

In this section, you'll answer:

What does it takes to be a fantastic colleague?

Examples might include:

- Have a truly excellent work ethic. Invoke passion and enthusiasm into everything you do and every team you work with.
- Always strive to produce award-winning or innovative work.
- Never settle for average. Aim for remarkable. Always think “How can I do that better? How can I make that more amazing?”

Also, don't be afraid to include the kinds of behaviors that won't be accepted! What Not To Do can sometimes be more informative than the What To Do.

Component 5: A Good Leader is...

This section of your Culture Playbook helps people with leadership responsibilities to understand what they need to do and why it matters, outlining the key behaviors, the best practices, and the impact you want them to have on their teams.

In other words: it helps leaders become a force multiplier for culture within their respective business units, rather than just another cog in the wheel.

In this section, you'll answer:

What are our core leadership principles?

Examples might include:

- Purpose-driven leadership
- Managers who have the willingness and courage to lead
- Managers who build and run healthy teams
- A belief that leadership is a group sport

How you end up laying out these five key elements can be as simple, as creative, as long, or as short as you'd like. From the fun and casual to the formal and polished, here's a short list of companies' varied approaches to a culture guide/playbook.



A Few Examples

[NFX Company Culture Playbook](#)

[Enphase Culture Playbook](#)

[How Google Works](#)

[Stripe's Quick Guide to Culture](#)

[HubSpot Culture Code](#)

[PandaDoc Culture Code](#)

Contributing Sources: *Aga Bajer's Culture Strategy*

CONCLUSION

Many business leaders will tell you that their company's most important asset is their team. Because they understand how valuable their people are, they make a conscious effort to provide competitive salaries and benefits. They strive to make employees feel like a part of the big picture and create a work environment in which people enjoy collaborating with one another.

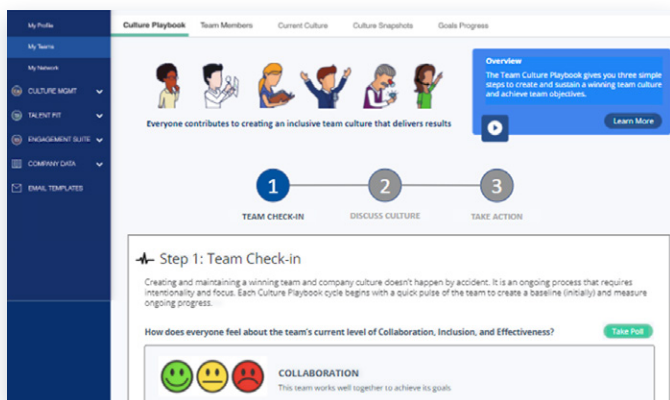
Consequently, staff may be relatively happy. But leaders who leave it at that overlook something just as important to employees as compensation, perks, and even being aligned with organizational goals. Most people want to feel great about their team and the company they work for.

Instead of being satisfied with employees who seem content, leaders should activate the kind of company culture that will help them thrive. Why? It's not only advantageous for the individuals who work for them; it's great for business. When people are proud of what they achieve professionally, they're more potent agents for organizational success.

A strong culture is built on sustaining the kind of behaviors that drive ongoing best performances. Companies that help people internalize winning behaviors cultivate fulfilled, engaged employees who are team players. These employees become champions, and your employer brand and overall organizational effectiveness get a boost. That's why developing your Culture Playbook is so important.

But first, if you're struggling to define, build, or understand your current culture, we can help!

Humantelligence enables you to align culture to strategy and improve your team's performance. We have a three-step Culture Playbook feature to help guide you through driving better collaboration, inclusion, and team effectiveness more quickly. With ongoing and frequent assessment of your team's culture, you'll be well on your way to developing your own organization's culture playbook to attract, retain, and continually engage team members.



humantelligence®
THE CULTURE SOFTWARE

Humantelligence is the leading cloud-based platform for the accurate measurement of culture at every level of an organization, from individuals and teams to overall corporate culture. Humantelligence is the first agile culture management platform to help you operationalize culture. You can improve collaboration, drive team performance, hire for culture, and build inclusion across your company day by day, all in one solution. For a consultation, contact us at www.humantelligence.com.