


Stuck in the Status Quo?

Overcome an unhealthy workplace culture*



*Even if you don't
realize you're
in one

by Dr. Rosie Ward & Dr. Jon Robison

No one would argue that they want an unhealthy workplace culture, one filled with apathetic or even disgruntled employees who hate what they are doing and where they work.

Sadly, though, this type of environment and the resulting attitudes are all too common. (*Even if employees don't put such comments on job satisfaction surveys for fear of retribution.*) Why? Because many organizations are “stuck” in the status quo, operating under long-held beliefs rooted in outdated paradigms.

Like a house with olive-green appliances and shag carpet, many workplace cultures need updating or sometimes a complete gutting that involves tearing down walls and rewiring for a more modern, open feel that fosters a positive, productive atmosphere for employees.

If you know there is something wrong with the atmosphere in your organization but can't seem to put your finger on what the exact problems are, or if you don't know the current status of your organizational and employee wellbeing, you might want to spend some time and attention understanding what workplace culture is and how you can make sure your organization has a thriving one. This can only be done by getting unstuck and moving towards a new way of thinking and doing.

“We need to challenge the status quo and outdated paradigms to not only survive, but to thrive in our ever-changing world,” write Dr. Rosie Ward and Dr. Jon Robison in their new book, “How to Build a Thriving Culture at Work, Featuring the 7 Points of Transformation.” The step-by-step guide for identifying an organization's culture and wellbeing problems and systematically developing strategies to fix them is due out this fall.

“It's time to reverse this insanity and create a process to build thriving organizational cultures that free, fuel, and inspire people to bring their best selves to work,” according to Ward and Robison.

A “thriving workplace culture,” “organizational health,” or whatever you choose to call it, is the most important competitive advantage companies have, according to Patrick Lencioni, renowned organizational consultant and author of “The Advantage.” These days, previous competitive advantages such as strategy, technology, finances, and marketing are of less relevance. This is not because they don't exist or aren't important, but because they don't serve as differentiators from other companies within the marketplace. What remains to separate your organization from your competitors is a thriving workplace culture and the benefits it provides.

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Everyone wins in a thriving workplace culture

The right culture makes all the difference for every stakeholder — the employer, employees, and customers/clients. Employers get more productive workers who think critically and creatively to ensure they are contributing everything they can. Employees feel valued and appreciated, so they enjoy and are engaged in their work; and this promotes their physical and emotional health as well. Customers/clients receive top-quality products and/or service from workers who take pride in what they do.

In his book “Grow: How Ideals Power Growth and Profit,” Jim Stengel recorded a 10-year study of the world’s 50 top businesses, including Apple, and determined that those that centered their businesses on a culture of improving people’s lives had a growth rate three times that of competitors in their industry. While the main focus of these organizations may be on improving customers’/clients’ lives, these top performing companies also paid major attention to another all-important constituent: their employees.

It’s safe to say that a healthy, thriving workplace culture is critical for business and the bottom line. Likewise, it is a necessary foundation for any worksite wellness or wellbeing initiative to have a chance of succeeding. To illustrate the importance of a healthy culture, the new eBook, “Six Questions that Make Creativity More Valuable Than \$\$\$ When Planning Your Wellness Program,” poses a multiple-choice question for readers to answer: Where would you rather work?

- A workplace with a traditional Cadillac wellness program, but a bad boss is in charge and all the work processes are dysfunctional.
- A workplace with a visionary boss and empowering functions and policies, but no wellness program.

According to eBook author and Hope Health President Shawn M. Connors, “People and their families are much more likely to experience wellbeing if their workplace is healthful.”

A positive culture is also a necessary foundation for any worksite wellness or wellbeing initiative to have a chance of succeeding. Without it, wellness efforts are pointless.

Defining “culture”

Before going any further, it is important to get a firm understanding of what a workplace culture really is and what it means to have a healthy one. The term “culture” as it pertains to an organization is thrown around with the assumption that everyone knows what it means. However, most people wouldn’t be able to accurately describe the term. When most HR professionals and leaders describe “culture,” they are referring to:

- Policies
- Procedures
- Communication practices
- Programs
- Rewards
- Leadership behaviors

However, this description and the list of components is really not the culture but rather the “climate,” or as Edgar Schein, PhD, the guru and leading researcher on corporate culture, describes as the manifestations of the culture.

And when most wellness professionals describe a “healthy culture” or a “culture of health/wellness,” they are referring to:

- Healthy eating policies
- Healthy food and exercise classes available onsite
- Behavior change programs
- Communications reinforcing healthy behaviors

In their book, Ward and Robison rely on Schein’s culture description. He defines culture as “the hidden force that drives most of our behavior both inside and outside organizations.”

Defining “thriving workplace culture”

OK, so now that the definition of “culture” has been established, what does it mean to have a thriving one? According to leading organization consultant Patrick Lencioni, a healthy organization is one in which there are:

- Minimal politics
- Minimal confusion
- High morale
- High productivity
- Low turnover

Culture is “the hidden force that drives most of our behavior both inside and outside organizations.”

– Edgar Schein, PhD,
corporate culture expert

Many problem organizations may offer aerobics classes, provide pedometers, give money toward gym memberships, and offer access to fruits and vegetables in the cafeteria, but these companies may not be healthy.

On the flipside, what does an unhealthy organization look like? In an article for “Entrepreneur,” Robert McGarvey outlined some warning signs of trouble with the company culture, including:

- Difficulty in hiring talented people
- Employees arriving at work and leaving for home right on time, no one putting in any extra effort to go above and beyond
- Low attendance at company events
- An “us-versus-them” mentality between employees and management
- Low quality products/service and low customer satisfaction

These warning signs point to just how imperative a healthy culture is for an organization not only to survive, but to thrive. Yes, a successful company needs to be smart, excelling in business basics such as strategy, operations, finance, marketing, and technology. However, being “smart” is only half of the equation, Ward and Robison write. An organization also needs to be healthy. Lencioni writes, “Once organizational health is properly understood and placed into the right context it will surpass all other disciplines in business as the greatest opportunity for improvement and competitive advantage. Really.”

Unfortunately, not enough focus is placed on organizational health. Or if there is a focus on health, it’s not the right approach to create a thriving culture and thriving organizational wellbeing. Organizations too often try to create a thriving culture from the outside-in via communication tactics, surveys, and employee training. These fail long-term because building organizational wellbeing and a thriving workplace culture requires an inside-out approach that starts with shifting thinking of the leaders, developing quality leaders, and creating a trusting environment where employees feel valued.

Even worse, companies will have signs of a dysfunctional culture but try to create a “culture of health” by offering aerobics classes, providing pedometers, giving money toward gym memberships, and offering access to fruits and vegetables in the cafeteria. Their efforts, though likely well-meaning, are severely misguided. This misguided focus is what it means to be “stuck” (*operating under long-held beliefs rooted in outdated paradigms*).

“While these opportunities may provide some positive health benefits, they do not address the only (*nor the most important*) aspects of individual wellbeing,” Ward and Robison write. “From an organizational perspective, the potential benefits to the company from such initiatives pale in comparison to the benefits of creating an environment where politics and confusion are minimal, relationships and open communication are cherished, and employees are intrinsically motivated to come to the workplace and be involved in something larger than themselves, something that contributes meaning and purpose to their lives.”

By now you might be thinking, “Whoa, that’s pretty deep,” “How is my company performing?” and/or “What should my organization do to make sure that it has this ‘competitive advantage’ of a thriving culture?” Well, read on.

Do you have thriving organizational wellbeing? Ask yourself these questions:

- Is the executive leadership team truly a cohesive one? Do the leaders work together as a team and give consistent direction to employees?
- Are the mission, vision, and values clearly articulated and shared/reinforced continually and not just brushed over during new employee orientation? Do all employees know how they fit within the vision and values so employees understand why they and their work matter?
- Are employees empowered and enabled to leverage their strengths and encouraged to take initiative in situations?
- Do leaders and the work climate provide employees with autonomous support (*versus using incentives/penalties to drive behaviors*)?
- Is clear, timely, and meaningful communication provided for employees? Do employees share ideas and feedback that management actually listens to and uses?
- Do managers and leaders provide clear, timely, and meaningful feedback for employees in the spirit of ongoing growth and development (*versus simply measuring performance*)?

- Does the climate foster innovation, creativity, and meaningful work?
- Do leaders truly value employees? Do employees feel valued?
- Are employees encouraged and supported to be authentic and be themselves?
- Do people within the organization respect, support, and care about one another as people, not just as employees there to complete certain job tasks?
- Is accountability embraced? Are rules clear and apply to everyone?
- Are employees given the tools and resources to work safely and productively?
- Do resources, programs, policies, and the environment support employees' to thrive in all areas of wellbeing?
- Are employees happy and proud to work for your organization?

If you answered “no” to any of these questions or had to pause and didn’t know for sure whether you could honestly answer “yes,” it’s time to focus on understanding your company’s culture. Chances are good that your organization could use some help and needs to make a shift in the way it thinks and operates.

Building a thriving workplace culture

The good news is that help to (re)build your organizational wellbeing and workplace culture is on the way. In their book due out this fall, Ward and Robison have a step-by-step blueprint for improving organizational and employee wellbeing and creating a thriving work culture. The duo call their strategy *The 7 Points of Transformation*. Ward and Robison compare building a thriving culture at work that supports and enhances both organizational and employee wellbeing to building a structurally sound and aesthetically pleasing house. Of course, since an organization is not just a physical structure, but really more like a living, breathing entity, the “7 Points” will also show you how to make the house a home — a place where employees will want to be!

“If you take shortcuts, skip an important step, or use outdated designs or materials, the house will not be able to withstand the test of time — including weathering the inevitable future storms,” the two write.

The same is true for building organizational and employee wellbeing. If you don’t take the time and effort to make sure you’re creating a thriving workplace culture, “it’s like building a house on quicksand; it is not sustainable and can have dire consequences,” Ward and Robison explain.

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— Rosie Ward and Jon Robison

Although transformation may not be quick, easy, or comfortable, it's often necessary for survival. Take the process one step at a time, just like you would when building a house. Here is a very brief summary of the *7 Points of Transformation* that Ward and Robison believe are necessary to create a thriving organizational structure. For a more detailed explanation, you'll have to wait until this fall when the book is released. In the meantime, though, you can begin to see what it will take to truly transform the way your company thinks and operates.

The 7 Points of Transformation:

- **Transformation Point #1: Survey the Land**

(Data Collection & Analysis) Become knowledgeable about the current state of your organization and the employee experience. Look holistically at data to fill in any gaps by collecting additional data.

- **Transformation Point #2: Create the Blueprint**

(Strategic and Annual Planning) Planning needs to be approached methodically and holistically to develop and align long-term vision and goals with annual objectives.

- **Transformation Point #3: Pour a Solid Foundation**

(Developing Quality Leaders) Culture is built team-by-team, and every interaction employees have with leaders reinforces their beliefs and feelings about the culture.

- **Transformation Point #4: Frame the House**

(Create a Supportive Climate) Communication will make or break any human interaction and is often a point of breakdown for organizations. Communicating is a two-way street that requires disseminating clear, relevant information but also listening and incorporating feedback.

- **Transformation Point #5: Wiring the House**

(Rethinking Change) The correct question for consideration here is not "How can we motivate people to ____?" but rather "How can we create the conditions within which people will motivate themselves to ____?"

- **Transformation Point #6: Decorate the House**

(Deploy Quality, Evidence-Based Programs and Resources) Too often organizations start at this point, skipping or skimping on the first five *Points of Transformation*; they want to start "doing stuff." Just because another company deployed a program or resource that worked doesn't mean it will work for your organization. Whatever programs and resources are being deployed to support all areas of wellbeing need to meet the unique needs of your organization and employees, be evidence-based, well-rounded in supporting total wellbeing; inclusive, and supportive of positive human relationships.





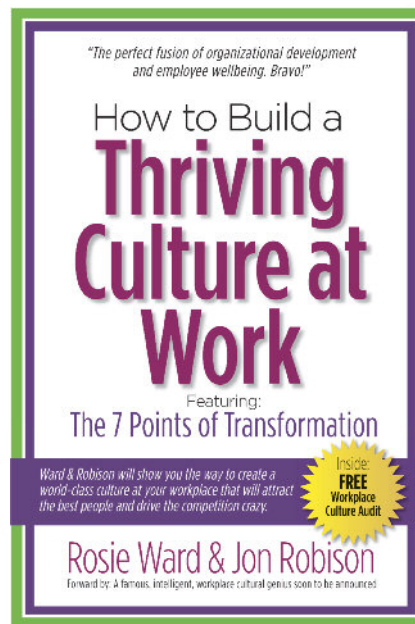
- **Transformation Point #7: Perform Regular Maintenance**

(*Continuous Quality Improvement*) Both culture and wellbeing can be difficult to measure; they are moving targets because the world and life are ever-changing. It is critical to be able to articulate where you've been, where you are currently, and where you're going in terms of organizational and employee wellbeing.

So, there you have it in a nutshell. Are you stuck in the status quo? Is the culture of your workplace as healthy as it could be? Whether your company is a relatively new entity or is on the local historic registry, updating your organization's way of thinking and doing to create a thriving culture is the smartest business strategy there is.

Now what?

Until the book by Ward and Robison becomes available this fall, begin discussions within your organization on the true meaning and importance of a thriving culture and get people excited about the idea of making the company as healthy as possible. Getting buy-in to make the necessary changes can be half the battle. Once you have acceptance that things will be changing, you will be that much better positioned to get started on your transformation.



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Fall 2014!

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About Salveo Partners

Our passion at Salveo Partners, LLC is helping organizations build thriving workplace cultures through a fusion of organizational development and employee wellbeing.

Salveo is the Latin word meaning to be well or to be in good health. Being “well” is not limited to eating nourishing foods and exercising; it encompasses so much more. Being “well” to us means that people are able to move towards living their life by design rather than by circumstances, by becoming more fully engaged in life — whether at work, play or anywhere in between.

We believe organizational and employee wellbeing are inextricably interconnected so that trying to promote employee wellbeing in an unhealthy work environment is like trying to swim upstream — exhausting and guaranteed to end up poorly. And we also believe that organizational wellbeing is not primarily about whether a company offers to pay for employees’ gym memberships or offers weight loss programs at work, but rather whether they create an atmosphere that frees, fuels, and inspires people to bring their best selves to work.

We offer consulting services, speaking engagements, and coaching that combines more than 50 years of experience in health, fitness, nutrition, coaching, intrinsic motivation, organizational development, and leadership training. We're a diversified and dispersed team of people who are passionate about our craft, and work productively and independently for a shared vision of the future.

We train and prepare leaders in building thriving organizations that foster wellbeing, in order to recruit and retain talented people, improve productivity, foster creativity and job satisfaction, and to compete effectively in the world economy.

We also share, educate, and inform readers how to transform and transcend dated social and management constructs, and emerge as powerful and effective players across a wide variety of industries by building thriving cultures of wellbeing.



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 Sustainable
Organizational Well-Being



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Rosie Ward, PhD, MPH, MCHES, BCC, CIC®, CVS-FR

Rosie is an accomplished speaker, writer, and consultant. She has spent more than 20 years in worksite health promotion and organizational development. In addition to her bachelor's degrees in Kinesiology and Public Health, and a doctorate in Organization and Management, Rosie is also a Certified Intrinsic Coach® Mentor, Certified Judgment Index Consultant, a Certified Valuations Specialist, and a Board Certified Coach.

Rosie uses this unique combination to work with executive and leadership teams to create comprehensive development strategies centered on shifting thinking patterns. She is a contributing author to the book, "Organization Development in Health Care: High Impact Practices for a Complex and Changing Environment." She leverages these principles to help organizations develop and implement strategies to create a thriving workplace culture that values and supports wellbeing and the unique, intrinsic needs of employees.

Jon Robison, PhD, MS, MA

Jon is an accomplished speaker, teacher, writer, and consultant. He has spent his career advocating that health promotion shift away from its traditional, biomedical, control-oriented focus, with a particular interest in why people do what they do and don't do what they don't do. Jon has authored numerous articles and book chapters and is a frequent presenter at national and international conferences. He is also co-author of the book, "The Spirit and Science of Holistic Health: More Than Broccoli, Jogging, and Bottled Water; More Than Yoga, Herbs, and Meditation." This work formed the foundation for one of the first truly holistic employee wellness programs - Kailo. Kailo won awards in both Canada and the United States, and the creators lovingly claim Jon as its father.

Learn about Rosie and Jon's consulting and speaking services:

Rosie & Jon can transform your workplace! Contact them for more information on their proven organizational development and employee wellbeing speaking and consulting services today.

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