

# JWC's "ONE TEAM" CULTURE

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**All organisations have cultures.** The only choice we have is whether we shape them or we let them shape us. Culture plays one of the biggest roles in the success or failure of all strategies and initiatives and in organisational spirit and performance. The Joint Warfare Centre (JWC) leadership team has embarked on a journey of intentionally shaping a healthier, high-performing culture to become even more effective in serving NATO. JWC calls it the "One Team" culture. Learn more about its insights and how aligning organisational culture with strategy and structure can boost performance of individuals and teams, and help fulfill its mission.

## Why culture matters to JWC: "Culture eats strategy for breakfast"

All organisations, from military and government to private institutions and corporations, have cultures. Cultures are made up

of historic habits, behaviours and engrained thinking, *e.g.* around how we make decisions, how openly we speak and listen, how we work in teams. The culture this creates determines much more than anything else the results we get. While often well intentioned, some of those habits get in the way, especially when strategic, operational changes or stretch goals need to be achieved. Leaders must choose whether to shape their cultures in a meaningful way that enables success, or to simply allow the culture to shape their organisation, for better or worse. JWC took the proactive approach.

## The start: Knowing and acknowledging where we are

Like any professional or personal endeavour, before we go anywhere, we need to know where we are and where we want to go. So, in January 2013, the JWC invited every employee for the first time to partici-

pate in a unique culture survey that would help to understand more clearly the current strengths and challenges of its organisational culture. The survey was done in partnership with Senn Delaney, a recognised leader in the field of culture shaping.

The senior team, at the time led by Major General Jean-Fred Berger and Chief of Staff Brigadier General John W. Doucette, was grateful for the high response rate as well as the quality, balance, honesty and thoughtfulness of the feedback received from the survey. It provided a clear and thorough starting point for an ongoing journey that some have described as being one of the most valuable, rewarding and meaningful ones of their careers.

## Overcoming the "Jaws of Culture"

The culture survey told a compelling story of the JWC culture. JWC has a strong culture characterised by a strong sense of pride



**Left and middle:** Nearly the entire JWC staff has attended cultural-shaping sessions. **Right:** JWC Human Resources and Public Affairs Office teams with Mr. Diekmann. Photographs by JWC PAO.



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for the difference JWC makes, exceptional commitment and care for its mission, unmatched expertise in its field, and mutual support within teams, especially in times of urgency. This culture was getting JWC, and hence NATO, good results.

However, the leadership also realised how much energy, experience, ideas and agility get lost through some of the habits and beliefs that determine the daily experience, interactions and choices of people. At JWC, these cultural barriers are now often referred to as the "Jaws of Culture." Dysfunctional organisational habits, such as silo mentality, bureaucracy and resistance to change, act like jaws in the culture that can chew up your strategies and initiatives, or as the saying goes, "eat strategy for breakfast". The JWC leadership understood that the JWC culture could become a strategic advantage, helping to bring out the best in individuals and teams; or at worst, the "Jaws of Culture" would be a significant drag on JWC's efficiency and effectiveness.

## The journey begins: culture-shaping sessions clarify the way forward

During a very engaging two-day off-site culture-shaping session, the JWC leadership team started clarifying and aligning around:

- the connection of its culture with strategic and operational needs;

## WHY CULTURE MATTERS?

Highlights from a 2013 "global culture and change management survey" confirm that whilst culture is critical to success, intentionally leading it is underutilized in organisations:

- **86%** of executive-level respondents believe that their organisation's culture is critical to business success.
- **60%** said culture is more important than the company's strategy or operating model.
- **96%** said some form of culture change is needed within their organisation.
- **51%** believe their organisation is in need of a major culture overhaul.
- **45%** do not think their culture is being effectively managed.
- At **57%**, skepticism due to past failed efforts was the number one reason for resistance to change.
- **70%** of those respondents whose changes were adopted and sustained leveraged organisational pride and emotional commitment.

Source: Strategy& <http://www.strategyand.pwc.com>

- the key cultural traits that would support and hinder future success;
- what it would require from them personally, as a leadership team, and for the organisation to successfully and sustainably shape a JWC culture.

Since then, being intentional about shaping the "One Team" JWC culture has become a

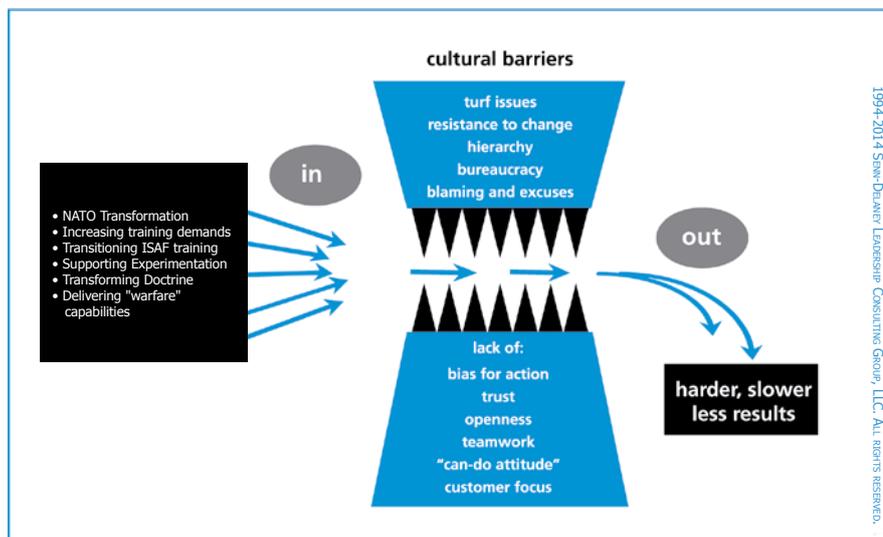
strategic priority and a rewarding path for everyone involved. The JWC leadership is convinced that creating and leading a thriving, high-performance culture aligned with its purpose and mission is a critical factor in effective execution of the strategy. It is a vital strategy for success in itself. Among the many demonstrated benefits that translate into measurable, sustainable, improved performance, here are the most important ones for JWC:

**A more innovative organisation:** New missions and exercises will require new ideas and approaches, implementing more change faster, as well as ongoing learning and best practice-sharing across the organisation.

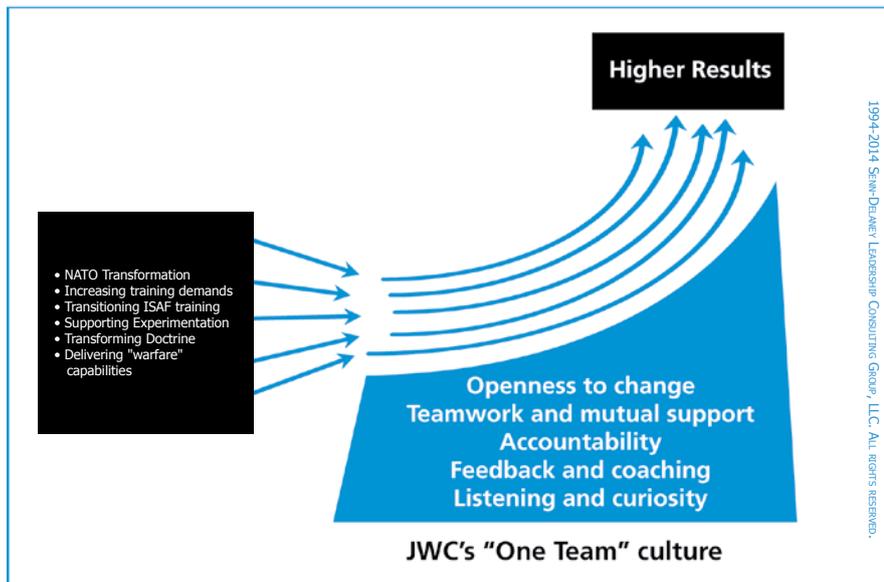
**Consider this:** As you read this, think about your own organisation, and ask yourself the 10 percent question: What if you had a culture that would help you and others save 10 percent of your time on implementing change?

**Working more as "One Team":** Designing high-quality and complex exercises, as well as flawless execution, quality and agility require excellent team work — particularly across Divisions and hierarchies. As with most other NATO bodies, building teams needs to happen despite challenges of high

## JAWS OF CULTURE



## CULTURE AS A LAUNCHING PAD



turnover, different military, civil, professional or national backgrounds and leadership styles, relatively little influence on recruitment, limited traditional positional power, fixed staff size, increasing workload and challenging time constraints.

**Consider this:** Reflect about your own organisation. What if it took 10 percent less time to fully integrate new staff members into teams? What if you and others could spend 10 percent less time on issues related to silos or bureaucracy? What if 10 percent more often you could take decisions, which create the best outcomes for the larger organisation and everyone was committed to them?

**Individuals at their best:** Last but not least, to fulfil its mission, JWC would like to attract great talent from inside and outside of NATO. The leadership believes that to drive innovation and great teamwork, every person needs to feel valued, thrive, and see his or her time at JWC as a career pinnacle.

**Consider this:** What value would it bring to your own organisation if people could be at their personal best even more often? What if everyone felt he or she had 10 percent more energy or had 10 percent more ideas to contribute? What if the organisation could move 10 percent faster through increased focus, fewer disruptions, high levels of curiosity and listening, and supportive and genuine feedback?

### A culture-shaping roadmap: a systematic "battle plan"

It is because of this strategic value and relevance of JWC's and hence NATO's success that the current Commander, Major General Erhard Buehler, together with Brigadier General Doucette, decided to engage the entire organisation in a thorough, systemic and ongoing culture-shaping process.

Shaping a culture is a journey, not an event. For the JWC leadership team, shaping the "One Team" culture is an ongoing commitment to pay equal attention to strategy,

structure and culture. The process requires an integrated approach that must begin at the top and be embedded throughout the entire organisation. Most leaders who try to shape the culture on their own do not succeed. However, if done correctly, shaping a culture can be a very successful, positive, rewarding and stimulating process.

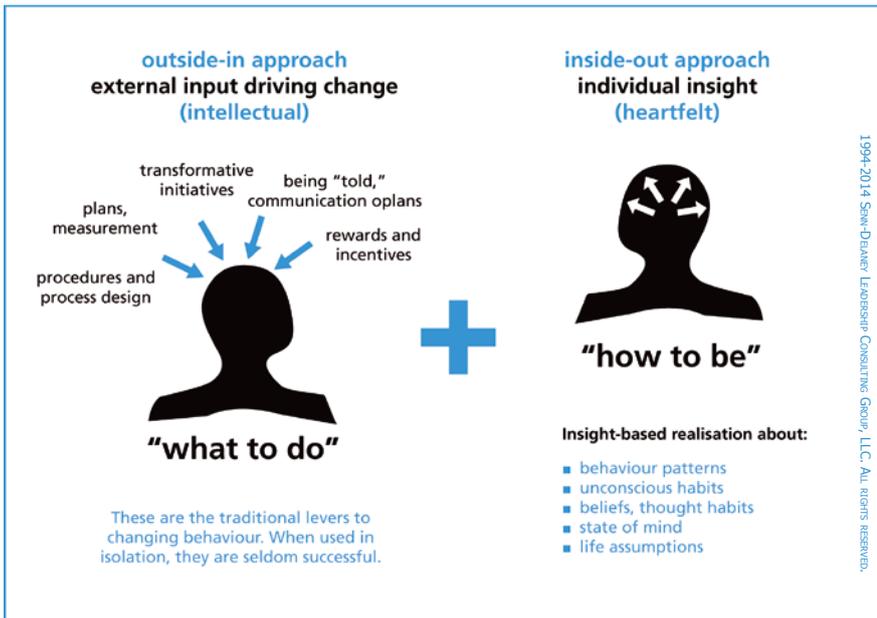
Committed to the success of this journey, the leadership team chose to partner with a global leader in the field of culture shaping, Senn Delaney, to leverage from its decades of hands-on experience and a proven methodology in shaping cultures, and a process to enable JWC to continue the transformation on its own. JWC follows a comprehensive system of change, with an awareness of and a focus on the following principles that Senn Delaney has determined are required elements of successful culture shaping:

- purposeful leadership
- personal change
- broad engagement with energy, momentum and mass
- focused sustainability

**Purposeful leadership:** Culture shaping is a leader-led process. Research shows that starting at the top is critical because organisations tend to become "shadows of their leaders". JWC started with nurturing even a more mutually supportive, high-performance team at the top that would model the desired culture. Team members learned about what it takes to shape a healthy, high-performance culture and their role in it. Based on this growing understanding, they created a systematic execution plan to support the process, like any other strategy. Through the process, the team was able to create more clarity around the purpose and reason for shaping the culture, and what is in it for JWC. Based on this perspective, as well as input from the initial culture survey, feedback from early culture-shaping off-site sessions, and their own experiences, they started to explicitly define JWC's "One Team" values, behaviours and mindsets that would need to become a way of life and they began to get aligned around them.



## EFFECTIVE BEHAVIOUR CHANGE



A "Culture Leadership Team", led by Major General Buehler, meets regularly to oversee the progress of a culture-shaping roadmap.

**Personal change:** Culture is the sum of all individual choices people make every day. Therefore, shaping a culture really starts at a personal level. Since people can only change behaviours that they are aware of and willing to change because it makes sense to them to do so, this requires an insight-based approach. It is only when "people do it for themselves" that shaping a culture is effective and sustained. Starting with the top team, people at JWC started their personal journeys with two-day off-site sessions that provided the environment needed for personal insights to flow. Where possible, this was done in natural work teams and led by senior leaders of these teams. Leaders and participants at all levels often reported that after some initial skepticism, they found these workshops to be one of the most valuable and rewarding experiences of their career.

**Momentum with energy and mass:** Cultures often resist what they need. Hence, momentum, energy and critical mass are needed to engage all employees. The faster people are engaged in the process, the more likely the culture is to shift. For example,

at JWC, after a few months, almost every individual had attended a culture-shaping off-site session, even during such major exercises as STEADFAST JAZZ. To obtain momentum and build internal competence for the future, JWC used Senn Delaney's transfer of competence process to train five leaders to carry out the culture-shaping sessions going forward. These JWC culture-shaping facilitators will help engage new joiners to live the JWC culture, as part of the on-boarding process.

**Focused sustainability:** For the "One Team" culture to become a new way of life, systematic reinforcement is needed at the individual, team and the organisation levels. These are a few examples. At JWC, more than 20 culture coaches have started supporting their respective teams through simple, short, and very regular conversations as well as feedback and coaching to link the healthy high-performance mindsets to their daily work. In addition, every team at JWC will attend a one-day follow-up workshop. This helps reinforce and expand on insights from the initial culture-shaping session, and provide ways to apply their learning to relevant team goals and issues, and create mutual support and commitment on how the team will live the JWC values.

JWC has also started looking at institutional practices to ensure they drive as much as possible toward the desired culture — including, but not limited to: communication, training, and Human Resources (HR) practices. Regular measurement of the impact of the culture initiatives and follow-up culture surveys will provide precious, timely feedback to leaders to ensure they remain on track. A survey conducted before any reinforcement activities began has already determined that 67 percent of respondents "believe the culture-shaping process can help to make JWC even more successful and get better results." The best is yet to come... ✦

If you would like to learn more about JWC's culture-shaping efforts, please contact Mr. Garry Hargreaves at: [garry.hargreaves@jwc.nato.int](mailto:garry.hargreaves@jwc.nato.int) or Mr. Paul Sewell at: [paul.sewell@jwc.nato.int](mailto:paul.sewell@jwc.nato.int)



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