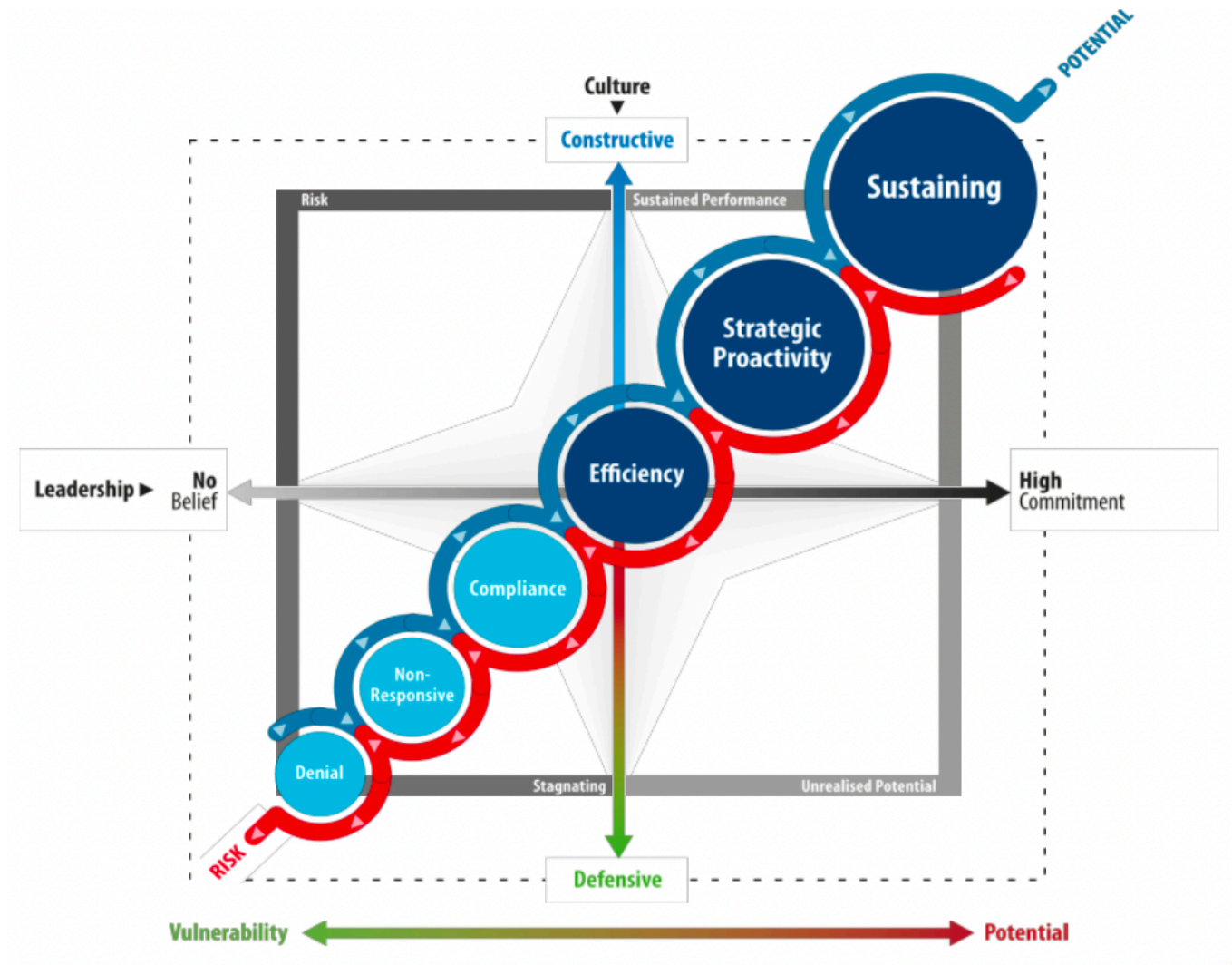


BirdsEye - Culture Leaders Network

Transformational Success Stories Guest # 3

Sébastien Dupuis
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White Paper Topic:
Stages of Organizational Consciousness Regarding Culture - Part 1



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Question # 1: Often leaders reference they're too "busy, busy, busy..." to invest the time, energy and resources to change organizational culture. What perspective do you have on this?

This is a common situation, but often a strategic illusion. Being "too busy" reflects a reactive culture where urgency overrides importance. Cultural change doesn't necessarily require more time, but rather a reallocation of priorities. Once leaders understand that culture directly influences performance, engagement, and innovation, it becomes clear that *not* investing in culture is far more costly in the long run.

That mindset is exactly *why* cultural change is so critical. Being "busy" is often a sign that we're reacting instead of leading. Culture is what drives alignment, focus, and clarity across an organization. Investing in culture doesn't take time away from the business—it gives time back by creating the conditions for people to work smarter, collaborate better, and make decisions more efficiently. If we don't make space for culture, we'll keep spinning our wheels. Culture isn't another item on the to-do list—it's the engine behind how we do everything else.

Question # 2: How helpful was the OCI organizational culture inventory / assessment in understanding your organizational norms / behaviours? (strengths and developmental requirements).

The OCI was eye-opening. It allowed us to see, with clarity and objectivity, the patterns that had become normalized in our culture—both the strengths we could build on and the areas where we needed to evolve. It revealed the implicit norms that were driving behaviour—often without people even realizing it. By mapping cultural tendencies (constructive vs. passive or aggressive), it provided a shared language and a clear structure to talk about culture. The OCI was a game-changer.

How did you, in a sense, use the tool to "clear the fog" to make cultural norms more transparent so you people could more clearly see their behavioural approach.

The OCI helped us "clear the fog" by providing a shared, objective language to talk about something that's often intangible: culture. It surfaced unspoken norms and unconscious behaviours that had become ingrained in our day-to-day—things we felt, but hadn't yet named.

Once these patterns were visible, it was easier for people to reflect on how their behaviours contributed to our collective environment. We could start connecting the dots: between culture and performance, between leadership behaviour and employee experience. It created the transparency we needed to move forward together. It shifted the conversation from judgment to awareness. Instead of asking "who's doing this wrong," we began asking "what in our culture is reinforcing this behaviour?" That opened the door to meaningful, collective change.

Question # 3: When you became more conscious of the impacts of your initial current culture (the starting point), how did you and the team estimate a set of realistic and attainable cultural change goals for your first two years of the cultural change journey?

We started by being honest about where we were and where we wanted to go. The OCI helped us map that starting point, and from there, we engaged our leadership team and employees in setting measurable, realistic goals. We didn't aim to change everything overnight—we focused on specific priorities: trust, empowerment, collaboration. We asked ourselves: *What would it look like if these values showed up in our everyday work?* From there, we translated those ideals into specific behaviours, development initiatives, and performance indicators. It was an incremental approach, but it built momentum fast.

Once we had a clear baseline, we worked as a team to define realistic, measurable goals aligned with our strategic direction. We targeted both behavioural shifts (e.g., increased accountability and collaboration) and organizational improvements (e.g., better decision-making, healthier conflict resolution and going to the heart of the matter). These targets were embedded into quarterly action plans, with specific cultural indicators to track progress.

Question # 4: What role did the feedback process (LSI leadership assessments, LSI 360 leadership assessments and LSI 360 Impact assessment) provide to the transformational journey for...

Myself: The LSI tools gave me deep insights into my personal thinking and leadership styles—especially under stress. They served as an honest and developmental mirror. It pushed me to lead with greater self-awareness and intentionality. As a leader, you don't always realize how your style affects others—until you see it through their eyes. The LSI gave me the insight I needed to grow and adapt, not just as a CEO, but as a human being.

Formal Leaders (Vice Presidents, Directors and Managers): For our leadership team, the feedback tools created a common language and framework for growth. The process created a powerful moment of self-reflection—and growth. It allowed each leader to better understand how they're behaviours influenced their teams and the broader culture. The 360 feedback, in particular, helped them connect intent with impact—and fostered greater accountability and self-awareness. Over time, we saw real shifts: more authentic leadership, improved communication, and a stronger sense of shared responsibility for shaping our culture.

Staff: At the staff level, the assessments were instrumental in fostering transparency and trust. People felt seen and heard, and they understood that this wasn't about individual performance alone—it was about collective improvement. The process helped normalize feedback as a developmental tool rather than a judgment, and it empowered teams to have more open, constructive conversations about how they work together. It also reinforced that culture is not something done to them—it's something they actively shape. Even for those not directly involved in assessments, the impact was felt. Leaders who had gone through the LSI journey showed up differently—more open, more accountable, more human. That shift built trust across the board.

Question # 5: Culture was embedded into your strategic plan, your senior leaders set clear monthly, quarterly and annual goals consistently on a roadmap and you reported progress to the board of directors on a quarterly basis – for four+ consistent years... what allowed for such great “stickability and commitment” to this leadership development and cultural change process?

We treated culture like any other strategic priority—with discipline, consistency, and accountability. It wasn’t just a one-time initiative; it became part of our operational rhythm. The key was anchoring culture in the corporate strategy. We integrated culture goals into our strategic plan, leadership development, and board reporting.

But what truly ensured long-term commitment was the genuine engagement of our leaders, and the consistent clarity and a shared belief in the “why”: building a more human, high- performing, and values-aligned workplace. We focus on continuous improvement, I believe this was the key. Everyone—from the boardroom to the front line—understood that this wasn’t about soft skills. It was about becoming the kind of company we aspired to be. That shared commitment kept us grounded, even when the work was hard and we understand that this is a marathon not a 100-meter race.

Question # 6: What type of ROI (return on investments) and / or Benefits is Assumption Life enjoying after shifting their culture into highly efficient and strategically proactive (that top 21% of cultures in Canada)? Was it worth the investment?

The results were multifaceted:

- Higher employee engagement scores (76 -80%)
- We’ve attracted and retained exceptional talent. and lower turnover. (2020 at 6% to 2024 at 3.4%)
- Stronger financial performance (increase of 62%; + 13% per year) and divisional growth rates (214%, 131%, 73%, 6%) through increased operational efficiency and innovation
- Innovation was more organic.
- Our client experience has improved—and it shows in our results.
- We’ve won national recognition, including top culture awards and top employer designations.

Yes, it was absolutely worth the investment—both in human and economic terms. The cultural transformation has created a more aligned organization. It enables us to attract top talent, navigate change with greater confidence, and unlock the full potential of our people. Beyond metrics, it’s also shifted the internal mindset—from compliance to commitment, from silos to collaboration. We’ve seen stronger leadership at various levels, more empowered teams, and a work environment where people feel safe to challenge, innovate, and grow. That kind of culture is not only good for business—it’s essential to long-term sustainability.

Question # 7: The outcome of cultural change is long term sustainable performance. Now that the firm has solidified a highly constructive culture, what will you be doing in the year ahead to build upon and sustain this momentum?

We're not slowing down—we're deepening the work. Looking ahead, we are committed to building upon this foundation of cultural and strategic excellence. Understanding that true transformation is an evolving process, we are now more attuned to areas requiring deeper focus. By addressing these nuances, we aim to further refine our practices, ensuring that the values guiding us remain vibrant and impactful. This forward-looking approach will not only reinforce our achievements but also pave the way for sustained growth and innovation.

In the year ahead, we'll continue investing in leadership development, reinforcing key cultural behaviours, and aligning new initiatives with our values. We're also being intentional about onboarding—making sure every new team member understands and experiences our culture from day one. Finally, we're expanding how we share ownership of culture—empowering teams across the organization to lead initiatives that reflect our shared values. Culture is a living thing. You sustain it by keeping it close, by evolving with it, and by never taking it for granted.

Closing Comments by Sébastien:

This transformation journey hasn't been easy, but it's been deeply rewarding. What we've accomplished proves that with clarity, commitment, and consistency, sustainable cultural change is not only possible—it becomes a driver of performance and collective pride.

We moved beyond surface-level initiatives to embed culture into the way we lead, decide, and show up every day. It wasn't about chasing perfection—it was about making progress, holding ourselves accountable, and never losing sight of the kind of organization we want to be.

Our cultural transformation has been one of the most meaningful journeys of my career. It has taught me that when people are trusted, empowered, and united by a common purpose, there is no limit to what they can accomplish. At Assumption Life, we're not just building a strong business—we're building a strong culture that will carry us forward for years to come. This isn't the end of the story. It's the beginning of a new chapter—one where culture continues to be our most powerful advantage.

Today, we stand on stronger ground, with a clearer sense of who we are and where we're going. And that, more than anything, is the real return on investment.