



Career Management Column as published in Leadership and Management Books, L&MB - [Rita Balian Allen](#), Author of *Personal Branding and Marketing Yourself*

“Why does corporate culture matter? ”

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Identifying the kind of organizational culture that is right for you is a priority to be determined early in the employment process, actually one of the first questions to ask and assess during the interview process. In fact, defining the ideal culture that is right for each of us is an important career management strategy, which requires prioritization of our own list of values compared to an organization's values, then ensuring there is alignment between the two.

Edgar Schein, a world-renowned expert on organizational culture, best-selling author and Professor Emeritus with MIT Sloan School of Management, has written numerous books on this topic and believes that leadership and culture are two sides of the same coin. Organizations are cultural units with many powerful subcultures based on several factors including occupation, history, demographics, and geography just to name a few. Culture issues can also differ depending on life phases of an organization. Organizational culture elements determine strategy, goals and modes of operating. Multicultural work environments exist presenting another layer of complexity as we continue to experience mergers, acquisitions, joint ventures, in addition to operating in a global and virtual workplace with remote teams and projects. How do we understand and successfully navigate organizational culture?

Culture is defined by exhibited behaviors throughout the organization, not just what is stated but also what is enacted. Organizational culture is the company's identity, shared values and beliefs. In reality, culture is created, defined and executed by senior management. Leadership and culture are intertwined. Culture sets the tone for how the company will operate and plays a significant role in defining a company's "employer brand" both inside the organization with

their existing employees as well as outside the organization to shareholders, customers and prospective recruits.

Organizational culture is embedded in organizations and therefore impacts everything. We live it, see it, feel it, and touch it every day within leadership and management practices, people strategies, group dynamics and teamwork, as well as individual accomplishments. It also affects how relationships are formed and developed, decision making, levels of autonomy and empowerment, individual motivation and achievement, ethical practices, diversity initiatives, as well as the demographics within the company. Therefore, understanding and determining our ideal corporate culture is a necessity for all of us to feel aligned and be successful in our careers. Asking the right questions, assessing the fit and effectively navigating culture takes some planning and strategy as follows:

Ten Strategies for Successfully Navigating Organizational Culture:

- 1) Identify and articulate the corporate culture along with norms, standards and expectations of one another. Learn and understand the organization's culture well.
- 2) Study company mission, vision, and values within culture as well as the link with the business strategy, company goals and objectives as well as the company brand.
- 3) Pay attention to cues — read surroundings, dynamics, verbal and non-verbal messages, be socially, professionally and emotionally aware of all interactions. Educate yourself; learn about differences that exist across functions, all demographics, and locations on a global level.
- 4) On a personal level, know yourself well and identify your own values and priorities; establish your personal mission for your career with goals and objectives so that you can continuously assess fit including where there is alignment as well as potential gaps.
- 5) Create, build and enhance your "personal brand" and determine the overlays with "company brand" as well as the differentiators.
- 6) Establish, build and nurture long-lasting business relationships with all key stakeholders inside the organization as well as externally within your industry and community.
- 7) Always exercise positive self talk; be positive and stay optimistic; don't allow yourself to be engaged in negative drama, set the example of exemplary leadership, be the role model of the culture in a positive and credible manner.
- 8) Find the right balance for yourself — use a mix of appropriate skills and techniques that work for you and are aligned with your preferred ways of communicating, relating and interacting.

9) Take some risk — push out of your comfort zone at times trying new approaches that may require a different way of thinking or working; keep an open mind, welcome change and allow yourself to make mistakes and embrace them as learning experiences.

10) Stay true to yourself — understanding your own values, needs and goals requires constant reevaluation and follow up including continuous assessment of alignment with organizational culture, personal reflection and decision making.

Ask Rita: Do you have a career question and/or a career story to share? Email your questions or stories to rita@ritaballenassociates.com

Rita Balian Allen is the president of Rita B. Allen Associates, a career management firm specializing in executive coaching, leadership development, management training and career development. She is a lecturer at Boston-area universities, a sought-after speaker and presenter, the author of numerous articles, blogs and the newly released book, *"Personal Branding and Marketing Yourself: The Three Ps Marketing Technique as a Guide to Career Empowerment"*. Rita was voted one of the top ten executive coaches by the Boston Women's Business Journal .