

# Leading Through A Crisis: Organisational Culture

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Simply defined, culture is “how we do things around here”.

Culture is a coordinated way of responding to a context. Whenever you have a group of people together you are going to get a culture. Therefore, culture exists in schools, culture emerges in challenges, and crises are a type of challenge.

Schein’s Iceberg model (Time stamp: 1.30 minutes) shows artefacts are at the top, the behaviours we see below this are the values, the things we relate to as being important, and beneath this are the assumptions. You need to talk about those things below the surface., what are the values, and what are they based on i.e. the assumptions.

## **How important is the organisational culture in a time of crisis? Or ‘does culture matter?’**

1. Culture impacts motivation – both positively and negatively. In a crisis you want people to be motivated to address the issues and challenges that are going on (the crisis).
2. Culture contributes to attracting the right people - the people most suited to the culture of the organisation and therefore the challenges they are working on.
3. A positive culture can impact on success, the collaboration to achieve the outcomes you are looking for.

## **Does organisational culture change in times of crisis?**

Culture is constantly evolving anyway. Values may not change, i.e. what we hold as important, but the culture, how we respond to the things that are important, will occur within the context we are currently operating in. This will happen more rapidly in times of crisis.

## **Are there elements within an organisations culture which help the organisation be resilient during and post a crisis?** (Time stamp: 9 minutes).

A positive or good culture will always:

1. Create a sense of belonging for people
2. Drive desirable outcomes.

As a leader, this is what you are wanting to achieve. If you have desirable outcomes happening but without a sense of belonging, people don’t really want to stay.

Ways to develop this positive culture:

1. Good communication: Talking about what is important.
2. The personal elements: Camaraderie and support feed into a sense of belonging. People feel supported when their own individual context is being looked after. This is not just for leaders to do, but the whole team, think, how can we support and look out for each other?
3. Have a sense of purpose, plan and a goal. Leaders need to show the pathway forward. Ability to adapt and respond is critical. Have a plan and be able also to adapt and respond to context.

The challenge is that often when you make changes people think you are affecting the values. Be sure to discuss how the change supports the values. Good culture requires effort. Keep working on it, talk and discuss what is important to you as a school.