



Execution IS the Strategy by Laura Stack Chapter 4 Tip Sheet

Shape the Culture

Employees make hundreds of independent decisions every week without consulting their superiors. What guides them? Organizational culture. It tells them how to respond to workplace situations, from handling unprecedented service requests to whether or not to risk telling the boss a new idea.

Many senior managers struggle with this concept, because they find it difficult to define. Culture is like a cloud: You know it's there, but it's nearly impossible to grasp. How do you come to a consensus on culture, and then get dozens, hundreds, or even thousands of people to think and act the way you've agreed on? You don't, really: culture evolves over time. But you can direct its evolution. Keep these things in mind while doing so:

1. **Develop an attitude of excellence for your team to follow.** Refuse to accept good enough as good enough. Make personal integrity your touchstone. Walk the talk and show them how it's done.
2. **Lay a foundation of accountability.** Everyone must accept both credit and blame for the results of their actions. A non-punitive environment will make this easier to encourage. Most people perform better when held accountable for their results.
3. **Build a culture of action and teamwork on your accountability foundation.** People must work together to make execution happen, and take calculated risks to improve their processes or projects – even knowing they might fail.
4. **Slash through the red tape.** Your team needs the time and uninterrupted focus to maximize production. Remove bureaucratic hurdles so they get plenty of both.

5. **Emphasize an atmosphere of community.** Collaboration, consensus, and mutual help all encourage a cooperative culture where everyone works together without excessive friction, remaining open to multiple perspectives and opinions.

You can't just say you want your culture to be agile, accountable, and top-quality, and then expect it to happen. What matters most is the synergistic combination of attitude and action in the workplace. Culture is not a goal to be mandated; it's the outcome of a collective set of behaviors. Dedicate yourself to developing those desired behaviors, instill them in your team members, and let those rules guide them as they meet change head on. Their weapon? Instant execution.

© 2013 Laura Stack. Laura Stack, MBA, is America's Premier Expert in Productivity™. For over 20 years, Laura has worked with business leaders to execute more efficiently, boost performance, and accelerate results in the workplace. Her company, The Productivity Pro, Inc., provides productivity workshops around the globe to help attendees achieve Maximum Results in Minimum Time®. Laura is the bestselling author of six books, with over 20 foreign editions, published by Random House, Wiley, and Berrett-Koehler, including her newest work, *Execution IS the Strategy* (March 2014). Widely regarded as one of the leading experts in the field of performance and workplace issues, Laura has been featured on the CBS Early Show, CNN, the *Wall Street Journal*, and the *New York Times*. Connect via her [website](#), [facebook](#), or [twitter](#).