

Culture & Change Models

“The culture of a group [is]... a pattern of shared basic assumptions learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, which has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems.”

—Edgar H. Schein, *Organizational culture and leadership* (2010).

Schein developed a model of culture that encompasses three “layers”

1. **Artifacts:** The visible aspects of an organizations, which easily observable to an outsider (e.g., dress, modes of speaking and interacting, the physical organization of space, written policies, logos and other design elements, slogans, rituals, etc).
2. **Values:** Explicitly espoused statements about what the organization values, which organizational insiders use to explain why they do the things they do (i.e., the visible artifacts)
3. **Assumptions:** The deep-seated, underlying, and unconscious beliefs that ultimately drive the organization. These form the core of an organization’s culture. They hold the highest explanatory power of the three layers but are the hardest to discern.

Depending on the nature of the change effort, change agents need to focus on different layers of culture

1. **First-order change:**
 - o Smaller and more surface-level, relatively easy to assess
 - o Targets the artifacts layer
 - o “Getting better at what we already do”
2. **Second-order change:**
 - o Harder, deeper, difficult to assess
 - o Targets the values and/or assumptions layer
 - o “Getting better by fundamentally changing what we do”

Whether someone is embarking on first- or second-order change, it is important to consider the different ways that change happens and to draw from different models of change. Here we present change models as described by Adrianna Kezar in *How Colleges Change*.



Model	Characteristics	Reflections Questions	Related DAT Activities
Cultural	<p>Change is driven by culture.</p> <p>Culture includes a group's values, beliefs, history, metaphors, and processes.</p> <p>Individuals resist change when they perceive a conflict in culture.</p> <p>Understanding history and context can help decipher values and culture.</p>	<p>How does the proposed change effort align with existing values and group identity?</p> <p>How does this change align with our history?</p> <p>How can I leverage our department's values and aspirations?</p> <p>In what ways does this change depend on a shift in mission/values?</p>	<p>Using surveys and interviews to understand the existing culture within a department</p> <p>Using language that aligns with existing departmental culture to frame change effort.</p>
Social Cognition	<p>Change is driven by cognitive dissonance/inconsistencies in thinking.</p> <p>Individuals resist change when they do not truly understand the change or understand how to integrate it into existing structures/mental models.</p> <p>Simply "telling" isn't an effective way to change thinking</p>	<p>How are people understanding the issue at hand?</p> <p>How is my thinking different?</p> <p>What forms of evidence would help others understand it differently? (e.g., data, anecdote, research literature, alternative interpretations)</p>	<p>Using interviews and surveys to gain an understanding of how department members think about change and to align change efforts with their existing mental maps.</p> <p>Communicating with department members regularly to help them make sense of the change effort</p>
Political	<p>Change is driven by collective action: coalition building, identifying allies, creating collective visions, negotiating.</p> <p>Rapid change is driven by constraints in resources and competing interests.</p> <p>Individuals resist change when they do not perceive it to serve their interests.</p>	<p>Which efforts are synergistic?</p> <p>Which relationships should I cultivate?</p> <p>What are the existing power structures?</p> <p>For important decisions, which stakeholders are deciders? Whose input informs those decisions?</p> <p>What resources does my change rely on? What other groups use those resources?</p> <p>WIFM (What's in it for me?) and HMWIFM (How much work is in it for me?)</p>	<p>Cultivating allies and champions</p> <p>Engaging with a broad diversity of stakeholders, both as DAT members and in communication outside of the DAT</p> <p>Aligning with existing university initiatives (and the people behind them)</p> <p>Clarifying who has the power to make key decisions and who has influence over the deciders</p>

Adapted from *How Colleges Change* by Adrianna Kezar (2014)



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Model	Characteristics	Reflections Questions	Related DAT Activities
Scientific Management	<p>Change is driven by incentives and rewards to influence behavior</p> <p>Includes top-down approaches.</p> <p>Assumes that people are rational actors.</p> <p>More effective in contexts with strong institutional hierarchy.</p>	<p>What incentives and rewards currently exist in the system?</p> <p>How can incentives and rewards shift to motivate others?</p> <p>How can the organization be restructured to create change?</p>	<p>Creating new or modifying existing departmental incentive structures, systems, policies, and guidelines</p>
Evolutionary	<p>Change is driven by unplanned, external factors (especially economic).</p> <p>Focuses on building the infrastructure to respond to external forces.</p> <p>Leaders must manage and respond to external changes.</p> <p>Leaders can stimulate change, but cannot control the outcome of change.</p> <p>Recognizes that organizations are complex, and change requires attention to the entire system.</p>	<p>What are the external factors that might impact us?</p> <p>How can we design nimble structures that can adapt to external pressures?</p> <p>How are the components of our organization interrelated?</p>	<p>Implementing flexible structures that can be adapted in response to changing external forces</p> <p>Understanding the varied and interconnected departmental and university structures, policies, and offices that could impact the change effort</p>
Institutional	<p>Institutions (e.g., colleges, universities) are embedded within a network of other institutions (e.g., peer institutions, funding agencies, accreditation agencies).</p> <p>Changes are driven by pressure and competition from outside institutions.</p> <p>Institutions have significant inertia.</p>	<p>What does our institution value?</p> <p>Who are the other institutions that influence ours?</p> <p>Which bodies are our institution accountable to? How?</p> <p>Which of these institutions value the things we want to do? How can we leverage this?</p> <p>How can the work of outside institutions be leveraged to effect change at our institution?</p>	<p>Bringing in respected outside experts to discuss the need for change</p> <p>Aligning change effort with recommendations from institutions like professional societies</p> <p>Securing funding from external sources that carry prestige</p>

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