

Culture and Change

Consider values, mission and goals.

Sometimes we just don't like the ways things are. Sometimes, we see a need to update, but the culture we live in makes that appear impossible. Truth be told, that doesn't always mean that things need to change. Sometimes, it's on us to adapt, or it's on us to mature or accept circumstances beyond our control or live with situations that we simply don't prefer. Once again, in this issue of *Hereford World*, we're talking culture and how it is impacted by the emerging conversation around sustainability.

In the last Stepping into Sustainability article (September 2024 *Hereford World*), I mentioned that all families and businesses have culture. It may be intentional or assumed, but we can all sense that it's there. Sustainability and the conversation around this emerging topic have become a cultural issue, whether you consider it political or philosophical. Incorporating anything into your operation's culture can be an exercise in patience, whether it is in your family, with your customers or within your industry. Keeping reading to learn about some common culture types and consider where your business fits. You might find that your culture is a blend of a few of these.

Clan culture

This is a tight-knit operation, usually all family or family and long-term trusted advisors. This is a culture of one-for-all and all-for-one with very little individual autonomy or room for individual gains or growth. In this type of culture, everyone is expected to pull their weight, and all reward gets shared, generally. Non-clan members are often disregarded or not trusted.

Risk and innovate culture

This culture values being the first, the best, the fastest and ahead of the pack. Ideas are accepted and encouraged.

Risks, including big financial risks, are attempted with success and failure. This operation is always first to try or 'demo' the new tech.

Results-driven culture

This culture is all about showing up, working hard; bottom-line profit and productivity are valued over all else. Similar to clan culture, everyone in this culture is expected to be 'on' all the time. It's a banner of pride to never take a day off, and vacations are expected to be for 'sometime in the future.' Expenses are kept to a minimum, even when spending money could make things easier or quicker. A showy lifestyle is disdained.

Ruler-peasant culture

In these operations there is only one 'alpha' who is in charge without question. All work plans run through the leader, as do all permissions. Individual ideas are not valued unless expressly approved by the leader. In fact, ideas implemented without that approval are seen as an affront.

Culture can change

You can change culture, but as you can imagine, this can take time and steady progress. Remember, culture forms over time, so shifting it won't happen instantly. A few fast tips to support changing culture include:

Values — these are the deep-seated beliefs that people hold and rarely shift. Is our current culture reflecting these values?

Mission — is about the purpose and the way an operation lives out their values. This absolutely can shift overtime, often as people age and mature or as new people take on leadership roles. A common farming mission is to build a business that transfers to the next generation. Does the current culture support the likelihood of that happening?

Goals — are the aims that the business intends to achieve, which are brought about by their actions. If your operation hasn't truly set or updated its short- and long-term goals recently, doing so could create an excellent pathway to changing culture.

As often mentioned, there are "4 Cs" in the sustainability movement — conservation, community, commerce and culture — which were highlighted in the last two Stepping into Sustainability articles. We will consider each of these in the coming months, along with more technical and 'what is' topics. **HW**

Editor's Note: Readers of *Hereford World* know Sarah Beth Aubrey as the long-time author of ACT's Playbook. She takes on the rapidly evolving arena of sustainability with this new column. As Aubrey explains, "We'll cover definitions, concepts and ideas. We'll explore what's current and what we in the beef industry have known about sustainability all along. We'll do a little cussing and discussing, too. Bottom line, we know our business and we know we're the best at what we do. It's time to step into sustainability and tell our story."

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