The Culture Blueprint: A Guide to Building the High-Performing Workplace
Robert Richman

SYNOPSIS

The Culture Blueprint is a guide for creating a company culture that fosters committed, engaged employees. Author Robert Richman shares the approach he used to help Zappos build a world-class culture with a renowned focus on customer service. He then tested and refined his methods with many organizations, whose stories are featured throughout the book to illustrate the power of culture change and how to achieve it.

Richman views *The Culture Blueprint* as an "operating system" to run your culture. And like any software, he writes, it must be installed properly. This requires adhering to two fundamental concepts:

- **Co-create:** You can never shape a culture alone
- **Opt-in:** Anything mandatory or forced will be met with resistance, whereas anything with invitation attracts the right people

These concepts are echoed within all of the book's recommendations for defining, articulating and implementing a new culture. Simply put, Richman defines culture as a *feeling* that results from employees' experiences. Organizations create these experiences, he writes, by honoring the seven principles of culture, paraphrased here:

1. **Culture is co-created** (this is addressed in the concepts above, but it bears repeating!) – People value that to which they contribute; abandon "command and control" and reach for inclusiveness
2. **Share what you want to keep** – Openly discuss and celebrate the culture, both internally and externally; it inspires integrity, accountability, appreciation and a spirit of generosity
3. **Culture feeds on culture** – Create a virtuous circle by capturing, preserving and sharing peoples' experiences through stories
4. **Culture is composed of systems** – Organizational systems are not independent, even if they appear to be; when making changes, consider the invisible connections and how they affect culture
5. **Culture is a game** – Like a good game, define the goal, the rules and how to keep score, and make participation optional—and fun
6. **The story is currency** – Tell values-embedded narratives in which people can locate themselves, and thus decide for themselves
7. **The secret to innovation** – Create a culture of *safety*; eliminating fear takes time, but start by *celebrating*, not just tolerating, failure

Review by Keith Cucuzza, Bridge Consulting

IMMEDIATE WINS

Building a culture takes time. It's not a "project," but a mindset to be embedded over the long-term. However, Richman offers some suggestions for leaders to help them achieve some quick wins. Here are just a few from the book:

- **The reverse beta** – Like beta testing something new, but the opposite and simpler: Try *stopping* something that might not be working.
- **Ditch personal offices** – Move into a cubical, which conveys the idea that everyone is important, while giving you greater insight into day-to-day issues and operations
- **Take calls with customers** – Make a ritual of helping customers directly; it increases organizational learning and boosts morale
- **Lose "that guy"** – You know, the one who's been dragging people down for a long time, even if he or she is a good performer
- **Eliminate the dress code** – It will cost you nothing, but employees see it as a huge benefit
- **Say "Good Morning"** – Smile and hold the door; make it a habit—then see what happens!