

The GOOD COMES FIRST CULTURE LEADERS' QUICK START GUIDE

*Practical, step-by-step guidance to define, align, and
refine your uncompromising work culture*



MARK S. BABBITT and S. CHRIS EDMONDS



The Good Comes First **Culture Leader's Quick Start Guide**

**Practical, Step-by-Step Guidance to
Define, Align, and Refine Your Uncompromising Work Culture**

Created by Mark S. Babbitt and S. Chris Edmonds,
co-authors of the bestselling book,
*Good Comes First: How Today's Leaders Create an
Uncompromising Company Culture That Doesn't Suck.*

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Welcome to the *A Leader's Guide to Creating an Uncompromising Company Culture!*

As a complement to our book, *Good Comes First*, we've created this eBook to help you assess the health of your current work culture. We then show you the steps required to implement a *Good Comes First* work culture—and increase retention rates, customer service ratings, employee engagement, productivity *and* profits—starting now.

Why Culture—And Why Now?

As we enter the culture conversation, one impossible-to-ignore data point is: “56 million.”

That's the number of US workers who quit their jobs voluntarily in 2021 and early 2022 ([US Bureau of Labor Statistics](#)). This staggering number shows the depth of employee dissatisfaction with their bosses and their companies. Unfortunately, that systemic disillusionment continues today.

Given the “Quiet Revolution” (versus the “Great Resignation”) happening in our post-pandemic world, your business is likely feeling the effects of employee dissatisfaction. You may be struggling to keep or attract talented, engaged players.

You are not alone.

Here's the reality leaders and organizations face today (and will experience in the years to come—in what we used to call the “future of work”):

“Employees of all generations desire and deserve a work environment where they are respected and validated for their ideas, efforts, and contributions—every single day.”

This one sentence represents the “good” in *Good Comes First*.

Simple, yes? And yet an uncompromising work culture like this is uncommon. Or, at least for those considering leaving their current employer, not common enough.

Chances are—even though your organization may excel in many other areas—your work culture doesn't make people feel valued or respected. Odds are your work environment isn't inspiring, driven by purpose, compassionate, fun, or productive. In addition, your current culture may not be as competitive as you would like. Or perhaps you would like

to see more business wins. Or maybe you would like your leadership team to be more purpose-driven.

You see these cultural shortcomings firsthand—and you know your company can do, and be, better. You want your company to become a better place to work and produce better results. But you don't know where to start. Without tearing apart existing operations, you don't know how to change your work culture.

Not knowing how is okay.

For now.

After all, no one taught us how to proactively manage a work culture that values respect and results equally—in other words, a work culture that puts good first. We didn't learn that skill in business school. Our bosses didn't know how to do it, nor did our mentors or predecessors.

Because until recently, no one ever asked leaders to manage company culture actively—and perhaps many leaders never thought it necessary. But today, that approach to company culture is decidedly outdated. Since Social Age thinking replaced Industrial Age “best” practices, how we think about company culture has changed significantly.

Because now, as we are all learning, culture change is often needed *before* our company can realize its full potential.

Before we start to see the business-focused results we expect (and perhaps) promised stakeholders and shareholders, it is required.

And culture change is undoubtedly needed before we can attract, retain, and celebrate talented, engaged players—the top-tier players necessary to help your company excel, now and in the months to come.

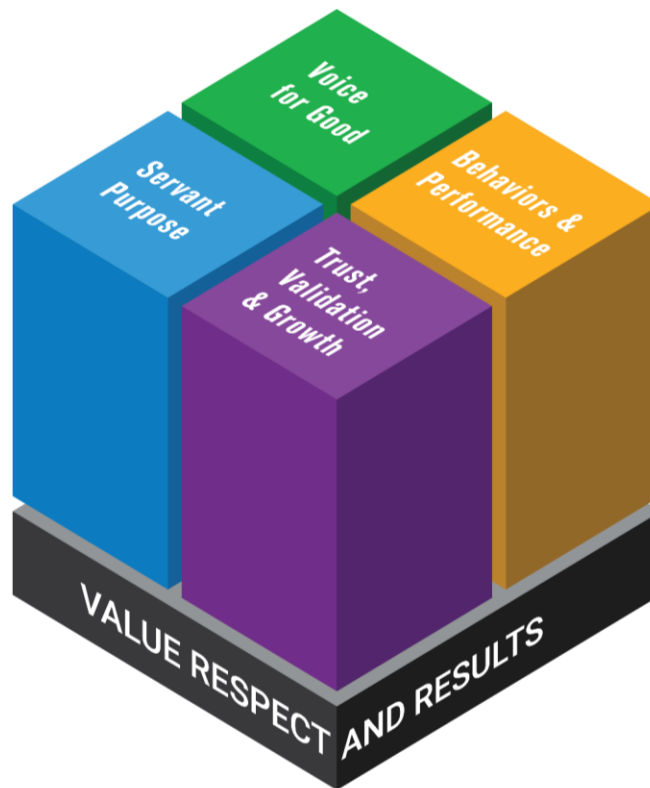
That is where this guide can help. Here we offer the blueprint needed to build and sustain a Good Comes First work culture—a purposeful, positive, and productive culture for every team leader and team member, in every interaction—every day.

Start with a Strong Foundation

How do you start to create a culture focused on doing good?

In *Good Comes First*—and now in this quick start guide—we help leaders build a Good Comes First company upon a proven foundational principle and four culture cornerstones carefully set atop that foundation.

After decades of practice, observation, and experiential education, we can tell you the organizations most capable of ensuring good comes first in every interaction intentionally feature these culture-building blocks.



Value Respect and Results

Create and sustain a work environment that expects respect and drives results.

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Our foundational principle is **Equally Value Respect and Results**.

This principle requires leaders to create and sustain a work environment that simultaneously expects respect and drives results.

The four culture cornerstones that rise from that foundation of respect and results include:

- **Live Our Servant Purpose.** This cornerstone requires leaders to define and activate a servant purpose that ensures a service-first leadership approach and equitable treatment of every contributor.
- **Lean on Trust, Validation, and Growth.** This cornerstone requires leaders to provide good people with a work environment where trust is contagious, validation is pervasive, and growth is constant.
- **Understand Behavior’s Impact on Performance.** With this cornerstone, every leader must model, measure, and celebrate people and teams that wholly align with agreed-upon desired behaviors - and they must coach and mentor people and teams that do not align with your desired behaviors.
- **Use Our Voice for Good.** This cornerstone requires leaders and team members to actively look outward, working to resolve local and global issues such as inequality, poverty, health crises, and climate change.

Equally Value Respect and Results

The foundational principle—**Equally Value Respect and Results**—is the overarching operational strategy for Good Comes First leaders.

Why do we place such emphasis on respect? Because most work cultures today suck. They’ve sucked for decades. And the lack of respect in the workplace has been contagious—for decades. Sure, disrespect has been a social problem (particularly a “social media” problem) for almost a decade now. And over the last several years, divisive approaches to politics have only worsened the situation.

The simple fact is the human race has *not* been doing a great job of doing good.

And “good”—no matter how one defines the word— starts with earning and showing respect.

In our work, workplace respect has repeatedly proven to be the primary indicator of a quality company culture. Regardless of size, revenue, or longevity, no other factor—including pay, perks and promotions—is as essential to human beings as feeling respected.

So nearly four years ago now, as we started writing *Good Comes First*, we were compelled to make respect the centerpiece of the book. Simply put: When leaders focus just as much on respect as they do results, as culture architects (and culture geeks), they will find an uncompromising—and purposeful, positive, and productive—company culture.

However, when leaders only focus on results, as we’ve trained so many leaders to do since the Industrial Age began, we’re sure to find an uninspiring—and perhaps even toxic—company culture.

But don’t just take our word for it...

Consider the findings from two comprehensive studies by MIT:

- September 2021: [MIT Sloan Management Review](#) found that workplace respect is the most crucial factor in a positive employee experience.
- January 2022: MIT Sloan also determined that [toxic company cultures are 10.4 times more likely to contribute to attrition](#) than compensation.

Yes, respect is *that* big of a deal.

In fact, if a leader focuses exclusively on results—as leaders have been known to do since the 1890s when assembly lines became commonplace...

They are doing exactly *half* their job.

The Impact of Respect on Culture

Not all work cultures suck, though.

As we've already said, we're culture geeks. We constantly ask people about the quality of their company's work culture. Many people are surprised that we're interested. Why? Because while "company culture" has become a buzzword, not many people actually take an interest (let alone take action) in improving culture.

We recently asked a member of a health and wellness company to describe their work culture. Despite still wrestling with the impact of the pandemic on the healthcare industry, she responded enthusiastically:

"Our company rocks! I have worked here since the fall of 2019.

*We are an awesome team of friends. Everyone truly cares about everyone else.
We all put our heart and soul into our work each day.*

We do what it takes each day because we believe in the products, our customers' experiences all matter, and we enjoy helping others help themselves.

When challenges arrive, we roll up our sleeves and work together to solve problems... together."

We're sure you agree: This powerful testimonial indicates the presence of a purposeful, positive, productive work culture.

And yet stories about a vibrant culture like this one are far too rare—because respect and results are rarely of equal importance to leaders. Not because they don't want to create a great place to work—most do! But for the most part, business leaders—especially old-school leaders—don't see the creation of a respectful workplace in their job descriptions.

To make matters worse: Those leaders are measured—and often compensated—exclusively on results. So they see their job as creating a productive workplace.

In other words: Leaders don't typically pay attention to the degree to which their work cultures demean, discount, and dismiss employees' ideas, efforts, and accomplishments, every day.

Leadership's Impact on Respect—And Culture

Unfortunately, because we don't yet measure leaders by the amount of workplace respect generated, an employee's need for respect, validation, and recognition of their contributions is not yet an essential metric.

So how do we get leaders to pay more attention to respect—let alone ask them to make respect just as important as results?

We talk numbers. And what numbers do leaders care about most? The numbers show undeniable results, of course. Specifically, we talk about how numbers change once an organization creates a culture where team members feel respected and validated at work:

- Employee engagement goes up by 40%
- Customer service ratings improve by 40%
- Retention increases by 35%
- And results—including profits—go up by 35%

Every leader who hears these numbers perks up at the results gains. Now we have their attention! They typically say some form of “Yes, more of that, please!”

The trick is that sustainable increases in traditional results-based metrics like these don't come first. Instead, respect drives engagement... which drives retention... which helps drive service and customer satisfaction... which drives results.

So, respect must come first.

This is why “Equally Value Respect and Results” is the foundational principle of *Good Comes First*—and why it is *the* key to creating an uncompromising company culture that doesn't suck.

That is also why our four culture cornerstones—critical as they are to creating a purposeful, positive, and productive work culture—only come into play once we set a solid foundation.

Now, let's talk a bit about those four cornerstones...

Cornerstone No. 1: Live Our Servant Purpose

Like all cornerstones, “Live Our Servant Purpose” helps align people and practices to your ideal work culture. Specifically, it enables people—leaders, employees, contractors, and even customers—to see that your company serves a purpose other than making money and increasing shareholder value.

What is a “servant purpose”?

Your organization’s servant purpose is what your company does, for whom, and to what end.

A servant purpose describes how or what your company does and how it improves the quality of life for employees, customers, and the communities served. Essentially, your servant purpose is your reason for being—other than making a profit.

That higher purpose shifts your organization’s primary focus from making money (or making truck bumpers, circuit boards, or sandwiches—none of which are innately inspiring) to generating tangible benefit to your customers *and* your community.

When a leader lives her servant purpose, she doesn’t just serve the purpose—she also serves her people. And by doing so in a selfless fashion, she serves both the cause and the well-being of the people driving that cause.

So how does this show up in a Good Comes First company?

First, you—the leader reading this guide—can’t be the only formal leader modeling your organization’s servant purpose. All members of the leadership team must model the ideal culture.

In most companies, leadership this consistent is rare. In fact, too many employees experience a crappy boss who is more concerned about compliance and conformity than creative work—a boss who doesn’t care about their people (respect), only about their bottom line (results). In today’s world of work, this is a significant reason far too many of our workplaces suck (and why many of those 56 million US workers recently left their crappy jobs—and crappy bosses and crappy colleagues).

Good Comes First companies, on the other hand, operate differently. They employ and promote the leaders and team members fully capable of serving the servant purpose—and their people. Moreover, those servant-first leaders genuinely care about personal and professional growth (which you'll learn more about in Cornerstone No. 3) and see each stakeholder (employee, contractor, vendor, and partner) as an integral part of that growth. Just as important, these leaders treat any sign of inequality and bias as the cancer they represent in any workplace.

And they insist their fellow leaders do the same. So soon, the entire leadership team is focused on not just results but on making people's lives better.

Cornerstone No. 2: Lean on Trust, Validation, and Growth

Our second cornerstone demands that leaders provide every player with the chance to work where trust is contagious, validation is pervasive, and growth is constant.

If your work culture doesn't model trust, validation, and growth today, you're not alone. When trust is lacking, the best way to rebuild that trust is to demonstrate genuine care for others. And in the workplace, how do leaders best show an appropriate level of unmistakable care?

By validating the good work of others, every day.

Through our actions, we fully support our people and our teams. We recognize and reward not just outstanding one-off performances but the daily grind—the work that helps keep the lights on. As a result, we become champions of not just our employees' productivity—but their potential.

At every opportunity, we also provide avenues for personal and professional growth. We certainly help our employees get better at what they do in the office. But we must also support the entire person, not just the part that shows up to work every day. We help them grow as people, parents, sons and daughters, baseball coaches, homeschool teachers, den mothers, volunteers, members of our community, and mentors.

After all, we know *good* people do *good* work.

Just as important, as leaders, we must provide our employees with the opportunity to do meaningful work. The kind of work our employees believe, with bone-deep pride, really

matters to them personally and to each team member. And also to each stakeholder, including the customers they serve, their boss, and the company.

Cornerstone No. 3: Measure the Impact of Behaviors on Culture

So far in this learning guide, we have discussed placing overarching human values (respect, trust, etc.) on the same pedestal as results (performance, profits, etc.). In this third cornerstone, we start to look past the theory and enter the first door of practical application.

And we show how behaviors—good and bad—impact respect AND results.

First, some context...

There isn't a professional organization on the planet that doesn't know how to measure traditional business metrics: Results. They manage a profit and loss statement. They thoroughly understand the cost of employee and customer acquisition and their net promoter score. They know their gross revenue, market value, growth or burn rates, and profit margins. All told, there are between twelve and eighteen business metrics every company—and every leader—should know.

But they should also know their respect metrics: Employee experience numbers, employee engagement levels, retention rates, and percentage of employee referrals. Unfortunately, these are not as high a priority as most business leaders' results-oriented metrics.

When we discuss the need to focus on respect as much as results, we are not asking leaders to do anything different than to co-create—with your work team (or teams)—a list of the values and behaviors that impact performance.

Precisely, your Good Comes First company will model, coach, measure, and ultimately celebrate those values and behaviors.

We've already discussed some behaviors on which a Good Comes First culture relies, including respect, trust, validation, and growth. We could add rewards, recognition, equity, mentorship, autonomy, authority, etc. And we're just getting started!

And we haven't even asked you, the reader:

- Which values surface most often in your organization right now?
- Which values take a back seat to the generation of better results?
- Which unproductive behaviors (bias, inequity, harassment, bullying, etc.) concern you most?
- And which more productive behaviors would counter those problem areas?

No, you don't have to answer these questions just yet.

But please know that if you choose to refine your work culture, you will need to think about your company's dominant values and behaviors. You will also want to engage with your team members to discuss how your teams will monitor, measure, and reward those carefully selected and defined behaviors.

As you anticipate this task, know it doesn't need to be complicated. Many of our clients, for example, generate a list of desired values and observable, tangible, measurable behaviors for their work culture, with clear definitions. That way, they aren't open to interpretation. Each leader and team member then promises to model those valued behaviors in every interaction, every day.

Of course, team members won't adopt these desirable behaviors simply because you publish them ("Get your values t-shirt here!"). Instead, team members will embrace these behaviors only after they see leaders modeling, celebrating, measuring, and coaching those desirable behaviors—in every interaction, every day.

And what if leaders don't demonstrate those clearly defined behaviors? Let's look at one real-world example...

At Puget Sound Energy in Bellevue, Washington, they mounted a poster on the wall in every conference room that displays their values and behaviors (which they call "leadership principles").

At any time, any team member—leader or team member—has permission to respectfully look those leaders in the eye, point to the poster, and say:

"At this moment, it doesn't seem like you're living up to No. 3."

Or, in a self-aware moment, one person can look at another respectfully and say,

“I see you’re making a real effort on No. 6 up there . . . and I’m not . . . but I will.”

The conversation, by default and precedent, gets a reboot. Quickly, the dialogue becomes more productive. Not coincidentally, so do the people in the room. Every time. Because those people chose to respect not just the established values and behaviors—but also themselves and each other.

This third culture cornerstone of a Good Comes First organization requires that leaders singularly define behaviors that impact respect *and* results. It also requires leaders to continuously model, coach, and measure those behaviors in real-time. And, of course, it asks leaders to celebrate the wins often.

That’s how you move beyond theoretical and aspirational and—in a practical, proven, equitable way—put values and behaviors on the same level as results.

Cornerstone No. 4: Use Our Voice for Good

With this cornerstone, we encourage leaders to actively work to resolve local and global issues such as inequality, injustice, poverty, health crises, and climate change.

Put another way: Leaders must care about something other than making money while improving the lives of others.

As we continue to rise out of the COVID-19 pandemic, the issues we face as a society go well beyond the virus and well outside our front doors.

From homelessness to a lack of affordable housing to unequal access to the internet, societal problems continue to impact our communities. Racial tensions too often rage in the streets and simmer in our workplaces. In addition, minimum wage mandates and poverty levels remain significant issues, especially compared to the average compensation for S&P 500 company CEOs—\$14.8 million (a CEO-to-worker pay ratio of 264-to-1).

Unfair payment practices penalize women and people of color even more. And given the recent rollbacks of environmental protections in the United States, our environment—our planet—is continually fighting off challenges. And as we go to press on this learning guide, an unjust war is raging in eastern Europe.

At one point in time, even in the recent past, it was okay for an organization—no matter what was happening in the world around it—to go “full ostrich.” Then, when trouble came—when society’s issues knocked on the front door of the company’s headquarters—many leaders just hid their corporate heads in the sand.

This ambivalence is not acceptable today. To put good first, we must contribute to the well-being of our employees and contributors and also that of our communities, regions, and our planet.

You can’t mitigate the terrible cost of the war in Ukraine—but you can address unfair policies, discriminatory practices, and pay inequities across your organization. Caring doesn’t mean simply being pleasant to others. Caring means addressing disrespectful practices across your organization and within your sphere of influence—now.

Social media is a powerful, immediate platform. Customers, employees, influencers, and many others can see what your company stands for—and what it will *not* stand for. On social and digital media and through your actions, they see and know what you, as a leader, do and *do not* tolerate.

Chances are, you’ve jumped into this learning guide because you care about your organization and the people who work there. You want to make your company a better place to work—or you wouldn’t be reading this paragraph at this moment. It makes sense, then, that you also want to make the world—one little piece at a time, perhaps—a better place.

It makes sense for you, and it makes good business sense, too.

There are tremendous pressures put on today’s executives. At no other time in business history have we held our business leaders accountable for social injustices, taking a stand against politically motivated personalities and far-reaching global issues. We understand. These issues may not strike a chord with you. They might not spark a passion inside you, personally.

But they most likely create a spark within your customer base and your strategic and industry partners. And they must light that same spark inside a vocal segment of your

employee base—and with job candidates looking for an organization that demonstrates genuine care for employees, customers, and communities.

These people care—a lot.

And they want their business leaders to care.

Now that you understand the foundational principle and cornerstones of *Good Comes First*—on top of which we build an uncompromising company culture—let's step into the tactical and practical. Specifically, let's look at how to lead a culture change effort first by objectively discovering the current state of your work culture. And then by leveraging our proven three-phase process—Define, Align, Refine—to close the gap between the current culture and your carefully crafted ideal culture.

The First Step of Culture Change: Discovery

If you're deep into reading Section II of *Good Comes First*, you already know each culture change initiative begins with 'Discovery.' This portion of the process has but one goal: To gain an objective view of how a company's work culture operates across all divisions and locations.

When we, as consultants and culture architects, help companies through Discovery, we typically interview leadership team members, middle-management, and select key employees. Our intention during these interviews is to learn how current team members perceive the company culture.

Not what it's *supposed* to be. Or what it *could* be. But what it feels like to work for this company—today.

During the discovery portion of our process, we also examine the company's performance data, employee engagement data, values and behaviors in place (and degree of alignment), and any similar documentation. After all, if we equally value respect *and* results—we must look at current culture (*how* we get our work done) and performance (*how well* we get our work done).

The typical deliverable from our Discovery work is a written Interview Summary and Recommendations Report that outlines what we've learned about that company's culture. Specifically, we discuss how the senior leadership team operates and what

beneficial culture pieces should be nurtured and maintained. We also emphasize any existing practices (and perhaps specific people) that seem to erode respect or negatively impact results.

Should you lead your own culture change effort, your crucial task as a leader is to establish a method of data collection that will result in an objective view of your current organization—both in terms of culture (respect) and performance (results). Often, top leaders feel they can delegate this responsibility. Those leaders are wrong. Not intentionally, of course—but because human nature means people tell us what we want to hear. At the very least, the people responsible for reporting tend to provide leaders with a filtered view of reality.

Rather than delegate, take ownership of the Discovery process. Invite your fellow leaders, managers, and key contributors to a frank discussion. Let them know the expectation is clarity and objectivity. Then ask the tough questions. Finally, listen—*really* listen.

You'll soon have a new awareness of exactly how people feel about working at the company (or maybe the division or team, depending on your role and sphere of influence) you lead.

Culture Change Phase I: Define

With objective data in hand, we begin the first full phase in our culture change process: Define.

As culture change veterans, we've learned the best method of launching a change effort is a focused two-day, face-to-face culture process kickoff session with the senior leadership team. This session can also include board members and select senior leaders to engage them in the process. There is no right or wrong number of participants; we've done kickoff sessions with as few as four and as many as 30 people. The key? Getting the right people in the right room at the right time—people genuinely interested in creating a more purposeful, positive and productive culture.

Again, if you're into Section II of *Good Comes First*, you know the primary focus of the kickoff meeting is to draft an Organizational Constitution. This document—critical to the success of any culture change effort—includes a formal statement of the company's present-day servant purpose and clearly defined organizational values. This relatively

short but thorough document also includes carefully selected behaviors that would indicate to observers that a leader or team member is modeling the company's values.

For example, "integrity" is an oft-chosen company value. For that value, an observable behavior might be:

- *"I keep the promises I make."*
- *Or perhaps "I do what I say I will do."*

To complete the Organizational Constitution and ensure your organization remains appropriately focused on results and promises already made, you'll next incorporate core elements of your strategic plan and performance targets.

With the Organizational Constitution complete, we move on to the last step in the 'Define' phase. Specifically, it's time to clearly and respectfully review the insights gained during the one-on-one interviews from Discovery. Of course, the goal of this engagement isn't to put people on the defensive or explain why your culture is the way it is today. Instead, we designed this segment to help determine the extent of the gap between the current company culture and the culture defined within the Organizational Constitution.

Most important: At the end of this two-day session, each leader must understand that moving forward, they must live and breathe the values and behaviors as defined in the Organizational Constitution.

Do that... and Voila!

You've not only defined your company's company culture—you've inspired each of your fellow leaders to serve as Chief Role Model for that culture.

In fact, you can't expect anything less.

Culture Change Phase II: Align

Now that company leaders serve as living role models for the defined company culture, you'll jump to the next phase of your culture change initiative: Align.

In this phase, all senior leaders begin to help all team leaders and team members live the company's new Organizational Constitution by:

- Modeling the desired values and behaviors (of course!)
- Coaching others to align to those values and behaviors
- Measuring alignment to both values and performance commitments
- Celebrating the individuals and teams that meet values and performance expectations
- Mentoring (and in some cases, redirecting) those people and groups who don't model the company's values and behaviors (respect) and performance (results) expectations

As described in detail in *Good Comes First*, the 'Align' phase includes creating and conducting two custom surveys that provide objective, inarguable data points. As a change leader, you'll need to develop similar surveys (perhaps by emulating ours).

Values and Behaviors Survey

In our practice, we leverage a custom Values and Behaviors survey to measure the degree to which formal leaders model the values and behaviors outlined in the company's Organizational Constitution.

Data from the first survey (which provides ratings of *all* leaders by *all* employees) gauges how well executives and other formal leaders demonstrate the values and behaviors outlined in your company's Organizational Constitution.

This data set also provides a baseline to benchmark future progress toward the company's ideal culture. Subsequent runs of the survey (typically six months apart) provide insight into how leaders better influence company culture within their work teams.

Executive Team Effectiveness Survey

While the Values and Behaviors Survey provides a snapshot of how well individual leaders model the company's defined values and desired behaviors, it doesn't tell us how effectively the executives operate as a leadership team. For that reason, the next step in the Align phase is conducting an Executive Team Effectiveness Survey (ETES).

In a 10-question assessment—customized based on the values, behaviors, and concepts contained in your company's unique Organizational Constitution—the ETES survey asks how effectively the company's executive team leads the organization. Topics covered range from how well the executive team communicates examples of meaningful work to

the members' ability to serve as positive role models. Survey items also include culture-defining topics like accountability, validation of good work, and steering the organization in the right direction.

More information on both surveys, including snapshots of sample results, can be found in Chapter 11 of Good Comes First.

Without exception, data from these surveys will reveal the work required for your organization to close the gap between current and defined cultures. At times, the amount of that work will seem daunting. Still, your charter as a culture change leader remains constant:

- To keep the culture initiative on track (despite any less-than-positive data points)
- To help leaders themselves further align with the company's values and behaviors

After all: If all leaders aren't fully aligned, employees won't be either.

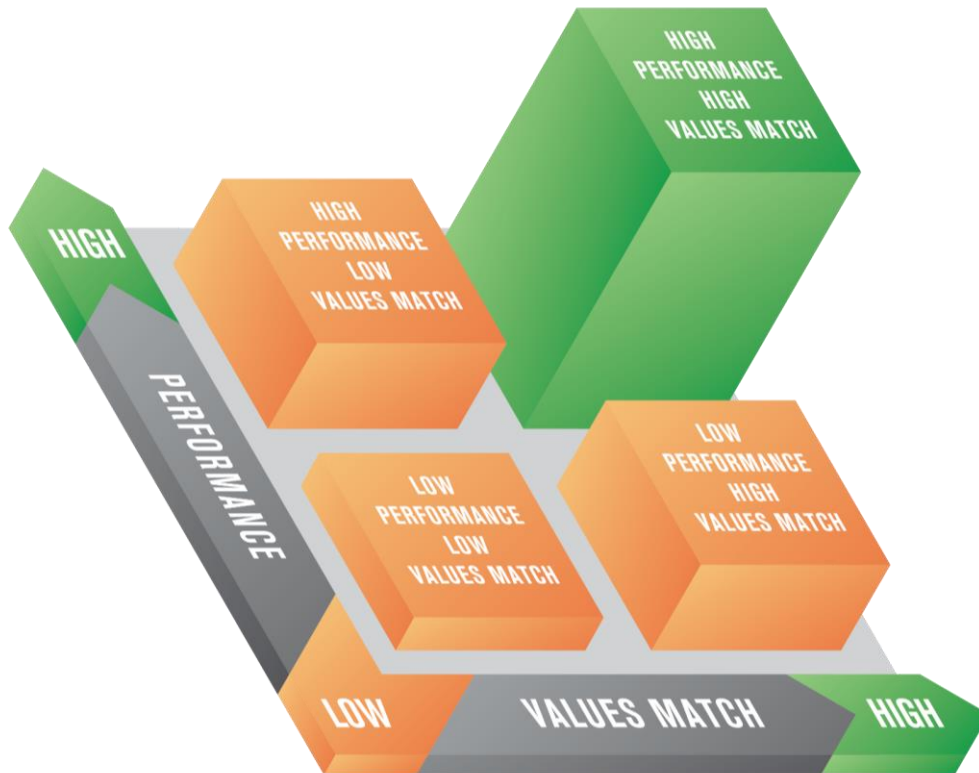
Culture Change Phase III: Refine

As the Align stage matures and you experience a tangible change in culture, you enter the last phase of culture change: Refine.

By leveraging quantitative data from surveys, interviews and observations, your primary task during the Refine phase is to identify people and practices not yet aligned with the desired culture.

During this phase, we use the Performance-Values Matrix (from page 106 of Good Comes First) to learn which individuals and teams have bought into the culture change while also meeting performance objectives.

You'll also discover those who, despite perhaps being previously identified as a high performers, are not currently aligned with the company's values, behaviors, and desired culture.



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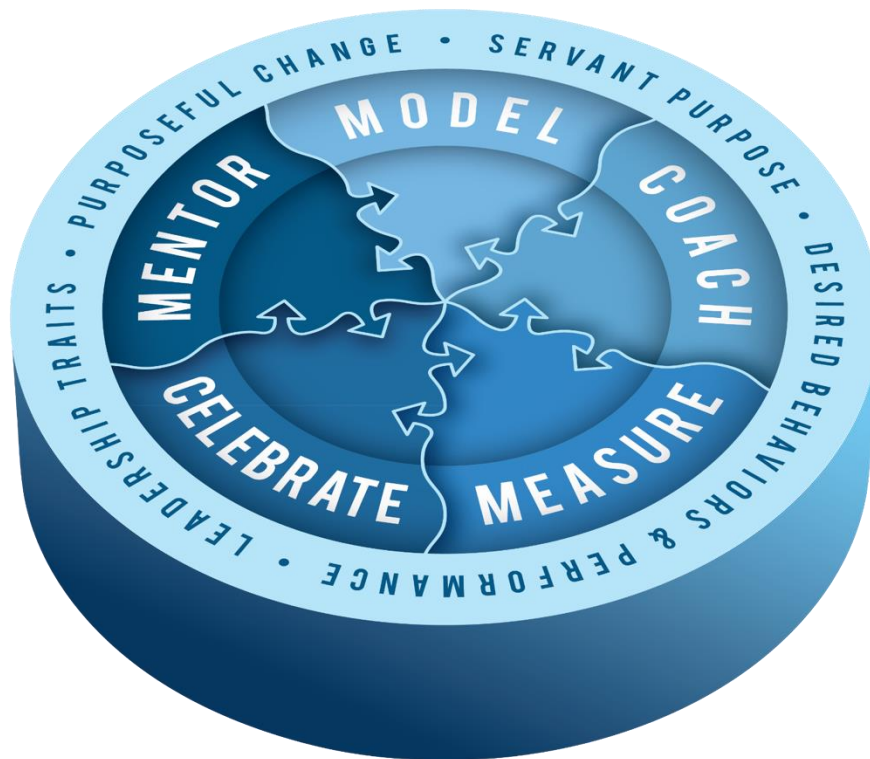
At this point, leaders typically begin to understand that a company builds a productive, purposeful, and positive company culture upon the desired behaviors rewarded—and that culture is torn down by the disrespectful, unproductive behaviors tolerated.

This third phase of culture change is the most challenging for many leaders—because this is where leaders realize they must become not just role models but mentors. It’s where they must equally and simultaneously apply traits such as empathy and accountability. This is also when leaders must remain constructive and objective during difficult conversations with—and transformations of—team members who haven’t yet aligned with the defined company culture.

To assist in holding every contributor accountable for driving toward the upper right quadrant in the Performance-Values Matrix, you’ll likely often refer back to the Good

Comes First Accountability Model introduced on page 176 of *Good Comes First*. Within this model, you'll note there are five accountability practices:

- Model
- Coach
- Measure
- Celebrate
- Mentor



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This is an excellent time to remind you that the five practices within the accountability model are most effective when used independently; leaders rarely execute them sequentially. In fact, the five individual practices have a much more significant impact when used organically based on which is most relevant and practical in any given moment.

As you continually work to refine your company's culture, you will undoubtedly identify team members who struggle to align to the company's focus on values alignment *and*

performance commitments. Despite perhaps years of dedicated service, you'll find people who no longer fit within the company's current uncompromising culture.

When that happens, and after you and your fellow leaders have done everything possible to mentor and redirect that contributor, do not put off the inevitable. Do not tolerate disrespectful, undesirable, unproductive behaviors. Instead, lovingly set that person free; permit them to become their version of successful somewhere else.

As you likely gathered when reading *Good Comes First* (and while considering how best to leverage this leader guide), the 'Refine' phase—again, by design and maybe by default—is ongoing. As a result, you and your fellow leaders and change champions might sometimes start to wish this phase had an end date.

There is no end date.

Your work to refine your desired culture never stops.

Market pressures, products, customer demands, personnel, and leadership styles continually evolve. With each change element comes a potential challenge to your desired culture. Which means culture refinement is constant.

As you work through the 'Refine' process, be diligent and resourceful; be patient and empathetic.

Above all, be uncompromising.

Conclusion

By reading this leader's guide, you have invested time and energy to learn how to create a Good Comes First work culture. So when it comes to refining, creating, and sustaining an uncompromising work culture, you are likely the most informed player in your organization. As a result, you may now feel tempted to act on your new insights. That's good!

But before you do, you must find the right pace and tone.

If you act too slowly or without firm commitment, you will fail to create the sense of urgency needed for real change to happen. If you speak too softly or too infrequently, you will miss opportunities to generate enough momentum to create the contagious pockets of excellence that will lead to quick wins. If distractions derail your actions, you'll indicate that culture change is not a high priority; you'll effectively send the message that something else (and perhaps everything else—especially results) is a higher priority.

On the other hand, if you act and speak too boldly, you risk inhibiting others from self-discovering what you've already learned about culture change. That means they might not come to the same conclusions you have. For example, they might disagree that you and your senior leaders must act quickly to create a work culture that values respect *and* results.

Remember: Until now, those senior leaders (and all other team members) have been doing what their directors, leaders, predecessors, and mentors have asked, trained, and incentivized.

So be thoughtful and strategic about how to engage your fellow leaders in this process.

Our advice: Gain momentum for a culture change effort in your organization by purchasing copies of this culture leader's quick start guide with other leaders in your company.

Then choose one or more of the options available to you next...

Next Steps

It is our hope that our conversation doesn't end here. With that in mind, here are some possible next steps for you and your organization:

- To learn more about *Good Comes First* and how leaders can create an uncompromising company culture—and improve retention, customer service ratings, engagement, productivity and profits, go to GoodComesFirst.com.
- Want to take your organization's knowledge of culture creation to the next level? Gift copies of *Good Comes First* to your leadership team, division, or company by clicking [here](#).
- Contact Mark and Chris about their webinars, video courses, consulting services, and keynote presentations by clicking [here](#).

And, as your culture change journey begins, please let us know how you're doing.

We're here to help!