

# iNNOVORA

Volume 01 | Issue 03 | December 2024



# culture



OGUN STATE  
BRANCH

# Season's Greetings

To all Managers of Talents, Architects of Culture,  
Ambassadors of Values, Bankers of Trust,  
Drivers of Change, Carpenters of Policies,  
Engineers of Performance, Translators of Strategies,  
Farmers of Potentials, and Gatekeepers of Ethics.

This season, may your homes shine bright,  
With blessings, joy, peace, love, harmony and God's light.  
And may the coming year bring you and your families,  
Success, fulfillment, breakthroughs, and prosperity.

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**Sean Olabode Badiru, MCIPM**  
Chairman, CIPM Ogun State Branch



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## ■ ABOUT CIPM

### Who We Are

The Chartered Institute of Personnel Management of Nigeria was established as an umbrella Association for Practitioners of Personnel Management in 1968 as the Personnel Management Association of Nigeria.

In 1973, it was renamed as Institute of Personnel Management of Nigeria. Finally, Act No 58 of 1992 chartered the Institute.

### Our Vision

To be the Institute of Choice for People Management.

### Our Mission

To promote Excellence in People Management through Value Creation, Optimisation of Human Potential, Standardisation and Regulation of Human Resource Management.

### Our Core Values

- **Service:** We understand the needs of our stakeholders and are committed to their delight.
- **Creativity:** We innovate to create value and drive advancement of new frontiers.
- **Respect:** We recognize that every individual holds a special value and as such will ensure their dignity in all our interactions.
- **Integrity:** We commit to being honest in all our dealings.
- **Professionalism:** We are committed to continuous learning and uphold the best practice in our field.
- **Teamwork:** We collaborate to deliver valuable results.

### Objectives of the Institute

The objectives of the Institute are

- To promote and develop the science and practice of personnel management in all its ramifications;
- To foster and maintain investigations and research into the best means, and method of applying the science and art of Personnel Management and to encourage, extend, increase, disseminate and promote knowledge and the exchange of information and ideas with regard to all questions relating thereto or connect therewith;
- To develop and maintain high standard of professional competence and ensure that the management of human resource in Nigeria, both in public and private sectors, conforms with the best professional standards;
- To conduct research into and publish materials relating to the discipline of Human Resource Management.



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Welcome to the third edition of iNNOVORA, the flagship publication of the Chartered Institute of Personnel Management of Nigeria, Ogun State Branch. This edition centers on a theme that shapes the heart of every organization: "**CULTURE**." Specifically, we delve into the critical role of Organizational Culture in driving innovation, enhancing employee engagement, and fostering sustainable growth.

Organizational culture is the invisible force that defines how we work, interact, and thrive. In this edition, our contributors offer profound insights into understanding, cultivating, and leveraging culture as a strategic tool.

I set the tone with "**Understanding and Cultivating a Thriving Organizational Culture**," where I provide a comprehensive guide to the foundations of organizational culture, offering actionable strategies for aligning culture with organizational goals and driving success.

The importance of mental health within organizations is the focus of "**Building a Supportive Organizational Culture**," where Oladunni Adetona, ACIPM, discusses its role in enhancing productivity and resilience. She highlights practical approaches such as Employee Assistance Programs and flexible work arrangements to demonstrate the value of prioritizing people.

In "**7 Drivers of Employee Engagement**," Belemina Obunge, MCIPM, explores the factors that create a motivated and loyal workforce. From aligning employees with a shared vision to fostering meaningful workplace relationships, this article outlines actionable steps to cultivate sustained engagement.


Jola Oyeneye, mni, MCIPM, takes a macro perspective in "**Breaking Barriers: Strategies for Inclusive Development in the Public Service**." With real-world examples from Lagos State initiatives, she examines how inclusivity in governance drives equitable development and strengthens public institutions.

Prof. Oladele Balogun, MCIPM, shifts the focus to education in "**The Imperative of Technical Education in Nigeria: A Catalyst for National Development**." He emphasizes the need for robust technical education to bridge the skills gap and support economic diversification, offering a clear roadmap for national development.

Finally, Dr. Peter Ogunkunle, FCIPM, addresses career development in "**Reimagining Career Pathing in HR**." He critiques the limitations of traditional career paths and proposes innovative solutions like personalized development plans and mentorship programs to enhance employee engagement and retention.

As you explore these articles, we encourage you to reflect on how organizational culture influences your daily professional interactions and long-term strategies. Remember, culture is not static—it evolves with intentional effort and leadership.

Happy reading!

  
Sean Olabode Badiru, MCIPM  
Editor-in-Chief



# UNDERSTANDING AND CULTIVATING A THRIVING ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

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SEAN OLABODE BADIRU, MCIPM





## What is Company Culture?

Company culture is essentially the personality of an organization, encompassing the shared beliefs, values, attitudes, standards, purposes, and behaviours that dictate how people work together. It includes both the formal rules and the unwritten norms that govern interactions and decision-making. In essence, it's the collective mindset and actions of everyone working towards common objectives. Its importance is widely recognized, with a vast majority believing it's crucial for organizational success. This highlights the need to understand and actively shape culture for thriving in today's business environment.

Culture permeates all aspects of a company, influencing everything from work assignments and career opportunities to working styles (collaborative or independent), dress codes, and even lunchtime discussions. It also affects how things like birthdays are celebrated and the relationships between different teams, departments, and management levels.

While some aspects of culture are easier to change than others, the goal is to create an environment where people can thrive and perform at their best. It's important to remember that things like free snacks or game rooms, while nice, are not the core of company culture. True culture is about a deeper connection to the organization's core values and goals.

Each company's culture is unique, shaped by factors like its mission, values, leadership style, the industry it operates in, its market position, and the challenges it faces. Whether intentional or not, every organization develops a culture. However, if this development is left unmanaged, it can negatively impact the organization's objectives. A key sign of a weak culture is a disconnect between what the company says its culture is and what it actually is in practice. Within the main company culture, smaller subcultures can also emerge within teams or departments based on shared experiences or responsibilities. These subcultures can have both positive and

negative effects on the overall organization, so it's important to ensure they align with the main company values. Finally, a strong company culture significantly impacts both internal and external reputation. It boosts employee engagement and retention,

attracts top talent, and improves key business measures like productivity, innovation, customer satisfaction, and financial performance. Therefore, a strong culture is not just a perk; it's a valuable strategic advantage.

## How Company Culture Drives Business Success



**Increased Engagement:** When employees feel a genuine connection to their work, their colleagues, and the company's mission, their engagement levels rise significantly. This sense of belonging and purpose translates into greater enthusiasm, dedication, and a willingness to go the extra mile. They are more likely to be invested in the company's success and actively contribute to its goals.

**Creativity and Innovation:** A positive and supportive work environment cultivates a fertile ground for creativity and innovation. When employees feel safe to share ideas, experiment with new approaches, and take calculated risks without fear of judgment, they are more likely to generate fresh perspectives and innovative solutions. This fosters a culture of continuous improvement and allows the company to stay ahead of the curve.



**Reduced Turnover:** High employee turnover can be costly, both in terms of direct expenses related to recruitment and training, and indirect costs associated with lost productivity and institutional knowledge. A strong company culture that values its employees and provides opportunities for growth and development leads to greater employee satisfaction and retention. This, in turn, significantly reduces turnover rates, saving the company valuable resources.

**Improved Customer Experience:** The link between employee satisfaction and customer experience is undeniable. Satisfied and engaged employees are more likely to provide exceptional customer service, build strong customer relationships, and create positive brand experiences. This translates into increased customer loyalty, positive word-of-mouth referrals, and ultimately, improved business outcomes.





**Higher Productivity:** Engaged and motivated teams are inherently more productive. When employees are invested in their work and feel supported by their organization, they are more likely to be efficient, focused, and committed to achieving their goals. This increased productivity contributes directly to improved business performance and profitability.

**Increased Revenue:** Ultimately, a positive and productive work environment driven by a strong company culture translates into tangible financial benefits. Happy and engaged employees contribute to higher productivity, improved customer satisfaction, and increased innovation, all of which drive revenue growth and contribute to the bottom line.



**Improved Morale:** A healthy company culture promotes a sense of well-being and overall satisfaction among employees. When employees feel valued, respected, and supported, their morale is high, which creates a positive and energetic work environment. This contributes to a more collaborative, productive, and enjoyable workplace for everyone.

**Talent Attraction:** In today's competitive job market, top talent is drawn to organizations with stellar reputations and strong company cultures. A positive and supportive work environment serves as a powerful magnet for attracting and retaining the best and brightest employees. This allows the company to build a high-performing workforce and maintain a competitive edge.



## The 8 Styles of Company Culture

Although every organizational culture is distinct, research from Harvard Business Review identifies eight primary cultural styles:

1. **Caring:** Cultures characterized by caring prioritize relationships, mutual trust, and support among employees. They foster a collaborative and empathetic environment where individuals feel valued and connected. These organizations often emphasize teamwork, open communication, and employee well-being. They invest in employee development and create a sense of community within the workplace.

2. **Purposeful:** Purposeful cultures are driven by a strong sense of mission and a desire to make a positive impact on the world. They are often idealistic and altruistic, focusing on contributing to a greater good beyond profit. Employees in these organizations are motivated by a shared sense of purpose and a belief that their work has meaning and significance.
3. **Learning:** Learning cultures prioritize innovation, creativity, and continuous improvement. They encourage experimentation, knowledge sharing, and a growth mindset. These organizations value learning from both successes and failures and foster an environment where employees are encouraged to take risks and explore new ideas. They invest in training and development and promote a culture of intellectual curiosity.
4. **Enjoyable:** Enjoyable cultures prioritize fun, humor, and a positive work environment. They foster a sense of camaraderie and encourage social interaction among employees. These organizations often organize social events and activities to build team spirit and create a lighthearted atmosphere. They believe that a happy and relaxed workforce is a more productive workforce.
5. **Results-Oriented:** Results-oriented cultures are focused on achieving goals, exceeding targets, and winning in the marketplace. They prioritize performance, efficiency, and accountability. These organizations often set ambitious goals and reward high achievers. They create a competitive environment where employees are driven to succeed.
6. **Authoritative:** Authoritative cultures are characterized by strong leadership, clear hierarchies, and centralized decision-making. They prioritize control, efficiency, and adherence to rules and procedures. These organizations often have a top-down management style and emphasize discipline and obedience.
7. **Safe:** Safe cultures prioritize predictability, stability, and risk aversion. They value rules, procedures, and established processes. These organizations often avoid taking risks and prefer to maintain the status quo. They create a stable and secure work environment where employees feel safe and protected.
8. **Orderly:** Orderly cultures prioritize structure, organization, and cooperation. They value efficiency, predictability, and adherence to established processes. These organizations often have clear roles and responsibilities and emphasize teamwork and collaboration. They create a well-organized and efficient work environment.

Each organization exhibits a unique combination of these styles, with some traits more dominant than others. Recognizing your organization's predominant styles can help you align them with employee perceptions and operational goals. Importantly, no single style is superior to the others; each has potential benefits and challenges.

# Assessing and Applying Cultural Insights

Identifying your organization's cultural traits involves gathering insights from various sources:



## Surveys

Collect feedback from leadership, management, and staff through methods such as surveys and performance evaluations. This allows for a multi-faceted perspective on existing cultural dynamics.



## Observations

Pay attention to how individuals interact, make decisions, and approach their work. Observing daily behaviors and communication styles can reveal underlying cultural norms and values.



## Programs

Analyze which types of cultural programs or activities are implemented or avoided, and evaluate whether these initiatives effectively support the organization's stated values and strategic goals.



## Budgets

Track the financial support allocated to different cultural programs and activities. This can reveal which aspects of culture are prioritized by leadership through budgetary decisions.



## Outcomes

Evaluate the outcomes and impact of each cultural program or activity. This data can provide insights into which initiatives are successful in fostering the desired cultural traits and which may require adjustments.

By leveraging this data, you can pinpoint strengths and address gaps. For example, a company emphasizing innovation might stifle creativity if it penalizes failures—a misalignment that could impede progress.



## Characteristics of Excellent Company Cultures

- **Promoting diversity and inclusion:** These organizations prioritize hiring individuals with diverse backgrounds, perspectives, and skill sets, rather than seeking homogeneity. This fosters a richer and more innovative work environment.
- **Ensuring inclusivity and respect:** They prioritize creating an environment where every employee feels heard, valued, and respected, regardless of their background or position.
- **Fostering employee engagement and development:** They cultivate performance, growth, and retention by offering meaningful learning opportunities and clear career progression pathways.
- **Providing recognition and appreciation:** They consistently offer constructive feedback and express genuine appreciation for employees' contributions.
- **Facilitating smooth onboarding experiences:** From the initial onboarding stages, these organizations equip new hires with the necessary resources, training, and support to integrate seamlessly into the team and perform effectively.
- **Adapting to future needs:** They proactively adjust to the evolving needs and interests of their workforce in response to changes in the industry and labor market, ensuring continued individual success.



## The Role of Stakeholders in Shaping Culture

In the ecosystem of a company, culture isn't the responsibility of one person or one department. It is a shared effort, involving every level of the organization. Each group—executives, middle managers, HR professionals, and employees—plays a unique and vital role in building and sustaining the cultural fabric.

Let's break this down further to understand how each stakeholder contributes to fostering a vibrant and effective workplace culture.

### 1. HR: The Unsung Hero

Human Resources professionals often serve as the backbone of company culture, though their contributions may sometimes go unnoticed. Acting as mediators between leadership and employees, they possess a

comprehensive understanding of the workforce's needs and the organization's objectives.

#### How HR Shapes Culture:

- **Define/Refine Company Culture:** HR collaborates with executives to establish the core elements of the culture and adapt it as the organization evolves.
- **Strategic Cultural Guidance:** HR advises leaders on aligning cultural initiatives with the organization's overarching values and strategic objectives.
- **Facilitate Communication/Feedback:** HR promotes dialogue between employees and leadership to foster a culture of transparency and continuous improvement.
- **Culturally Aligned Recruiting:** HR plays a critical role in attracting and hiring

individuals who will strengthen and diversify the existing culture, while identifying and avoiding those who may not be a good fit.

- **Integrate Culture into Onboarding/Experience:** HR ensures that cultural values are prominently featured in the onboarding process and consistently reinforced in the everyday employee experience.
- **Recognize/Reward Cultural Behaviours:** HR develops and implements systems for recognizing and rewarding employee actions that exemplify and support the desired cultural values.

For companies to fully leverage HR's potential, it's essential to give them a seat at the strategic table. Their insights can significantly influence decisions that strengthen the organization's cultural foundation.

## 2. Executives: The Visionaries

Executives set the tone for company culture by defining its overarching values and ensuring resources are allocated to support cultural initiatives. Their leadership is crucial not only in creating but also in embodying the culture they wish to promote.

### Key Responsibilities:

- **Establishing Core Values:** Executives define the fundamental principles that guide the organization's actions and decisions, setting the foundation for the company culture.
- **Approving and Resourcing Cultural Initiatives:** Executives formally endorse and provide the necessary resources (financial, human, etc.) for programs and activities designed to promote and reinforce the desired culture.
- **Monitoring Cultural Impact and Addressing Issues:** Executives actively

monitor the influence of the company culture on the organization and take corrective action when necessary to ensure it remains aligned with strategic goals.

- **Leading by Example and Embodiment of Values:** Executives have a unique opportunity to demonstrate the organization's values through their own behaviours and actions, setting a powerful example for all employees. Their conduct significantly influences the overall cultural tone.
- **Communicating Cultural Values:** Executives articulate and reinforce the organization's values through various communication channels, ensuring that employees understand and embrace the desired culture.
- **Championing Cultural Responsibility:** Executives acknowledge and embrace their responsibility for fostering a positive and productive company culture, setting the tone for accountability throughout the organization.

Great leadership doesn't just set the rules; it exemplifies them. When executives are visibly invested in the company's culture, it encourages employees to embrace it wholeheartedly.

## 3. Middle Managers: The Bridge

Managers operate at the intersection of strategy and execution. They take high-level cultural goals and translate them into day-to-day actions, serving as both enforcers and advocates of company values.

### Their Role in Culture:

- **Implementing Cultural Initiatives:** Managers translate executive-level cultural strategies into actionable plans and implement them within their teams.

- **Identifying and Addressing Cultural Issues:** Managers are well-positioned to observe and identify any cultural problems or inconsistencies within their teams and take appropriate corrective measures.
- **Gathering Employee Feedback:** Managers act as a conduit for employee feedback, collecting valuable insights and concerns that can inform cultural improvements.
- **Reinforcing Organizational Alignment:** Managers ensure that employees understand and adhere to the organization's policies, values, and goals, maintaining consistency and coherence.
- **Fostering Open Communication and Trust:** Effective managers cultivate a culture of trust and open communication within their teams, encouraging regular dialogue through various channels, such as team meetings, performance reviews, and informal interactions.
- **Modeling Desired Behaviours and Values:** Similar to executives, managers must embody the organization's cultural values in their own actions and behaviours, setting a positive example for their team members. For instance, if customer service is a core value, managers should actively demonstrate excellent customer service practices rather than simply instructing their teams to do so.
- **Leveraging Problems as Cultural Learning Opportunities:** Managers can utilize challenges and issues as opportunities to showcase the company culture in action, demonstrating how the organization's values can be applied to resolve problems effectively.

The impact of managers cannot be overstated—Gallup attributes 70% of employee engagement variance to managerial influence. Good managers don't just talk about culture; they embody it.

## 4. Employees: The Cultural Carriers

Every employee contributes to culture through their attitudes, behaviours, and interactions. They are the living representation of what the company stands for, making their engagement and alignment critical.

### Employees' Responsibilities:

- **Supporting Company Values and Goals:** Employees actively uphold and demonstrate the organization's core values and work towards achieving its strategic objectives.
- **Maintaining a Positive and Constructive Attitude:** Employee attitudes significantly impact the overall work environment. A positive and engaged workforce strengthens the company culture. Employees who find their work meaningful and believe in the organization's future are more likely to project a positive attitude.
- **Providing Honest and Constructive Feedback:** Employees offer valuable perspectives on the existing culture and identify potential areas for improvement. This includes sharing both positive and negative feedback, even if it is difficult to hear.
- **Recognizing and Addressing Cultural Misfires:** Employees are often the first to notice discrepancies between the espoused culture and the actual lived experience within the organization. They can help identify and address these "cultural misfires."
- **Contributing to a Positive and Productive Work Environment:** By acting in accordance with company values, employees contribute to a collaborative, respectful, and productive workplace.

- **Addressing Dissatisfaction Constructively:** While it's unrealistic to expect universal satisfaction, employees should express concerns constructively. Organizations should also be open to addressing valid points raised by dissatisfied employees, even if expressed negatively.
- **Recognizing the Importance of Cultural Alignment:** Employees should understand that cultural fit is important for both individual well-being and organizational success. In cases where there is a significant and persistent misalignment, it may be necessary for an employee to seek opportunities elsewhere.
- **Participating in Cultural Initiatives:** Employees should actively participate in cultural initiatives and programs designed to reinforce and improve the work environment.

While most employees embrace the culture enthusiastically, not everyone will. Leaders must navigate the occasional challenges of cultural misalignment thoughtfully, sometimes making difficult decisions for the good of the organization.

## Collaboration is Key

The real magic of company culture happens when everyone works together. Collaboration across all levels—executives, HR, managers, and employees—creates a cohesive effort that maximizes impact. Each group brings a unique perspective and set of skills to the table, and when their contributions are harmonized, the result is a thriving workplace culture that attracts talent, drives performance, and sustains long-term success.





## Enhancing Your Company Culture

Improving company culture is an ongoing process with the potential to significantly impact an organization's success. Whether your current culture needs a complete overhaul or simply a boost, there's always room for growth. The following twelve strategies provide a roadmap for this improvement, offering guidance for transforming a struggling culture or elevating a positive one to even greater heights. This investment in a stronger culture is an investment in the organization's future, as a thriving culture positively influences productivity, innovation, employee morale, retention, profitability, and many other key areas.

When implementing cultural changes, it's important to avoid trying to do everything at once. This can lead to overwhelm and hinder progress. Instead, review the available strategies and assess which areas within your organization require the most immediate attention. Prioritize one key area to begin with, focusing your efforts and

resources effectively. As time and resources allow, you can then incorporate additional strategies, building upon your initial success and creating sustainable positive change.

### 1. Define Cultural Foundations

Your organization's mission, values, and vision are the foundation of its culture. Without clarity on these, it's impossible to foster a cohesive and meaningful work environment.

- **Mission:** Why does your organization exist? Your mission statement should succinctly articulate your core purpose.
- **Values:** What principles guide your actions and decisions? Clear, actionable values create consistency in how employees work and interact.
- **Vision:** What does success look like in the long term? Your vision should inspire and guide your team toward a shared goal.

Take the time to evaluate—or reevaluate—these critical components. Are they still relevant? Are they precise? For instance, PayPal’s mission is “to build the web’s most convenient, secure, cost-effective payment solution,” while Virgin Airlines lists values like “We do the right thing” and “Together we make the difference.” These examples highlight the power of simplicity and focus in defining your organization's identity.

Once these foundational elements are in place, leaders should ensure they are woven into every aspect of the workplace, from hiring practices to performance evaluations.

## 2. Hire for Cultural Fit

Recruiting new staff involves significant investment of time and resources. Research indicates that the process of hiring, from advertising the vacancy to finally filling the position, can take considerable time and money. It's truly disheartening when, after all that effort, a new employee doesn't work out. Sadly, this is a common occurrence. A significant percentage of new hires leave their jobs within the first few months, with a substantial number citing a mismatch with the company culture as the reason. This highlights the importance of prioritizing cultural fit during the recruitment process.

To minimize this risk, focus on hiring individuals who not only possess the necessary skills and qualifications for the role but also align with your organization’s core values and long-term vision. These new hires should also bring fresh perspectives and diverse experiences that can enrich the existing culture. It's crucial to give potential candidates a clear picture of your company culture right from the application stage. This transparency allows both you and the applicants to assess whether there's a genuine fit, saving everyone time and potential disappointment later.

A common pitfall is hiring only people who share similar viewpoints and backgrounds. While this might seem like a shortcut to a harmonious culture, it can actually stifle growth and innovation. A truly strong culture thrives on diversity of thought, experience, and background. Different perspectives challenge assumptions, spark creativity, and lead to better problem-solving.

As the saying goes, many job seekers would even forgo an otherwise perfect opportunity if they felt the company culture wasn't a good match. This underscores the critical role culture plays in attracting and retaining top talent.

## 3. Onboard for Culture Integration

Helping new employees integrate into your company’s culture is essential for their success and the overall health of your organization. A solid onboarding process is key to achieving this, but too often, organizations miss the mark by neglecting cultural training. Research shows that only a small percentage of new hires receive cultural training during onboarding—a missed opportunity to build early connections and affirm their choice to join the company.

Starting a new job can feel overwhelming, but small, thoughtful gestures can make a world of difference. Pre-boarding actions, like sending a welcome message or introducing the team through their manager, can create a strong first impression and establish a sense of belonging before they even step into the office. Once they’ve started, the integration process needs to continue. Structured programs, like weekly meetings with leadership or training on key skills and cultural values, help new hires quickly understand and embrace the company culture.

Practical steps like assigning a buddy can provide immediate support and answers to day-to-day questions. Make sure to communicate the company's values clearly and show how new employees contribute to and benefit from a positive work environment. Demonstrate the impact of their role by highlighting the meaning and purpose behind their work. These thoughtful practices don't just help new employees settle in faster; they also set the foundation for their long-term success and loyalty to the organization.

## 4. Model Cultural Values

Leading by example is fundamental to shaping a strong, positive company culture. When leaders embody the organization's core values, they set a clear standard that resonates throughout the company. The way leaders act depends on the values they aim to promote. For example, if transparency and trust are priorities, leaders should openly share both wins and challenges during company meetings. To foster open communication, they should engage regularly with employees at all levels, inviting feedback and addressing questions. To encourage teamwork, leaders need to actively participate in collaborative projects and recognize outstanding team contributions. These behaviours amplify their influence, making them role models for others to follow.

When considering candidates for leadership roles, it's important to focus on traits that define effective leaders who truly lead by example. Look for individuals who demonstrate professionalism in their actions and attitudes, a results-driven mindset, and the ability to inspire those around them. Key qualities include accountability for their own words and actions, the skill to guide others toward shared goals, sound intuition for making thoughtful decisions, emotional intelligence for building strong team relationships, and

the ability to maintain a clear vision while empowering team members to handle the details. Leaders with these attributes not only embody the company's culture but actively strengthen it.

## 5. Embed Values in Operations

Company values shouldn't just exist as words on a wall; they need to be an active part of daily operations. As the saying goes, defined values mean nothing if they are not reflected in how work gets done. These values must be visible and demonstrable across every aspect of the organization.

There are plenty of opportunities to integrate values into your company. Start by introducing new employees to these values and explaining their importance during onboarding. Company meetings and internal communications should constantly reinforce them. External messaging—like marketing materials and social media posts—must also align with the company's values to maintain consistent branding. When planning initiatives, use values as a guide for decision-making. Even performance management should be rooted in these values, giving employees a framework for growth and improvement.

This consistent emphasis creates a powerful cycle: strong values build a strong culture, and that culture, in turn, reinforces the values. Encourage everyone in the organization to live these values daily—it's the key to embedding them into the company's DNA.

## 6. Implement Recognition Programs

Recognizing and rewarding employees for their contributions is essential to building a positive and productive workplace. It

reinforces the value and purpose of their work, showing them that their efforts are appreciated by both leadership and their peers. When employees feel valued, they're more likely to experience higher job satisfaction and productivity, creating a cycle that drives continuous improvement.

Recognition doesn't always have to come in the form of monetary rewards. While financial incentives are appreciated, non-monetary recognition can often have an even greater impact. For example, a heartfelt, personal "thank you" from a supervisor can mean a lot. Public acknowledgment, such as a shoutout in a company-wide email, is also highly effective—and, for many employees, even preferred over bonuses.

The most successful rewards and recognition programs share a few common traits. They are inclusive, giving all employees a fair chance to be recognized. They are timely, ensuring recognition happens soon after the achievement to maximize its impact. They are specific, clearly highlighting the behaviour or achievement being celebrated to reinforce those actions. They are visible, showcasing recognition in ways that inspire others, like team meetings or newsletters. Finally, they offer meaningful rewards—incentives that resonate with employees but remain sustainable, steering clear of fostering excessive competition.

## 7. Adapt to Evolving Dynamics

The business world is always shifting, driven by technology, global events, and changing demographics. From the digital revolution to major world events, businesses face constant disruption as new industries emerge, processes evolve, and employees and customers bring fresh expectations. No organization is immune to these changes.

As your workforce evolves, your company culture needs to adapt too. Right now, we're seeing baby boomers retiring while Gen Z professionals join the workforce, each bringing their unique values and aspirations. The best way to prepare your culture for these transitions is to anchor it in principles that stand the test of time. Rigid practices won't hold up—they quickly become outdated. But grounding your culture in core values ensures it stays flexible and responsive to whatever comes next.

Yes, change can feel uncertain, but it's also full of opportunity. By embracing these moments of transformation, you can uncover new ways for your business and its culture to grow and thrive. It's about seeing change not as a challenge but as a chance to evolve and stay ahead.

## 8. Strategize Perks and Benefits

It's easy to associate positive company culture with flashy perks like free food or recreational spaces, but these aren't the foundation. A strong culture is built on your company's mission, vision, and values. Perks should complement these principles, creating a supportive work environment that reflects and reinforces your cultural priorities.

For example, if your company emphasizes "Quality of Life," a perk like a vacation stipend for travel makes sense. It aligns with the value by giving employees opportunities to create meaningful memories with loved ones—experiences they might not otherwise afford.

Modern employees are clear about what they want when it comes to perks. Surveys consistently highlight a strong preference for work-life balance and flexibility. Flexible schedules, compressed workweeks, and remote work options are highly valued by

today's workforce. Offering perks like these shows you're listening to employee needs while staying true to your company's core values.

## 9. Cultivate Feedback Loops

Creating a culture that prioritizes feedback is a win for both employees and the organization. Many companies still depend on annual performance reviews, but these often fall short—they're not timely, accurate, or effective enough to support real employee growth. Switching to performance management software can make feedback more continuous, impactful, and easier to manage. When evaluating software, look for features like ease of use, automated reminders, custom reporting, goal tracking, feedback documentation, mobile access, and secure storage options like e-signatures and online document storage.

Another challenge is understanding how employees really feel. Anonymous surveys are an excellent way to get honest feedback on what's working and what isn't. These surveys provide critical insights into employee satisfaction, helping leaders make better decisions about culture initiatives to boost morale and reduce turnover. Sending surveys via email makes them convenient and accessible, encouraging higher participation while keeping costs low.

Just like a garden needs regular care, a strong company culture thrives on consistent effort and attention. By cultivating open feedback channels and acting on insights, you can nurture a workplace environment where employees feel valued and engaged.

## 10. Measure Cultural Impact

Keeping track of your cultural initiatives is key to making sure they're working. Start by

identifying which cultural attributes are most important for your organization to measure. Strong cultures typically exhibit traits like effective communication, innovation, adaptability, employee wellness, a positive work environment, collaboration, support, performance focus, accountability, and alignment with mission and values. Assess where your company stands on these fronts and decide how you'll track changes as the culture evolves. Using measurement tools can give you clear insights into your progress.

Employee feedback surveys, especially pulse surveys, are some of the best tools for this. Pulse surveys consistently ask the same set of questions to gauge employee sentiment over time and identify trends. They can show how cultural initiatives, turnover, or organizational changes are impacting the workforce. eNPS® surveys are another useful option. They're based on the Net Promoter System® and measure how likely employees are to recommend the company as a workplace, while also uncovering the reasons behind their responses.

You can also rely on other tools like leader observations, which provide firsthand insights into what's working and what isn't, or 360-degree assessments, which gather feedback from various sources to evaluate how well individuals are adapting to cultural changes. If you want a more in-depth evaluation, professional culture assessments from firms like Human Synergistics or Deloitte can provide detailed analyses using proprietary methodologies.

Tracking progress ensures you're not just rolling out cultural initiatives but also understanding their real impact and making data-driven adjustments to strengthen your company's culture.

## 11. Address Culture Gaps

Even with your best efforts, maintaining a positive culture can be tough. Challenges like rapid growth, difficult individuals, inadequate training, or a lack of transparency can all lead to cultural breakdowns. But these aren't failures—they're opportunities to learn and improve. The key is to analyze what's happening, make adjustments, and ensure employees understand the reasons behind any changes. Involving them in the process by encouraging their input makes transitions smoother and builds trust.

The Harvard Business Review highlights some practices that can help steer cultural transformations successfully:

- **Define the Desired Culture:** Start by analyzing the current challenges and clearly outlining what you want the culture to look like. A clear vision sets the foundation.
- **Develop the Right Leaders:** Culture begins at the top, so you'll need leaders who embody the changes you're striving for. Their ability to support and implement the vision is crucial.
- **Encourage Open Communication:** Foster regular conversations about the importance of culture. This helps both employees and leaders understand the changes and stay engaged with the process.
- **Align Systems with the New Culture:** Make sure the organization's structures, systems, and processes support the cultural changes you're aiming for. This reinforcement ensures the transformation is sustainable.

Shifting culture can be challenging, but these steps provide a roadmap for navigating obstacles and achieving meaningful, lasting change. It's about persistence, clarity, and involving the whole team in the journey.

## 12. Sustain Cultural Growth

Building a positive company culture isn't a one-and-done task—it's an ongoing process. Just like a garden needs consistent care, culture requires regular attention and nurturing. Once you've made improvements, don't fall into the trap of complacency. Keep monitoring and refining the culture to ensure it stays on track. Revisit the strategies that worked in the past and adapt them as needed.

Regardless of whether the organization is a fresh startup or a well-established company, always consider how any organizational change might impact the culture—and how the culture, in turn, might shape those changes. It's a continuous cycle: observe, evaluate, analyze, strategize, and take action. This cycle ensures the culture remains healthy and evolves in the right direction. The key is to stay committed to constant improvement.

**"Culture eats strategy for breakfast."**

- Peter Drucker

# BUILDING A SUPPORTIVE ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

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OLADUNNI ADETONA, ACIPM



In today's workplace, the importance of fostering a supportive organizational culture cannot be overemphasized. As businesses evolve globally and the nature of work changes, there is a growing recognition that the well-being of employees is not just a personal concern but a critical business imperative. A supportive culture is one that prioritizes the mental and emotional health of its employees, recognizing that a healthy workforce is more engaged, productive, and resilient. This cultural shift is particularly crucial in the wake of global challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic, which has heightened awareness of mental health issues and the need for robust support systems within organizations. So, today, we will briefly explore the strategies and practices that organizations can adopt to build a supportive organizational culture, focusing on the role of leadership, open dialogue, and comprehensive support systems. We will also discuss how involving employees in the development of well-being programs can ensure these initiatives are effective and responsive to the unique needs of the workforce.

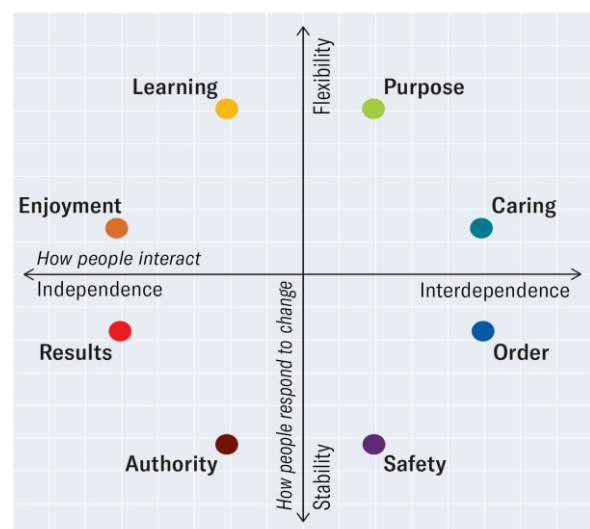
## The Imperative of Mental Health in the Workplace

Mental health in the workplace is a critical issue that has far-reaching implications for both employees and organizations. It encompasses emotional, psychological, and social well-being, affecting how individuals handle stress, relate to others, and make decisions. In the workplace, poor mental health can manifest in various ways, including decreased productivity, higher absenteeism, and increased turnover rates. Moreover, the stigma associated with mental health issues often prevents employees from seeking help, exacerbating the problem.

The importance of mental health in the workplace has been underscored by recent trends and events, such as the increasing prevalence of remote work, which can lead to feelings of isolation and blurred boundaries between personal and professional life. Economic uncertainties and the evolving job market also contribute to stress and anxiety among employees. These factors have heightened the awareness of the need for robust support systems within organizations. As a result of these, companies are increasingly recognizing that supporting mental health is not just a moral obligation but also a strategic business decision.

A supportive organizational culture that prioritizes mental health fosters a positive work environment, enhances employee satisfaction, and improves overall organizational performance. According to a study by the Harvard Business Review, caring and results are the most salient culture attributes in organizations worldwide, reflecting an orientation toward collaboration and achievement. This finding highlights the importance of creating a culture that not only seeks high performance but also cares for the well-being of its members.

## The 8 Styles of Company Culture



Source: Spencer Stuart

HBR

## Ranking the Culture Styles

Average ranking from most to least salient for all survey respondents.

<div> <div>Most salient</div> <div>↑</div> <div>↓</div> <div>Least salient</div> </div>	No. 1	<span style="color: #00728f;">●</span> Caring
	2	<span style="color: #e31a1c;">●</span> Results
	3	<span style="color: #7cae00;">●</span> Purpose
	4	<span style="color: #f1c232;">●</span> Learning
	5	<span style="color: #6a329f;">●</span> Safety
	6	<span style="color: #0072bc;">●</span> Order
	7	<span style="color: #8b4513;">●</span> Authority
	8	<span style="color: #e69a00;">●</span> Enjoyment

Source: Spencer Stuart and survey of HBR readers

HBR

To address the imperative of mental health in the workplace, organizations must implement proactive measures, including promoting awareness, reducing stigma, and providing access to necessary resources. These measures benefit employees and help create a more resilient organization capable of navigating challenges and adapting to change. Thus, developing a supportive organizational culture that emphasizes mental health and well-being is essential for long-term success and sustainability in today's dynamic business landscape.

### Developing and Implementing Support Systems

A supportive organizational culture hinges on having strong, accessible support systems for employees. These systems should be well-rounded, covering various aspects of mental health and overall well-being. When these supports are in place, they not only boost employee morale and productivity but also create a more inclusive and positive work atmosphere. By prioritizing these aspects, companies show

that they value the mental and emotional health of their employees just as much as their physical health.

#### 1. Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs):

Implement EAPs to provide employees with access to confidential counseling and support services, including anonymous online platforms. These platforms can offer a range of services, from self-help resources to live chats with mental health professionals, allowing employees to seek assistance discreetly. Ensure these programs are well-

publicized and easily accessible, so employees feel comfortable and secure in seeking help.

2. **Wellness Programs:** Develop comprehensive wellness programs that include mental health components, such as stress management workshops, mindfulness training, and resilience-building activities. For example, organizing workshops on nutrition and healthy living and providing resources for physical fitness, such as fitness classes and gym memberships, can significantly enhance employees' overall well-being. Regularly scheduled wellness days or health fairs can also encourage employees to engage with these resources actively.

3. **Training and Education:** Regularly provide workshops and training sessions focused on mental health topics, such as managing stress, building resilience, and recognizing signs of mental health issues. These sessions not only educate employees but also provide a forum for discussing mental health openly.

4. **Crisis Support:** Establish clear procedures for responding to mental

health crises, including immediate support options and follow-up care. Ensure that all employees are aware of these procedures.

5. **Flexible Work Arrangements:** Implement policies that allow for flexible working hours, remote work, or hybrid models. This flexibility helps employees manage work-life balance, reducing stress and burnout.

6. **Peer Support Networks:** Establish peer support groups or buddy systems where employees can share experiences and offer mutual support. These networks can provide an informal space for discussing mental health and well-being.
7. **Regular Check-Ins:** Encourage managers to have regular one-on-one check-ins with their team members. These conversations can be an opportunity to discuss workload, stress levels, and any personal challenges that might be impacting work.

## Creating an Open Dialogue

An open dialogue about mental health is crucial in building a supportive culture. As Catherine Pulsifer aptly noted, "Communication is one of the most important skills you require for a successful life." Employees should feel safe discussing their mental health without fear of judgment or repercussions. This environment can be fostered through several strategies:

1. **Regular Communication:** Regularly include mental health topics in company communications, such as newsletters or town hall meetings. This inclusion reinforces that mental health is a priority in the organization.

2. **Safe Spaces:** Create safe spaces where employees can discuss mental health issues confidentially. This could be through HR, designated mental health ambassadors, or anonymous reporting tools.



3. **Encouraging Feedback:** Actively seek feedback from employees about the mental health resources and support systems available. This feedback can help identify gaps and improve services.
4. **Anonymous Surveys:** Conduct regular, anonymous surveys to assess the mental health climate within the organization. These surveys can help identify areas of concern, gauge employee sentiment, and provide insights into the effectiveness of existing mental health initiatives. The anonymity ensures that employees can provide honest feedback without fear of repercussions.
5. **Storytelling and Testimonials:** Encourage employees to share their personal stories related to mental health and well-being. This could be done through internal newsletters, videos, or town hall meetings. Hearing stories from peers can normalize mental health discussions and help reduce stigma.
6. **Resource Visibility:** Ensure that information about mental health resources, such as Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) and support hotlines, is

highly visible and easily accessible. This includes placing information in common areas, on the company intranet, and in employee handbooks. Visibility reinforces that support is available and encourages utilization.

## The Role of Leadership

Leadership is the cornerstone of a supportive organizational culture. Leadership is the art of getting someone else to do something you want done because he wants to do it. As Kenneth Blanchard wisely noted, "The key to successful leadership today is influence, not authority." For mental health initiatives to be effective, leaders must demonstrate a genuine commitment to these issues. This commitment can be shown in various ways:

### 1. Visibility and Advocacy:

Organizational leaders must openly address the importance of mental health and well-being within the organization. Sharing personal stories, when appropriate, can further humanize the conversation and help destigmatize mental health issues. This openness encourages a culture where discussions about mental health are normalized and supported.

**2. Policy Development:** Develop and promote inclusive policies and practices that support mental health and work-life balance, such as flexible working hours, remote work options, access to counseling services, and adequate vacation time. Leaders should model these behaviors themselves, taking time off and setting boundaries around work hours.



**3. Resource Allocation:** Allocate sufficient resources to support mental health initiatives. This includes funding for training, wellness programs, and mental health services.

**4. Role Modeling:** Actively participate in mental health and wellness programs, demonstrating that these initiatives are valued at all levels of the organization.

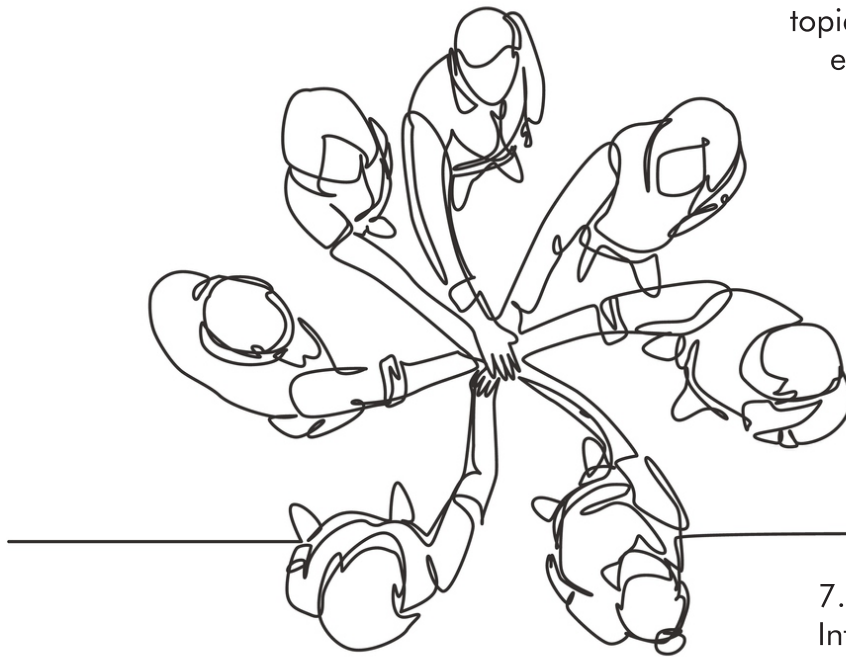
**5. Consistent Communication:** Regularly communicate the importance of mental health and the availability of support resources through multiple channels, ensuring that the message reaches all employees.

**6. Integration into Business Strategy:** Embed mental health and well-being objectives into the broader business strategy, aligning them with the organization's mission and values. This integration ensures that mental health is not seen as a standalone issue but as part of the organizational success.

**7. Recognition and Reward:** Recognize and reward behaviours and initiatives that promote mental health and well-being, such as peer support programs or innovative wellness ideas. This recognition reinforces the importance of these values within the organization.

## Employee Involvement in Well-being Programs

For well-being programs to be effective, they must be relevant and responsive to the needs of employees. Engaging employees in the development and implementation of these programs ensures that they are tailored to the unique culture and needs of the organization:



1. **Surveys and Assessments:** Conduct regular surveys to assess the mental health and well-being of employees. Use this data to inform the development of support programs and to track their effectiveness over time.
2. **Focus Groups:** Hold focus groups with employees to discuss mental health challenges and potential solutions. This participatory approach helps ensure that programs are relevant and effective.
3. **Feedback Mechanisms:** Establish feedback mechanisms that allow employees to suggest improvements to existing programs or to propose new initiatives. This feedback should be taken seriously and acted upon where appropriate.
4. **Peer Support Networks:** Create peer support networks or buddy systems where employees can support each other's mental health and well-being. Involving employees in the design of these networks ensures they meet the actual needs and preferences of the workforce.
5. **Open Forums and Town Halls:** Hold regular open forums or town hall meetings where employees can discuss

mental health and well-being topics openly. This transparency encourages participation and helps identify areas for improvement.

**6. Suggestion Boxes:** Implement anonymous suggestion boxes, either physical or digital, where employees can propose ideas for well-being initiatives without fear of stigma or reprisal.

**7. Incentive Programs:** Introduce incentive programs that encourage employee participation in well-being activities, such as challenges, workshops, or training sessions. Recognizing and rewarding contributions can motivate employees to engage more actively in these programs.

## Conclusion

Building a supportive organizational culture that prioritizes employee well-being and mental health is a vital component of a resilient organization. Through committed leadership, open dialogue, comprehensive support systems, and active employee involvement, organizations can create environments where employees thrive. As the landscape of work continues to evolve, the importance of mental health and well-being in the workplace will only grow, making it imperative for organizations to invest in these critical areas. By doing so, they not only enhance the lives of their employees but also secure a competitive advantage in the marketplace.

# 7 DRIVERS OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

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BELEMINA OBUNGE, MCIPM



*"The only way to do great work is to love what you do."*  
- Steve Jobs

A company's success is deeply intertwined with its workforce. The skills, innovative thinking, and dedication of employees are crucial for achieving goals, fostering progress, and shaping the company's future. It's therefore understandable why business leaders frequently cite human resources as a primary concern. This focus stems, in part, from the highly competitive talent market. The pursuit of skilled professionals is fierce, with organizations employing various strategies to attract top candidates. However, simply acquiring talent is insufficient; the true challenge lies in effectively retaining and motivating employees once they've joined the team.

Maintaining high levels of retention and engagement can be difficult. Research indicates a significant gap in employee engagement, with a large portion of the workforce feeling disconnected from their work. This presents a substantial opportunity for organizations to enhance their internal practices.

Creating a truly engaged workforce requires a sustained, holistic approach rather than isolated initiatives. It necessitates building meaningful connections throughout the employee experience, from the initial hiring process to long-term career development.



Let's briefly explore seven crucial factors that drive employee engagement—principles designed to inspire and energize teams, creating a mutually beneficial environment for both employees and the organization.

## 1. Connecting with a Shared Vision

The idea that successful organizations begin with a clear "why" rather than a "what" is a powerful concept. Organizations with a strong sense of purpose base their operations on a well-defined mission and core values. When employees understand and identify with this fundamental "why," they are naturally driven to align their work with the larger organizational objectives.

Organizations that prioritize a shared vision cultivate a culture where employees feel their contributions are valuable and make a difference.

The need for purpose is a fundamental human motivator. Individuals desire to feel that their work contributes to something significant.

Witnessing the impact of their efforts fosters a sense of fulfillment and intrinsic motivation. Engaged employees are more likely to:

- Exceed expectations in their roles.
- Collaborate effectively within teams.
- Contribute to innovation and creative problem-solving.

Conversely, employees who lack a sense of purpose may become disengaged, performing only the bare minimum required or even less.

Here are practical steps to cultivate a shared vision within your organization:

- **Clearly Articulate Your Strategic Direction:** Communicate the organization's current position, past achievements, and future aspirations. By understanding the broader context and their place within it, employees develop a stronger sense of connection.
- **Demonstrate the Impact of Daily Work:** Help employees understand how their daily tasks contribute to overall goals. For example, if your company provides a service, share examples of how that service has positively impacted clients or the community.



- **Encourage Employee Participation in Defining Goals:** Involve employees in discussions about organizational objectives, actively seeking their input and demonstrating that their opinions are valued.

Building a shared vision is an ongoing process that requires consistent effort. However, these efforts can significantly transform how employees perceive their work and their relationship with the organization.



perceived lack of progress can lead to disengagement, frustration, and even burnout.

Here are practical strategies to foster and maintain consistent progress within your organization:

- **Recognize Achievements at Every Stage:** Avoid reserving recognition solely for major milestones. Acknowledge and celebrate smaller

achievements along the way. Whether it's the completion of a key task or reaching a project benchmark, these acknowledgements reinforce progress and generate enthusiasm for future work.

- **Contextualize Progress within the Larger Narrative:** When communicating the organization's story, emphasize not only future goals but also past achievements and the journey undertaken. This allows employees to feel a sense of pride and ownership in the organization's trajectory.
- **Equip Leaders to Address Declining Momentum:** Reduced momentum can occur when goals are unclear or the scope of work feels overwhelming. Leaders should be trained to identify these indicators and take appropriate action:
  - Reiterate goals to refocus teams on objectives.
  - Divide complex tasks into smaller, more manageable components to create a sense of achievable progress.
  - Develop clear action plans so employees understand the next steps.
- **Visualize Progress Effectively:** Utilize tools such as progress trackers, dashboards, or visual project timelines to make progress tangible. When employees can visually track their efforts, it reinforces motivation and engagement.

## 2. Maintaining Forward Motion

The principle that objects in motion tend to stay in motion, a fundamental concept in physics, also holds relevance for human behavior. Individuals who are actively engaged and achieving results are more likely to maintain that momentum. Conversely, inactivity can lead to stagnation. In a work context, fostering and sustaining this forward motion is essential. Employees who perceive themselves as making progress, whether individually or collectively, are more likely to remain engaged, motivated, and productive.

The psychology of momentum is compelling. Research suggests that when individuals believe they are progressing towards a goal, their dedication to achieving it increases significantly. This sense of progress cultivates:

- A deeper emotional connection to the task.
- Increased productivity as individuals strive to maintain their pace.
- Enhanced engagement, as progress fosters satisfaction and a sense of accomplishment.

When employees can reflect on their achievements, it reinforces their belief in their contributions and the overall organizational objectives. Conversely, a

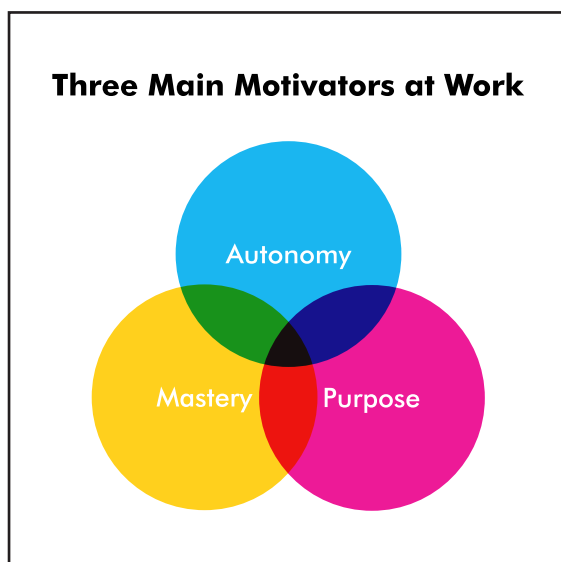
By fostering a culture of continuous progress, you create a positive cycle that drives engagement, collaboration, and a shared commitment to success.

### 3. Empowering Decision-Making

Empowerment in the workplace involves granting employees the freedom to manage their work effectively. This doesn't imply abandoning employees without support; rather, it's about enabling them to make decisions within their defined areas of responsibility. Whether it involves complete ownership of a project or managing a specific component, the key factor is the presence of control, not necessarily the extent of it.

When employees experience autonomy, they develop a sense of ownership over their tasks. This sense of ownership fosters accountability, pride in their work, and a motivation to achieve results that meet both their personal standards and organizational objectives.

Research highlights autonomy, mastery, and purpose as key drivers of workplace motivation. While purpose has been previously addressed and mastery will be discussed later, autonomy warrants specific attention. Its importance stems from several factors:



- **Promotes Accountability:** Employees who feel ownership of their work are more invested in achieving positive outcomes.
- **Builds Trust:** When leaders delegate responsibility and trust employees to manage their work, it reinforces confidence in their abilities.
- **Fosters Pride:** Employees derive satisfaction from their independence and the responsibility they've been given.

Providing employees with the opportunity to experiment, take calculated risks, and learn from setbacks facilitates both professional development and contributions to organizational success.

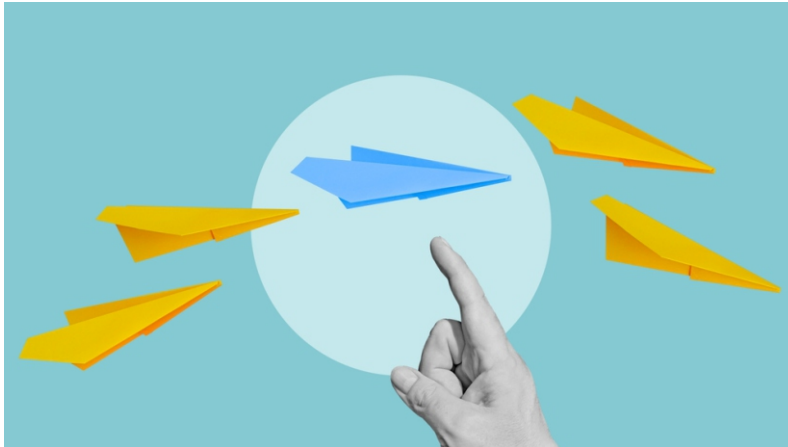
Cultivating autonomy requires a balanced approach within organizations:

- **Develop Leadership Skills for Balanced Delegation:** Micromanagement can stifle creativity and engagement, while excessive independence can lead to confusion or errors. Leaders should be trained to provide appropriate guidance and resources without excessive control, enabling employees to thrive within well-defined boundaries.
- **Encourage Innovative Approaches:** Provide employees with the space to test new ideas and implement their own solutions. While mistakes are inevitable, they also provide valuable learning experiences. Foster a culture where setbacks are viewed as opportunities for growth rather than grounds for punishment.
- **Develop Decision-Making Capabilities:** Provide opportunities for employees to make decisions within their roles, regardless of scale. Trust them with responsibility and acknowledge initiative when they take ownership.
- **Recognize Contributions Beyond Outcomes:** Autonomy encompasses more than just achieving results; it also includes the process. Recognize

employees for their innovative thinking and problem-solving skills, even if the final outcome isn't perfect.

Empowering employees through autonomy creates a more engaged, capable, and confident workforce that can effectively drive organizational progress.

#### 4. Matching Skills to Tasks



Matching skills to tasks involves ensuring employees are placed in roles that effectively utilize their strengths. While this concept may seem straightforward, research indicates that a significant portion of the workforce experiences a disconnect between their actual job responsibilities and the expectations established during the hiring process. This misalignment often originates in the initial stages of recruitment, including job description creation, interviews, and onboarding.

Achieving effective skill-to-task alignment requires a thorough understanding of the requirements of each role, identification of the necessary skills, and, crucially, recognition of the type of individual who will thrive in that position. It's about placing individuals in roles that capitalize on their abilities and passions, fostering engagement by ensuring their work aligns with their strengths.

Data consistently demonstrates a strong correlation between mismatched roles and

decreased engagement. Employees who are not utilizing their strengths often experience feelings of being unchallenged and undervalued. Conversely, when individuals believe they are making meaningful contributions and performing tasks they excel at, their engagement levels significantly increase.

When skills and tasks are aligned, employees often experience a state of deep focus and high productivity, sometimes described as "flow." In this state, individuals are fully absorbed in their work, less aware of time passing, and achieve optimal performance. This benefits both the organization, through increased productivity and higher quality work, and the employee, through a strong sense of accomplishment and purpose.

Here are strategies to improve skill-to-task alignment:

- **Prioritize Alignment During Recruitment:** During the interview process, ask targeted questions designed to reveal a candidate's strengths and passions. Provide a transparent overview of the role, including not just the tasks involved, but also the required skills, behaviors, and personality traits.
- **Develop Manager and Recruiter Expertise:** Train managers and recruiters to identify the optimal intersection of a candidate's competencies, available opportunities, and personal passions. Empower them to assess whether an employee's current role is a suitable fit and explore internal mobility options to optimize talent alignment within the organization.
- **Conduct Regular Alignment Reviews:** Skills and roles can evolve over time. Regularly evaluate whether employees

remain in positions that effectively utilize their strengths. If misalignment is identified, consider reassigning responsibilities or transitioning the employee to a more suitable role while simultaneously seeking a better match for the original position.

When individuals perform tasks that leverage their strengths, they experience increased productivity, greater job satisfaction, higher engagement, and a stronger desire to remain with the organization.

## 5. Appreciation and Incentives

Human behavior is influenced by the anticipation and receipt of rewards. When individuals receive recognition for their efforts, it triggers a positive response that encourages repetition of the associated behavior. This principle, often used in game design to enhance engagement, can also be effectively applied in the workplace to reinforce desired actions and contributions.

Formal and informal appreciation programs can motivate teams to strive for excellence and contribute to organizational objectives. Integrating elements of positive reinforcement, such as incentives, acknowledgements, and milestones, can create a work environment where employees are motivated to perform at their best.

Recognition plays a significant role in employee retention. Research indicates a strong link between effective appreciation programs and reduced employee turnover. A significant portion of the workforce expresses dissatisfaction with the level of recognition they receive, highlighting a crucial area for organizational improvement.

Employees seek workplaces where their contributions are valued. Organizations that lack effective appreciation and incentive programs risk losing valuable talent to competitors who prioritize recognizing and celebrating their workforce.



Here are strategies for implementing effective appreciation and incentive programs:

- **Provide Specific and Personalized Acknowledgement:** While general praise is positive, it lacks the impact of specific, personalized recognition. Clearly articulate the specific behavior or achievement being acknowledged and its positive impact on the team or organization.
- **Integrate Elements of Positive Reinforcement:** Develop programs that encourage ongoing engagement. This could include offering points for reaching milestones, awarding badges for achieving specific goals, or providing tiered incentives for outstanding performance. Publicly acknowledging achievements can also serve to motivate others.
- **Foster a Culture of Appreciation:** Recognition should not be limited to leadership; cultivate a culture where peer-to-peer appreciation is encouraged. Implementing peer recognition platforms or dedicating time for acknowledgements during team meetings can significantly enhance a sense of value and appreciation.
- **Offer Diverse Incentives:** Individuals are motivated by different types of rewards. Some may prefer financial bonuses, while others might value experiences, additional time off, or opportunities for professional development. Whenever possible, tailor incentives to individual preferences.

Appreciation and incentives are not merely symbolic gestures; they are powerful tools for driving engagement, improving retention, and fostering a high-performing work environment. When employees feel valued and appreciated, they are more likely to remain motivated and contribute their best work.

## 6. Building Meaningful Workplace Connections

A positive work environment should be inclusive, fostering a sense of belonging and mutual respect among all employees. This doesn't mean creating exclusive groups; rather, it means cultivating genuine connections that encourage collaboration, mutual support, and a shared sense of purpose.

Strong social connections are crucial for building a positive and productive workplace culture. Employees who develop meaningful relationships at work are more likely to remain engaged and committed to the organization. For example:

- Many new employees find that having a colleague or mentor to guide them significantly enhances their productivity and integration into the team.
- A substantial number of employees who leave within their first few months indicate that a more welcoming and supportive social environment could have influenced their decision to stay.
- Employee referrals, often a result of existing workplace connections, are a highly effective recruitment method.

Individuals naturally gravitate towards workplaces where they feel connected, supported, and valued as part of a community.

Here are strategies for fostering meaningful workplace connections:

- **Emphasize the Importance of Employee Referrals:** Clearly communicate to employees the value of their referrals in finding suitable candidates. Regularly share information about open positions and the qualities of an ideal candidate. Maintaining open communication with referring employees about the status of their referrals can further encourage participation.

- **Personalize the Onboarding Experience:** Incorporate social elements into the onboarding process to help new hires connect with their colleagues. Gathering information about new hires' interests and hobbies can facilitate introductions to like-minded individuals. Implementing structured buddy programs or mentorship initiatives can also create a strong sense of belonging from the beginning.

Building a strong sense of community within the workplace not only enhances employee engagement and retention but also contributes to a more positive and productive work environment overall.

## 7. Shared External Challenges



In a business context, a "shared external challenge" refers not to an internal conflict or individual, but rather to an external force or objective that unites employees in a common purpose. This could be a key competitor in the market, an ambitious target the organization aims to achieve, or a significant industry challenge the company seeks to address. The aim is to motivate employees to collaborate effectively to overcome this external obstacle, fostering teamwork and minimizing internal disagreements.

Psychologically, working towards a shared objective taps into our natural inclination to

work together towards a common goal. When employees feel they are part of a team striving for a greater purpose, it can significantly enhance engagement and boost performance. Examples from business history illustrate how focusing on an external challenge can reduce internal rivalries and promote unity within an organization.

Incorporating elements of friendly competition can further amplify this effect. By establishing clear objectives, tracking progress, and recognizing achievements, organizations can provide employees with additional motivation and a stronger sense of purpose.

Here are strategies for leveraging shared external challenges:

- **Clearly Define the Objective:** Clearly identify the "shared external challenge." Is it surpassing a competitor in market share, achieving a significant revenue milestone, or addressing a key industry issue? Ensure the objective is realistic, measurable, and clearly communicated.
- **Maintain Momentum and Track Progress:** Regularly update employees on progress towards the objective. Are you ahead of schedule, on track, or facing challenges? Celebrating milestones and acknowledging achievements can help maintain enthusiasm and motivation. Providing recognition and opportunities for shared celebrations can further encourage collective effort.

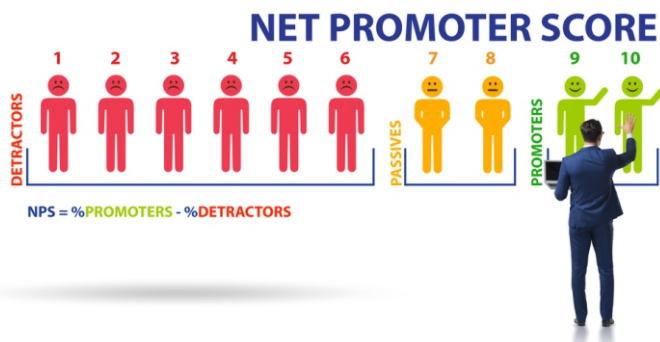
Working together to overcome a shared external challenge can foster a strong sense of unity and purpose within a team. When facing a common objective, employees are more likely to collaborate effectively and support one another.

## Monitoring and Adapting Your Approach

Employee engagement is a fluid concept that requires ongoing assessment to understand your organization's current state and identify areas for improvement.

### Key Measurement Tools:

Various methods can be used to gauge employee engagement. One valuable tool is the Employee Net Promoter Score (eNPS). This straightforward survey provides actionable insights into employee sentiment.



### Typical eNPS questions include:

- "On a scale of 1 to 10, how likely are you to recommend our company as a place to work?"
- "On a scale of 1 to 10, how engaged do you feel with your work at this time?"

### Interpreting the Results:

Responses are typically categorized as follows:

- **Promoters (9-10):** Highly engaged and positive about the organization.
- **Passive (7-8):** Satisfied but not fully engaged.
- **Detractors (1-6):** Unhappy and more likely to disengage or leave.

### How to calculate eNPS:

$$\text{eNPS} = \% \text{ Promoters} - \% \text{ Detractors}$$

Regularly monitoring the eNPS across different departments and levels of the organization can reveal areas of strength and highlight areas that require attention. It can also be a valuable tool for evaluating leadership effectiveness, the impact of engagement initiatives, and overall cultural alignment.

## Conclusion

Human Resources plays a vital role in developing and retaining the talent that drives organizational success. Cultivating employee engagement is an ongoing process that begins with recruitment and continues throughout the employee lifecycle.

By integrating key factors such as strong workplace relationships, shared objectives, and appropriate recognition into your engagement strategy, HR can foster a positive and productive work environment where employees feel valued, connected, and motivated.

When HR provides organizations with the tools to measure, adapt, and focus on these key factors, the result is a workforce prepared to perform at its best. Employees are not simply resources; they are a crucial source of competitive advantage.

# BREAKING BARRIERS:

Strategies for Inclusive Development  
in the Public Service

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JOLA OYENEYE, mni, MCIPM



*“A leader’s unending responsibility is to remove every detour and barrier to ensure that the vision is first clear, then real.”*  
– Jack Welch.

**T**he primary functions of government in any society are to promote the general well-being, security, stability, and prosperity of the people—collectively summarized as development. Achieving development through the Public Service depends on the level of professionalism among its personnel and their readiness to challenge the status quo and inherent barriers. According to Olaopa (2013), the destiny of the state and its public sector are intertwined; an effective public sector creates an effective and developmental state.

### Conceptual Clarifications

Before delving deeper into this discourse, it is essential to clarify some concepts pertinent to the topic: barriers, Public Service, and inclusive development.

### Barriers

Barriers, whether physical or metaphorical, are obstacles that impede progress (Vocabulary.com). They may be real or imaginary, depending on the views and perceptions of the person encountering them. As a reformer, when confronted with barriers in service delivery, I ask:

- “What features of our current structures, culture, systems, processes, or skill sets are hindering what we aim to achieve in conducting government business and delivering results?”
- “What can we do to overcome these barriers?”

### The Public Service

The Public Service encompasses both the Civil Service and Public Service. The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999), as amended, defines the Public Service as the service of the state in any capacity concerning the government of the state.

It includes roles such as clerks and staff of the House of Assembly, the High Court, the Sharia Court of Appeal, and the Customary Court of Appeal, as well as other courts established by the Nigerian Constitution or by state law. It also comprises members or staff of commissions or authorities established by the Constitution or state law, staff of local government councils, employees of statutory corporations, and personnel of educational institutions established or financed principally by the state government. Additionally, it includes staff of any company or enterprise in which the state or its agency holds a controlling interest.

According to this definition, most individuals present here today are part of the Public Service.

While the Constitution distinguishes between the “Public Service” and the “Civil Service,” the two terms are often used interchangeably.

Another key clarification pertains to the role of the Public Service, which is to render services to the public. These services are designed to enhance citizens’ quality of life, address their social needs, and promote the

common good. Examples include healthcare, education, social welfare, public safety, infrastructure development, sanitation, waste management, housing, urban development, and community programs. The overarching goal is to serve the public's interests and create a positive societal impact.

## Inclusive Development

In the context of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), inclusive development refers to fostering outcomes that are both sustainable and inclusive, addressing global sustainability, social, and economic issues. Although the concept lacks a universally accepted definition, it emphasizes equality and incorporates fair distribution of development benefits, human-centered development, equal access to opportunities, and participatory empowerment. It also includes non-income dimensions like social participation and environmental protection (Dorffel and Schuhmann, 2020).

Rehal (2023), in his work "Inclusive Development: Meaning and Features," describes it as a holistic, people-centered approach aimed at creating equal and equitable opportunities while reducing disparities. It seeks to promote the well-being and participation of all, particularly marginalized or excluded individuals. Recognizing diversity as a strength, inclusive development strives to build a more just and equitable society by addressing systemic barriers and fostering opportunities for all.

While Nigeria's Constitution does not explicitly mention inclusive development, it provides for human rights, federal character, the quota system, and other inclusive policies, though these are not justiciable.

In simpler terms, how do we ensure the "dividends of democracy" are distributed

equitably? Inclusive development is about effectively organizing access to and allocation of basic resources. The motto of the Alumni Association of a National Institute aptly encapsulates this concept: "Towards a Better Society."

## Strategies

Strategies are plans of action designed to achieve specific goals. Therefore, what are the plans to accomplish inclusive development through the Public Service?

## Fundamentals of Public Service and Inclusive Development

The Public Service of any state is built on fundamental structures that enable it to perform its functions impartially. These structures are rooted in the Constitution or laws of the state. For instance, Section 197 (1) (a) of the Nigerian Constitution provides guiding principles for the Public Service. Oyeneye (2021) summarises the powers of the Civil Service Commission as the authority to "hire and fire," encompassing the broader management of human resources. Section 207 of the Constitution further empowers the State Civil Service Commission, subject to the Governor's approval, to delegate its powers to members or officers within the Civil Service of the state. When necessary, the Commission delegates these powers to other government Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs).

## Framework of the Public Service

A pyramidal structure underpins the institutional framework for human resource management within the Civil or Public Service. At the top of this pyramid is the Civil Service Commission, followed by the Office of the Head of Service, Management Staff Committees, Administrative Staff Advisory Committees, Centrally-Deployed Cadres Board, Senior Staff Committee, and, at the

base, the Junior Staff Committee (Osokoya and Obawunmi, 2016).

This framework promotes inclusiveness and fairness within the Public Service as a foundational culture, ensuring equity in its internal processes before extending the same discipline to its outputs and deliverables.

Job security in the Civil Service is often attributed to this structured framework, which ensures fair hearings and due diligence, preventing undue dismissals. The framework also guarantees that employees receive what is due to them, including equitable employment policies, promotions, training, career development, placements/postings, and succession planning. To achieve these objectives, the Public Service adheres to standard guidelines outlined in documents such as the Public Service Rules, Financial Regulations, Administrative Guidelines, Codes of Conduct, Circulars, and Gazettes.

## Fundamentals of Inclusive Development

Rehal (2023) identifies key concepts that guide inclusive development: Equity, Participation, Accessibility, Empowerment, Sustainability, and Social Cohesion.

1. **Equity:** Ensures the fair distribution of resources, opportunities, and benefits among all individuals and communities, addressing historical inequalities.
2. **Participation:** Involves all stakeholders, including marginalised groups, in decision-making processes to ensure diverse perspectives are considered and affected individuals have a voice.
3. **Accessibility:** Focuses on removing barriers to essential services, education, healthcare, and economic opportunities, enabling everyone to benefit regardless of their background.

4. **Empowerment:** Provides individuals and communities with tools, skills, and resources to improve their lives, enhancing their participation in economic and social activities.
5. **Sustainability:** Advocates for the responsible use of resources, balancing present needs with those of future generations while promoting environmentally friendly practices.
6. **Social Cohesion:** Fosters community, trust, and cooperation among diverse societal groups, building a harmonious and resilient society.

## The Role of the Public Service in Inclusive Development

The Public Service acts as a conduit, delivering the government's development goals to beneficiaries and facilitating the citizenry's reciprocal responsibilities to the state. Equity in inclusive development ensures that everyone has an equal chance to participate in and benefit from these initiatives. For example, Lagosians who pay taxes and levies are entitled to partake in the state's development efforts.

Achieving this requires overcoming significant obstacles, such as:

- Inadequate infrastructure
- Limited access to education and healthcare
- Discrimination and social exclusion
- Corruption and inefficiency
- Lack of transparency and accountability
- Insufficient funding and resources
- Political and bureaucratic barriers
- Limited civic engagement

## Strategies for Inclusive Development

The Lagos State Government has implemented comprehensive strategies aligned with international best practices to overcome these barriers. Examples include:

1. **Decentralisation and community-led development:** For example, the Lagos State Neighbourhood Safety Agency (LSNSA) and its Neighbourhood Safety Corps.
2. **Digital transformation and e-governance:** Initiatives such as the Citizens' Gate 2.0 platform and the metro-fibre project under the "Smart City" agenda.
3. **Inclusive budgeting and resource allocation:** Utilising the Integrated Financial Management Information System (IFMIS) and leveraging contributions from the Lagos State House of Assembly and the Ministry of Budget and Planning.
4. **Capacity building and training:** Conducted by agencies like the Office of the Head of Service and the Public Service Staff Development Centre (PSSDC).
5. **Citizen engagement and participatory governance:** Platforms such as Citizens' Gate 2.0 encourage active involvement.
6. **Performance monitoring and evaluation:** Led by the Office of Transformation, Creativity, and Innovation (OTCI) and M&E units across MDAs.
7. **Collaboration with civil society, the private sector, and development partners:** Numerous partnerships within the state reflect this approach.
8. **Innovative financing and resource mobilisation:** For instance, the Lagos State Employment Trust Fund (LSETF).

For Lagos State, the THEME Plus agenda of the current administration provides a strategic lens for understanding and

achieving inclusive development. It offers a framework for fostering a truly equitable and progressive "Centre of Excellence."

### Breaking Barriers: Merging the Past with the Present

The challenges faced by the administration of His Excellency, the late Alhaji Lateef Kayode Jakande, fondly called Baba Kekere, in delivering the first-ever Metroline Rail project between 1979 and 1983 seemed insurmountable at the time. Who would have imagined that those barriers would eventually be broken? Back then, the general sentiment was that building a Metroline rail system in an already

developed city like Lagos would necessitate the destruction of numerous public and private properties. The 1983 coup d'état dealt the final blow to the project.

Today, thanks to the unwavering

determination of successive Lagos State governments—championed by His Excellency, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, GCFR, the first Governor of Lagos State in the Fourth Republic—the city now boasts the Red and Blue Lines of a modern rail system.

Under the management of the Lagos State Metropolitan Area Transport Authority (LAMATA), a public service organization operating under the Lagos State Ministry of Transportation, the rail system has become a reality. Despite funding challenges, delays, economic downturns, and skepticism from naysayers, the project is expected to transport half a million passengers daily. Its objectives include reducing travel time, mitigating stress-



related health issues, alleviating traffic congestion, minimizing road accidents, and improving commuter safety (Channels TV).

The barriers have been broken, and the rail system has significantly enhanced Lagos State's overall economic growth and development.

### **Breaking Barriers in Times of Hardship: Ounje Eko Food Markets**

As part of its inclusive and trailblazing governance approach to address global inflationary trends, the Lagos State Government introduced the Ounje Eko food market. This discount market, launched under the umbrella of EKO CARES, aims to cushion the impact of economic hardships on Lagosians.

Demonstrating responsiveness, the government established the Special Dispensation Advisory Committee on Social Interventions (SPEDAC) to ease the economic burden on citizens amid Nigeria's new economic realities.

Ounje Eko operates in 57 centers across the state, offering residents at the lower end of the societal ladder an affordable and dignified shopping experience. By providing essential commodities at discounted rates, this initiative embodies inclusive development, recognizing that not everyone can independently navigate economic downturns.



Other EKO CARES initiatives extend to health, education, and transportation sectors, showcasing the Lagos State Government's commitment to serving humanity during challenging times. These initiatives are spearheaded by the Ministry of Agriculture and other relevant agencies.

### **Breaking Barriers: Rising to the Challenge**

Some believe that Nigeria's public service system is struggling and unable to deliver transformative results. But why should this be the case? The public service system, modeled after that of the colonial masters, has functioned effectively in other countries and should perform similarly here.

The responsibility for making the public service work lies with its operators. The government, as the chief operator, must continue reforming the system to ensure it remains fit for purpose. Meanwhile, public servants themselves must embrace these reforms, however novel or challenging they may seem. Such reforms foster value reorientation within the service, bringing along the critical mass willing to implement change and drive inclusive development.

As Prof. Tunji Olaopa, the current Chairman of the Federal Civil Service Commission, aptly put it, "The destiny of the state and its public sector are tied, in that an effective public sector makes for an effective and developmental state."

## Conclusion and Recommendations

Barriers test the resolve of goal-getters. Lagos State and its public service have consistently demonstrated the ability to break new ground in development, fostering inclusiveness by ensuring everyone feels a sense of belonging. Whether in the public service or the streets of Lagos, the city has something to offer everyone.

For example, the National Youth Service Corps members often cherish their memories of Lagos, a state that now grants ₦100,000 to each corps member at the end of their service year (Premium Times, 2024). Moreover, Lagos collaborates with private sector organizations on large-scale projects, such as housing the world's largest petroleum refinery owned by a pan-Nigerian business mogul.

## Recommendations

To sustain and enhance its achievements, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. The public service should regularly evaluate its operations and services using the principles of inclusive development, making necessary adjustments.
2. Lagos State should assess its development projects for inclusivity and draw lessons for future initiatives.
3. Equity should not only ensure that everyone benefits from development projects but also that everyone contributes to public goals. Payment of taxes and levies is a civic duty, enabling citizens to have a stake in inclusive development.

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# THE IMPERATIVE OF TECHNICAL EDUCATION IN NIGERIA:

A Catalyst for National Development

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*“The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn.” - Alvin Toffler*



Nigeria, a nation brimming with potential, stands at a pivotal juncture. Our vast natural resources and energetic youth, are the true wealth of a nation. However, to unlock this potential and translate it into tangible progress, a critical element is missing: a robust system of technical education.

This is not merely an academic pursuit, but a national imperative. Just as a sculptor chisels a formless block into a masterpiece, technical education transforms raw potential into a skilled workforce capable of building a brighter future. Nigeria's current economic landscape is a resource-rich yet import-dependent paradox. We possess the raw materials, but lack the technical expertise to transform them into finished goods, hindering economic diversification and job creation. As Albert Einstein observed, "The only source of knowledge is experience." Technical education provides the practical experience needed to bridge this gap and unlock the true value of our resources.

The global landscape is undergoing a technological revolution, and Nigeria risks

being left behind without a skilled technical workforce. From harnessing renewable energy to automating agriculture, the call for individuals who can build, maintain, and innovate in these fields grows ever stronger. A recent World Bank report reinforces this urgency, stating that "Nigeria's economic diversification and job creation efforts rely heavily on building a robust technical and vocational education system."

Investing in technical education goes beyond just economic benefits. It is a social responsibility that empowers our youth. By equipping them with practical skills and fostering ingenuity, we cultivate not just employees, but problem-solvers and innovators. Technical education fosters the very qualities that define a strong national character – discipline, a thirst for continuous learning, and the ability to translate knowledge into action. It combats unemployment, fostering self-reliance and propelling Nigeria towards true development.

### Advantages of a Technical Education

- 1. Bridges the Gap Between Theory and Practice:** Unlike traditional academic education, technical education provides a hands-on approach to learning. You gain practical skills and knowledge directly applicable to the demands of various industries, preparing you to solve real-world problems efficiently.
- 2. Highly Sought-After Skills:** The job market demands a skilled technical

workforce. From Information Technology to renewable energy and mechanized agriculture, technical professionals are in high demand. A technical education positions you strategically for a successful career in these growing fields.

3. **Strong Foundation for a Sustainable Economy:** A robust technical education system is vital for a nation's economic well-being. It produces skilled technicians, artisans, engineers, and technologists who are the backbone of any industrial ecosystem.

4. **Empowers Individuals and Fosters Self-Reliance:** Technical education equips you with the skills and knowledge to be self-sufficient. It reduces unemployment and empowers individuals to contribute meaningfully to their communities and the nation's development.

5. **Develops Valuable Soft Skills:** Technical proficiency is just one piece of the puzzle. Technical education also fosters the development of crucial soft skills such as communication, teamwork, problem-solving, and leadership. These skills make you a well-rounded candidate who can effectively collaborate and lead in professional environments.

6. **Pathway to Fulfilling Careers:** Technical education opens doors to fulfilling careers that offer intellectual challenges, opportunities for continuous learning, and the potential to make a real difference in the world.

7. **Competitive Salary Potential:** The demand for skilled technical professionals translates into good earning potential. Many technical careers offer competitive salaries and benefits

packages, providing financial security and a comfortable standard of living.

8. **Entrepreneurial Opportunities:** Technical education equips you with the knowledge and skills to not only be an employee but also a potential employer. The training and experience gained can empower you to pursue entrepreneurial ventures and contribute to economic growth by creating jobs and innovative solutions.

9. **Lifelong Learning:** Technical education fosters a love for learning and the ability to adapt to a constantly evolving technological landscape. It equips you with the tools and mindset for continuous professional development, ensuring your

skills remain relevant throughout your career.

10. **Contributes to National Development:** By producing a skilled and innovative workforce, technical education plays a critical role in

national development. It empowers a nation to compete on the global stage, drive industrial growth, and create a brighter future for its citizens.



### Building a Robust Technical Education System in Nigeria

For Nigeria to harness the full potential of technical education, there is a pressing need to invest in the requisite knowledge and infrastructure. This includes:

1. **State-of-the-Art Facilities:** Modern laboratories, workshops, and equipment are crucial for providing students with practical experience and exposure to the latest technological trends.
2. **Qualified Instructors:** Competent and experienced educators are essential to

impart both theoretical knowledge and practical skills effectively.

3. **Research and Development (R&D):** Encouraging a culture of innovation through R&D initiatives can lead to technological breakthroughs and indigenous solutions to local challenges.
4. **Industry Collaboration:** Partnerships with industries ensure that the curriculum remains relevant and aligned with market needs, providing students with internship and employment opportunities.
5. **Robust Curriculum:** A comprehensive and continuously updated curriculum that incorporates emerging technologies and industry standards is crucial for preparing students to meet current and future demands.
6. **Digital Literacy Programs:** Integrating digital literacy into the technical education curriculum ensures that students are proficient in using modern tools and platforms, enhancing their adaptability in the digital economy.
7. **Entrepreneurship Training:** Providing training in entrepreneurship can empower students to start their own businesses, fostering innovation and contributing to economic growth.
8. **Access to Online Resources:** Ensuring that students have access to a wealth of online resources, such as academic journals, e-books, and virtual labs, can supplement their learning and research activities.
9. **Strong Alumni Network:** Establishing a strong alumni network can offer current students mentorship, job placement assistance, and opportunities to learn from the experiences of successful graduates.
10. **Government and Policy Support:** Supportive government policies and funding for technical education can provide the necessary resources and regulatory framework to enhance the quality and accessibility of technical education across the country.

## Ten Actions to Enhance Your Competitive Edge

As students of the Redeemer's College of Technology and Management, you have made a commendable choice by pursuing this kind of education. Your decision not only prepares you for a fulfilling career but also positions you strategically in the competitive labour market. Here are ten key actions you can take to gain a competitive advantage:

1. **Join Professional Associations:** Becoming a member of relevant professional bodies provides you with several advantages. These associations offer networking opportunities, allowing you to connect with established professionals in your field. You will also gain access to industry resources, including publications, webinars, and conferences, keeping you updated on the latest trends and innovations. Membership in a professional body also demonstrates your commitment to your profession and can enhance your credentials in the eyes of potential employers.
2. **Engage in Internships:** Practical experience is invaluable in the job market. Internships allow you to apply the classroom knowledge you've gained in real-world settings. You will have the opportunity to work on real projects, develop industry-specific skills, and gain valuable insights into the daily operations of your chosen field. Internships can also serve as a springboard for full-time employment, as employers often look to their interns to fill open positions.
3. **Participate in Workshops and Seminars:** Attending industry workshops and seminars keeps you at the forefront of your field. These events provide you with opportunities for hands-on learning and interaction with industry experts. You will gain exposure to the latest trends and innovations, allowing you to stay ahead of the curve and demonstrate your

commitment to continuous professional development.

4. **Pursue Certifications:** Obtaining certifications in specialized areas can significantly enhance your credentials and make you a more attractive candidate to potential employers. Certifications in areas such as Project Management (PMP), Information Technology (Cisco, Microsoft), or Occupational Safety (NEBOSH) demonstrate your expertise and proficiency in specific skills.
5. **Develop Soft Skills:** Technical proficiency alone is not enough to thrive in today's competitive job market. Soft skills such as communication, teamwork, problem-solving, and leadership are equally important. These skills enable you to collaborate effectively with colleagues, manage projects efficiently, and navigate complex situations with composure. By honing your soft skills, you become a well-rounded candidate who can make a significant contribution to any team.
6. **Engage in Research and Development Projects:** Participating in R&D projects, either within the college or in collaboration with external partners, provides a valuable learning experience. You'll have the opportunity to develop innovative solutions, gain hands-on experience with cutting-edge technologies, and contribute to advancements in your field. R&D experience demonstrates your initiative, problem-solving abilities, and critical thinking skills – all highly sought-after qualities by employers.
7. **Build a Professional Portfolio:** Create a portfolio that showcases your projects, internships, certifications, and achievements. This portfolio can be a physical document or an online platform like a personal website or LinkedIn profile. By showcasing your skills and experience in a tangible way, you provide potential employers with a clear picture of your qualifications and value proposition.

8. **Network Actively:** Building and maintaining professional relationships is crucial for career success. Network actively by attending industry events, joining online professional communities like LinkedIn, and engaging with alumni associations. Building relationships with established professionals can open doors to job opportunities and mentorship.
9. **Seek Mentorship:** Finding a mentor in your field can provide invaluable guidance, support, and advice as you navigate your career path. A mentor can help you set realistic goals, identify areas for improvement, and connect you with key people in your industry.
10. **Stay Updated with Industry Trends:** The technological landscape is constantly evolving. To remain competitive, you must commit to continuous learning and professional development. Keep yourself updated with the latest advancements and industry trends by reading industry publications, attending workshops and seminars, and participating in online courses.

## Conclusion

The potential of Nigeria rests on the shoulders of its youth, and nurturing a robust system of technical education is the key to unlocking their potential. By equipping them with the necessary skills and fostering a spirit of innovation, we empower them to become the architects of a brighter future. Let us embrace technical education not just as a path to individual success, but as a national imperative. It is through the ingenuity and dedication of these future leaders that Nigeria can cultivate its fertile crescent of innovation and claim its rightful place as a technological powerhouse. The seeds we sow today, through investment in technical education, will blossom into a future brimming with progress and prosperity for all Nigerians.

# REIMAGINING CAREER PATHING IN HR

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In today's dynamic corporate landscape, effective Human Resource Management (HRM) practices are increasingly very crucial for fostering employee engagement, satisfaction, and retention. However, one area that has been overlooked or poorly attended to by HR professionals (and by extension: business owners and employers) and which poses significant threat, anxiety and loyalty challenge on the part of the employees especially core talents is career pathing. Career pathing involves mapping out potential career trajectories within an organization.

This article explores time-tested, results-proven innovative approaches to career pathing that can – in any clime - enhance effective HRM practices, ensuring that employees feel valued and motivated to grow within and beyond their roles.

Employees need to see where they're going on the organization's structure and more importantly what they need to do and how to get there.

## Understanding Career Pathing

Career pathing is the process of identifying and creating pathways for employees to advance their careers through structured development opportunities. It involves a combination of training, learning and development, mentoring, strategic career development planning and management; enabling employees to achieve their professional goals while aligning those with and delivering the organization's objectives.

The mutual benefits are imperative and inherent in the successful practice of this vitally important HR role.

## Challenges in Traditional Career Pathing

1. **Lack of Personalization:** many traditional career pathing programs adopt a one-size fits-all organization-focused approach, failing to consider individual employee aspirations and skills.



2. **Limited Communication:** employees often lack either knowledge or clarity regarding available career opportunities and the steps necessary to achieve their goals. HR keeps so many vital information as 'Confidential' for very many various reasons.
3. **Inflexibility:** rigid career paths can discourage innovation and the exploration of non-linear career options, which are increasingly common in today's job market.

These are the days when upcoming professionals do not want to be bogged down with bureaucracy nor want to be informed to conform to ineffective and outdated policies; but want to thrive in the organization working their own way once they understand the business of the organization; and where they're not allowed to innovate, they 'japa' elsewhere even within the same industry or country.

### Reimagining Career Pathing in HRM

Let's consider the following as we champion a change in this non-negotiable endeavour:

1. **Personalized Development Plans:** There is need to implement customized career development plans that take into account the unique strengths, interests, and aspirations of each employee. This may involve regular one-on-one meetings with HR and line managers to discuss goals and progress. Best practice is to start with identified employees in very critical roles and/or high potential ones.
2. **Utilizing Technology:** there are several HR technology platforms that could be leveraged on to create digital career pathing tools where employees can explore various roles, required skills, and available training programs. Gamification elements can enhance engagement and motivation.
3. **Mentorship Programs:** HR must champion and facilitate the establishment of mentorship initiatives that connect employees with experienced professionals within the organization. Mentors can provide guidance, share experiences, and help mentees navigate their career paths.
4. **Continuous Learning Opportunities:** we must encourage a culture of continuous learning by offering training sessions, workshops, and access to online courses.

This helps employees build the skills necessary for career advancement and adapt to changing industry demands.

5. **Flexible Career Models:** there is the need to recognize that career progression is no longer a strictly linear path. HR must explore and offer flexible career progression models even within a given organization, that allow for lateral moves and project based roles, enabling employees to broaden their experience.
6. **Regular Feedback Mechanisms:** HR has to make regular feedback sessions part and passle of line managers' responsibilities: where employees can discuss their career aspirations and receive constructive feedback on performance and growth. This creates open communication and helps align individual goals with organizational needs. There has to be a process of ensuring that documentary outcomes of these sessions eventually gain attention of HR's eyeballs.
7. **Succession Planning:** career pathing should be closely linked with succession planning to ensure that high-potential employees are identified and groomed for future leadership roles. This not only prepares the organization for talent gaps but also motivates employees by providing a clear trajectory.

### Conclusion

Reimagining HRM practices in career pathing is essential for organizations striving to attract and retain top talent in a competitive market. By adopting personalized development plans, leveraging technology, fostering mentorship, and encouraging continuous learning, companies can create an empowering environment that supports employee growth.

Ultimately, effective career pathing does not only benefit individual employees but also drives organizational success by enhancing productivity, engagement, and loyalty of precious talents.



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