Is Your Organization Experiencing a Culture Disconnect?
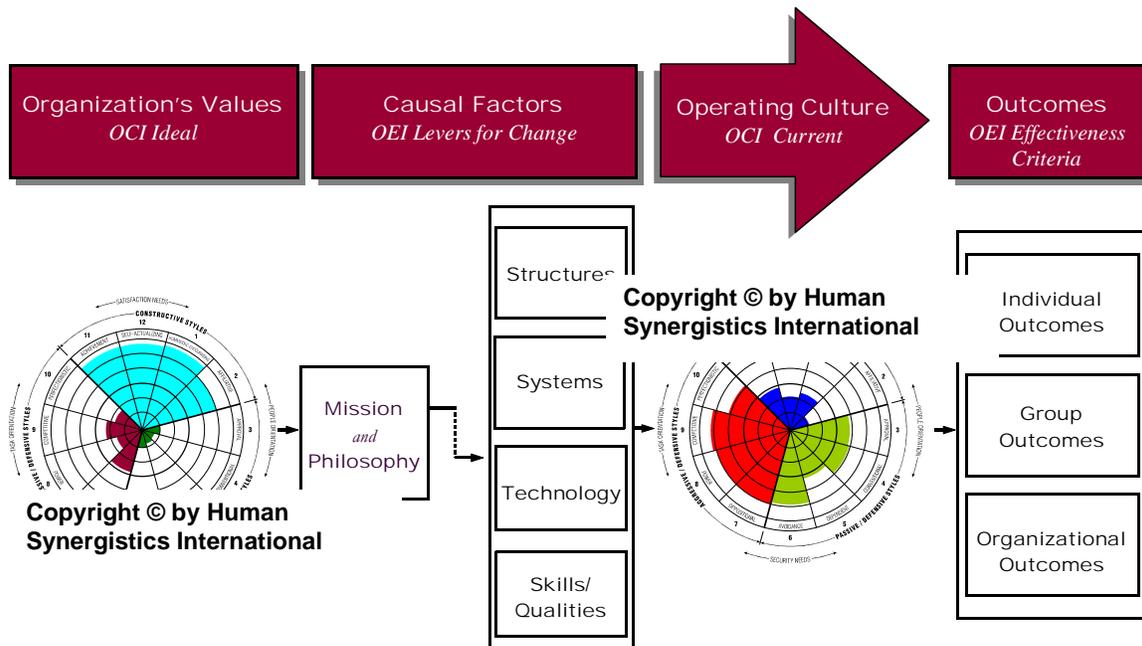
By Janet L. Szumal, Ph.D.

Do your managers and employees act in ways that are consistent with and reflective of the stated values, mission, and philosophy of your organization? Or, do their decisions and behaviors reveal that something different is really expected? If your company is not living up to values and mission, then it is experiencing what Dr. Robert A. Cooke calls "the culture disconnect."

Culture disconnects occur when the structures, systems, technologies, and skills and qualities of members are driven more by current resources, external demands, and short-term consideration rather than by organizational values. When this happens, the operating culture that emerges can require people to behave in Passive/Defensive and/or Aggressive/Defensive, ways that lead to counter-productive and undesirable outcomes—particularly in the long-term.

Culture disconnects can be reduced by bringing organizational structures, systems, technologies, and skills/qualities in alignment with the organization's values, mission, and philosophy. This means modifying or changing any structures, systems, technologies, and skills/qualities that do not reflect and reinforce the organization's values. Since most organizations value Achievement, Self-Actualizing, Humanistic-Encouraging, and Affiliative thinking and behavior, those that work toward improving their internal alignment will likely see their operating cultures move in a more Constructive (and less defensive) direction that will enable them to more consistently achieve desired outcomes.

The Culture Disconnect

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Try the Organizational Culture Inventory (OCI) and Organizational Effectiveness Inventory (OEI). They can help you to uncover culture disconnects and identify the levers for achieving internal alignment and more effective results.

For more information on cultural disconnects see R. A. Cooke and J. L. Szumal. (2000). Using the Organizational Culture Inventory to Understand the Operating Cultures of Organizations. In N. M Ashkanasy, C. P. M. Wilderom, and M. F. Peterson (Eds.) *Handbook of Organizational Culture & Climate*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. Or, contact us to find out how you can use the OCI and OEI to discover—and correct—culture disconnects in your organization.