CURATING CULTURE:

## MOBILISING PEOPLE IN THE AGE OF DISRUPTION

CREATED BY MAXIMUS

The phrase "culture eats strategy for breakfast", coined last century by then management guru Peter Drucker, has never seemed more pertinent than it is today. The Royal Commission into misconduct in the financial sector has highlighted cultural issues as foundational and fundamental drivers of the behaviours it investigated. As a result, financial organisations are reshaping strategies and setting cultures to relearn the rules of survival, and teams in all organisations are being compelled to adapt and change their behaviours.

The first part of this paper re-examines the relationship between culture and strategy in the age of disruption, and talks to the criticality of getting culture right, as it has a profound impact on the strategy and performance of an organisation. We go so far as to suggest that culture, due to its fluidity and adaptability, can be utilised more effectively than static strategies when responding to the threats of disruption.

The second part of this paper talks to the role of the leader as a cultural curator. Culture in this instance is defined as employees' shared beliefs about the rules particular to each company that enable them to survive in that environment or to thrive and achieve holistic prosperity. With change approaching from every angle these rules will be disturbed, and

EMOTIONAL COMMITMENT

BEHAVIOURS AND RITUALS

MINDSET

VALUES
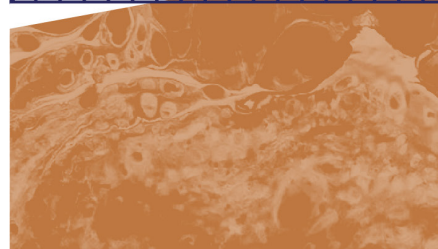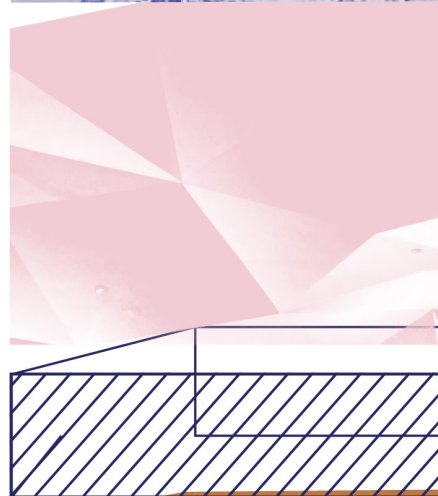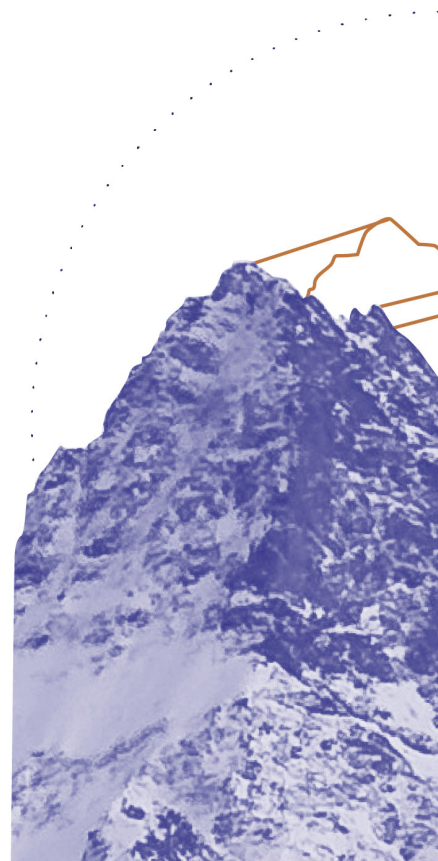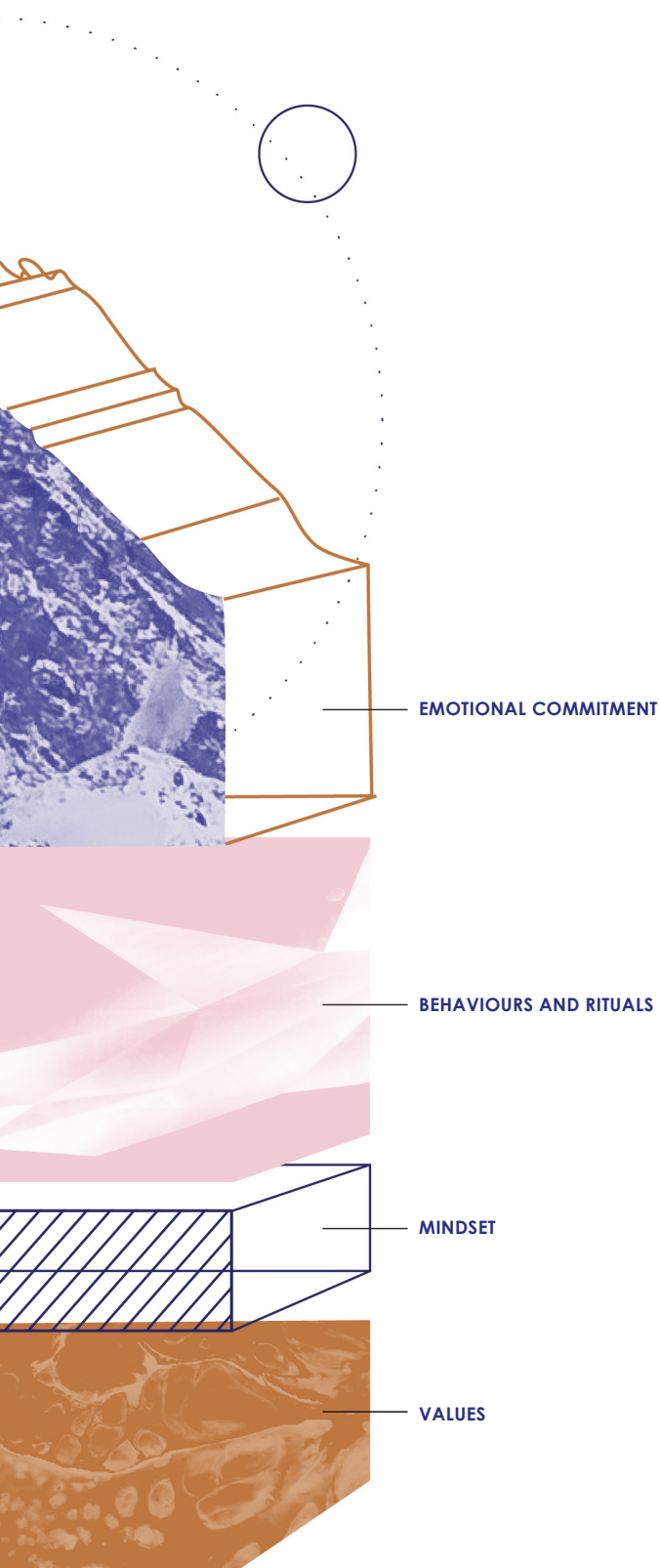
leading with purpose and conviction has never been more important. Our experience has shown us how vital culture is to the sustainable performance of an organisation, affecting the way it operates and responds to challenges in its environment.

In the third part of this paper we bring to life the new perspective of the leader as a culture curator and outline how leaders can navigate their new responsibility for culture, without controlling it.

Culture has long been linked to key organisational outcomes such as employee morale, turnover and service quality. However, we see two changes taking place in the realm of culture: first, a growing understanding of culture as a system that evolves and adapts, which raises questions about traditional ways of measuring and changing culture; and secondly, an emphasis on the responsibility leaders have as culture curators.

What is the role of a leader when rapid change is the new normal, when the concept of people leadership itself has changed enormously and continues to evolve, and when the leader's role in understanding and curating culture can no longer be downplayed?

The core of this paper talks to the criticality of a shift in the way leaders lead, mobilise the people around them and create value-building cultures.

We address the requirement that leaders take action and not remain bystanders; that they realise their responsibility, influence and role in helping to build cultures that will outlast any individual employee. We can no longer shy away from the fact that leaders are exceptionally influential in shaping company culture. They must confidently exert that influence on both individuals and teams to help future-proof their organisations in an era of tumultuous change.

PART 1:
STRATEGY AND CULTURE IN THE AGE OF DISRUPTION

The world's organisations and its leaders are experiencing unprecedented levels of disruption and are reeling from the impact of exponential technological change on their businesses. For example, 76% of UK FTSE 100 companies have disappeared in the past 30 years[1] (Hill et al.), and a recent global survey of managers and executives by MIT Sloan Management Review[2] and Deloitte revealed that nearly 90% of managers and executives anticipate that their industries will be disrupted by digital trends to a great or moderate extent. Businesses and products that nobody had envisaged have quickly come to dominate entire industries. The stories of Uber disrupting the transport industry, Airbnb flattening the hotel industry growth curve, and Apple effectively rendering digital cameras obsolete are legends of the ongoing revolution in which tools such as Canva have democratised design, OFX is disrupting global foreign exchange and Deputy is dramatically reshaping workforce management in traditional industries such as aged care.

Although most people acknowledge the wave of disruption rolling through the corporate landscape, only 44% of respondents to the MIT Sloan Management Review[3] and Deloitte study referenced above say that their organisations are ready to ride that wave. Clearly, a gap exists between the understanding that we are living in an era characterised by disruption, and the mobilisation of organisations to transform their structures, processes, and mindsets in order to thrive. Strategic planning is one of the principal change mechanisms traditionally applied, and increasingly appears to be failing to keep pace with contemporary management needs.

Strategy in times past

Typically, organisations have measured the past and the present — for example, they have tracked financial performance data and analysed market trends — to determine how they can respond to predicted demands and conditions. Strategic planning processes tend to follow standardised rhythms, under the assumption that a multi-year cycle allows for the realisation of a clear direction. In the past, this process served many organisations well, however it is important to recognise that changing circumstances require revised strategies:

"In a stable environment, market size was an effective way to think about the future, for years or even decades at a time. When the old model blew up, strategists would build a new one and then look forward to another relatively stable period[4]" (Chavez, 2018).

As our environments become less stable, executives now frequently shape their strategic

planning around expected tenure, which restricts them to short-term horizons and the optimisation of short-term metrics, while containing threats and minimising failure[5]. Therefore, while there is recognition that environments are shifting rapidly, executives are incentivised to deliver what can be examined in the here and now, rather than setting up organisations to fully engage with the future.

Even when organisations do engage in future thinking, their reasoning often suffers from a fundamental flaw. The traditional approach to strategic forecasting and planning makes the assumption that the future will mirror the present and the past, but disruptors in many industries have taught us that what has previously defined markets, industries, and services, is no longer a guarantee for the future. Nobody is safe from exponential developments that can redefine what companies and industries do[6].

The 2018 *World Economic Forum Global Risks Report* paints a picture of the future shocks that might await humanity, our economies and our planet. Specifically it demonstrates the need for "more rigorous exploration of potential sources of value destruction, greater strategic agility to match a rapidly evolving market context, and sharper contingency planning for unexpected events as key priorities for today's business leaders[7]".

The implication is that strategic planning for our organisations must move away from planning based on static states and predictable patterns, towards strategy that is defined by adaptability and change.

It also speaks to an issue of agency and broader perspective in the realm of strategic planning: we tend to think of disruption as an unforeseen threat that hits us from outside the industry in which we operate, when we could actively innovate from within our industries or organisations – effectively and advantageously grasping opportunities to disrupt ourselves.

Strategy in the age of disruption

Leaders of organisations understand that the age of disruption requires different approaches to strategy and strategic planning, but all too often we see their revised approaches and methodologies still cannot keep up with the pace of change due to their linear natures, clearly defined cycles and end points.

One common response has been to shorten the strategic planning cycles in order to be more responsive to change. The unintended consequence of this approach, though, is short-termism, both

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in thinking and acting. In working to shorter planning cycles, executives do not give themselves enough time or space to fully engage with future possibilities. This creates a tendency to identify incremental solutions that are achievable within shorter cycles and reduced executive tenures, rather than solve for the big problems. In other words, disruption is viewed as a threat to be minimised, rather than an opportunity to be seized.

We suggest moving from short-term thinking to a 'what if?' frame of exploring options and embracing the unknown; viewing strategy as a way to provide direction without having to conform to a step-by-step plan. We see two themes emerging which might help organisations to better respond to a changing world:

1. Redefining the role of strategic planning and trying out new approaches to strategy;
2. Relying increasingly on culture rather than strategy as a source of competitive advantage, due to its adaptability.

New approaches include the future-back strategy, which "begins with the assumption that tomorrow may not resemble today. It involves looking at powerful trends that hold transformational potential, coming to consensus about the future environment, developing **shared aspirations** about the company's future state, and then making 'stepping stone' investments to turn that aspiration into an achievable reality[8]".(Innosight, 2016).

We suggest that the emphasis be on shared aspirations for the future, which speaks to the

importance of aligning a collective around future possibilities, and leads to the second way of responding to an age of disruption, that is, setting up thriving organisational cultures which can adapt and quickly mobilise to respond to change.

Jeff Puritt, CEO of TELUS International, illustrates this point:

"Leaders must be fearless in the face of evolving to new business models, energising the organisation in new ways and creating a culture that empowers teams to act boldly, question relentlessly and strive for results […] What good is a strategy written down on a piece of paper when success hinges on its execution? My role as a transformational CEO is to make sure everyone 'gets it' when it comes to organisational change — that they understand the plan, how it will affect them and how they can personally contribute to its implementation. But, more important than the 'what' we are all doing, is 'how' and 'why' we are doing it [9]" (*CEO Today*).

In essence, this represents the emergence of "Culture eats strategy for breakfast 2.0". It is clear that while strategy helps in setting up organisations for success, if the culture delivering the strategy is not aligned, and if people are not engaged in delivering on the organisation's strategy, the business will fail to reach its potential. In today's age of disruption, strategy and culture must be intertwined. Successful cultures can help organisations to adapt, keeping employees aligned and committed to each other even in times of deep uncertainty.

We liken culture and strategy to dance partners — they need to move together in the direction of future success. Disruption can be seen as a change in the music, a radically different beat, to which both strategy and culture must adapt. The first organisation to do so, will win.

So far, we have shown that disruption requires a rethink of the traditional approach to strategy and the methodologies of strategic planning. Culture, an adaptive system capable of evolving, has become a key lever in helping organisations to mobilise quickly in times of rapid change. In the following part, we offer a perspective on how the concept of corporate culture is changing, and delve more deeply into how leaders can take up responsibility for curating resilient cultures.

WE LIKEN CULTURE AND STRATEGY TO DANCE PARTNERS — THEY NEED TO MOVE TOGETHER IN THE DIRECTION OF FUTURE SUCCESS

PART 2:
LEADERS AS CURATORS OF CULTURE — THE MAXIMUS APPROACH TO DEVELOPING EMOTIONAL COMMITMENT WITHIN ORGANISATIONS

Deep within each organisation, and extending to the customer-contact extremities, company culture is an independent, evolving organism that determines how an organisation will react to change, challenges and day-to-day demands. Long-term business strategies may not stand up to market turbulence and disruption, but this organism called culture, with its inherent adaptability, can turn shared beliefs, values and stories into purpose-driven responses that help a company pivot and prosper in almost any circumstance.

Organisational culture has traditionally referred to the unwritten rules and assumptions about the way things are done within an organisation[10] (Schein, 1990), which provides a system of shared meaning and determines how members perceive, think about and react to their environment (Kilmann, Saxton & Serpa, 1985[11]; Robbins et al., 2001[12]).

These seminal definitions have been helpful in understanding the implicit nature of culture. However, over the past few decades, in order for culture development to be integrated successfully into organisations and gain the buy-in of boards and executives, culture has had to be measurable. As a result, the focus has been on the language of 'engagement' as a proxy for measuring culture. While often understood to be synonymous with discretionary effort, the engagement concept

"is used at different times to refer to psychological states, traits, and behaviors as well as their antecedents and outcomes[13]". (Macey & Schneider, 2015). Engagement is conflated with measures of employee turnover intention, leadership effectiveness, commitment, and satisfaction, to name but a few. While these can be antecedents or outcomes of culture, they do not give a true insight into the lived reality of a culture.

Rethinking culture

We propose a radical perspective on culture as a system — to regard it as a living, breathing organism. Like any organism, it is adaptable and reactive to stimuli or changes in environment. It selects practices that bring reward and satisfaction. It may be cohesive, or consciously diversified; aligned in common purpose, or towards various influential front-line leaders. One enlightening way to think about culture as a system is to consider other organisational systems and their "cultures".

Biologist Deborah Gordon describes how studying systems such as ant colonies can help us to understand "how the simple parts of organisations interact to create the behaviour of the whole organisation". In her TED talk[14], she says:

"There are about 10,000 species of ants. They all live in colonies consisting of one or a few queens and then all the ants you see walking around are sterile female workers. And all ant colonies have in common that there's no central control. Nobody tells anybody what to do. The queen just lays the eggs. There's no management. No ant directs the behaviour of any other ant".

Comparing organisations to ant colonies might seem unusual, but it resonates with the recent work of Stan Slap. We take inspiration from how he illuminates the relationship between strategy and culture by referring to "the absolute power of an employee culture to make or break any management goal[15]". He repositions culture as an independent organism, which "has the first vote" on whether strategies are executed or performance goals are achieved. The notion of employee culture as separate from the broader organisational culture is interesting because it means that leaders are outside of the critical mass of employees who have the power to make things happen or not. Leaders, he says, are "standing outside of the culture, trying to sell it something".

In practice, this means that executives do not own or set organisational cultures, and that organisational culture cannot be prescribed or beautifully crafted by HR departments. As soon as employees feel that leaders or HR are trying to impose culture, they dismiss it. So what then is the role of leaders, if they are not controlling or managing the culture?

Slap says, "Culture is a distinct organising framework that gives your people a motivation fundamentally different from the company's

70%
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HARVARD BUSINESS REVIEW

motivation". If your task as a leader is motivating those around you to achieve your and your company's goals, it's crucial that you bridge the divide; leaders must understand how to shape culture and drive the emotional commitment of the people within their sphere of influence, to achieve common objectives.

Our perspective on culture sets up the **leader as an emotionally committed culture curator.** This perspective rests on four dimensions of leadership, through which culture is activated: curating culture, making meaning, activating performance, and becoming the architect of value.

To be a curator means to continually evolve, integrate novel things and look at them differently, combining and recombining positive factors, skills and influencers. Curating, however, does not include absolute control. Instead of using command and control to mobilise, **emotional commitment** is at the core of mobilisation. Leaders need to deeply understand organisational cultures as systems with interdependent parts, and apply their understanding to building true emotional commitment on the part of employees. Within this process, leaders must be able to articulate their direction for the culture with clarity and conviction, providing a powerful purpose for employees to connect with and thereby craft their own meaning.

MEANING MAKER

CULTURE CURATOR

PERFORMANCE ACTIVATOR

VALUE ARCHITECT
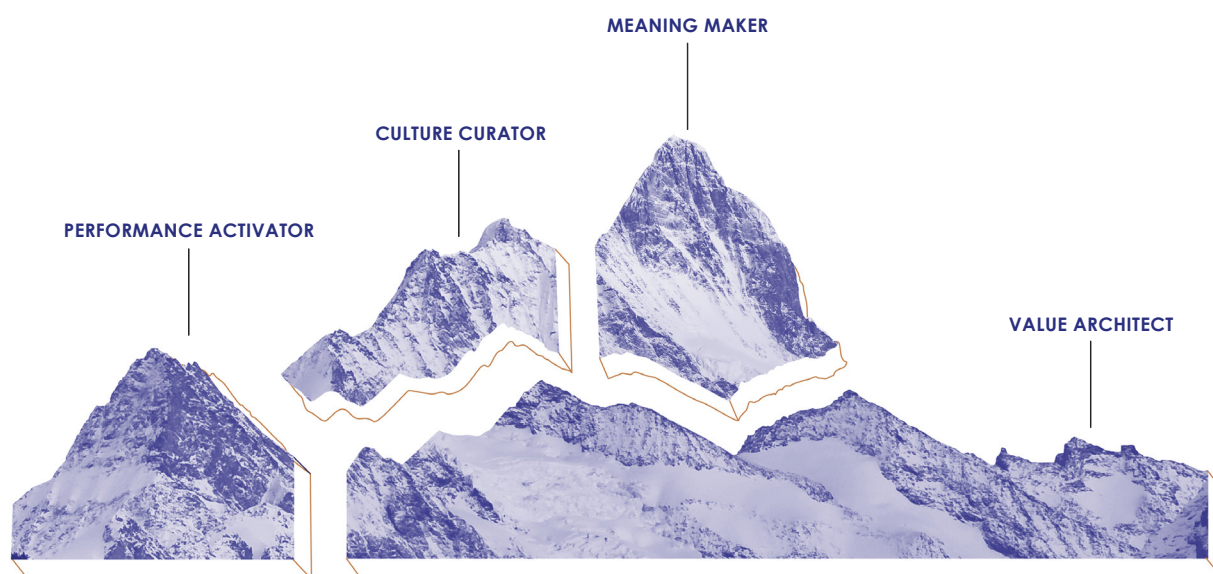
The notion of 'caretaking' also implies that you will leave the system in a better state than when you found it, and is similar to the notion of stewardship suggested as a key factor behind the success of organisations that can thrive for 100 years, versus organisations that will not, investigated by Hill et al[16]. (*Harvard Business Review* 2018).

It should be clear by this stage that culture is integral to business performance, and that leaders play a crucial role as curators of culture. Alongside this realisation and a re-evaluation of a leader's own bias on their role in culture and the state of play of the culture they are curating, how can they adapt their people leadership to enable better business performance and employee satisfaction?

One implication of viewing and treating cultures as organisms or systems is that we reframe how to change such a system. Systems are adaptable and responsive to stimuli. They evolve based on their environment. This means that cultural change can happen much more quickly than the five-to-seven-year timeframe previously calculated

as the minimum. But it has to be initiated and driven from within the culture, rather than being imposed on it. As such, we believe that the often-cited 70% failure rate[17] of all change initiatives can finally be smashed.

And of course, if we define cultures differently, and rethink how to change them, our measurement approaches must also evolve accordingly. The systems perspective lends itself to deeper, ethnographic measures[18] (Van Maanen, 2011) for understanding cultures from the inside. Cultures can also be better understood through organisational network analyses[19], which provide insight into the different component parts of the system, how they interact, relationships between people and objects, and where blockages occur. An extensive search has shown us most existing tools contain selective components of this, but very few get to the heart of cultural issues and opportunities, blurring the lines between a true culture read and the better known and more standardised engagement surveys.

PART 3:
CULTURE CURATION BROUGHT TO LIFE — THE EMOTIONAL COMMITMENT MODEL

In our previous whitepaper we explored the changing nature of leadership in the age of disruption, and connected the challenges of disruption and a decline in institutional trust to leadership capabilities. Leading in today's uncertain times requires vastly different capabilities than the planning, directing and controlling skills of the past.

Today, leadership is about taking moral responsibility for the culture you create, and activating people in new and different ways. Our emotional-commitment model defines four dimensions of leadership that assist in curating a thriving, adaptable culture which can then become a source of competitive advantage.
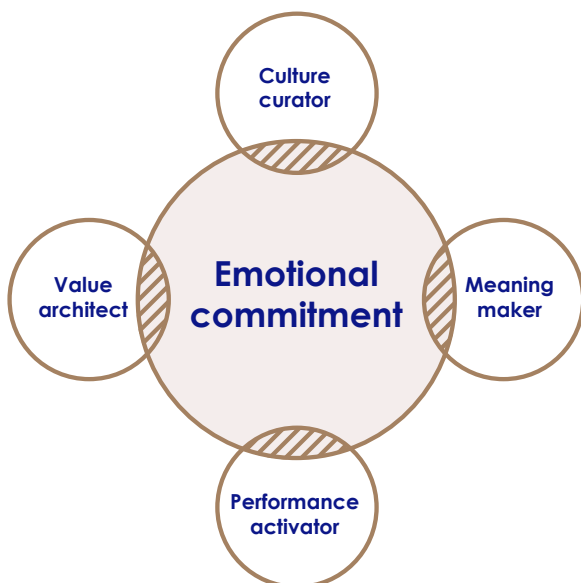
We have unpacked these four dimensions below, to provide leaders with practical advice on how to develop the required capabilities. At the heart of the model lies the philosophy that leaders can only mobilise and change culture through emotional commitment and true understanding of their company system, its people, and the parts that interconnect to make up a culture.

Culture curator

When leaders understand their corporate culture and their sphere of influence within it, they can begin to model the behaviours that complement purpose and build cultural cohesion. In the wise words of Stan Slap: "Your employee culture will notice what you emphasise, what you reward, what you give priority attention to, what you ignore. It will observe why you protect and promote… It will watch to see whether you defend what's important to you under stress or temptation to compromise. The culture will use all of these impressions to form beliefs about how to behave in order to best serve itself [20]". What leaders choose to shine a light on in terms of rewarding integrity, curiosity, fearlessness or ingenuity will become more quickly and naturally embedded in the culture than any company code.

Culture curator

Value architect

Emotional commitment

Meaning maker

Performance activator

Practically speaking, this means that leaders need to identify the outcomes they seek, demonstrate behaviours that drive those outcomes and reward people for making those behaviours their own. It means specifically embodying the culture that you seek to create, understanding where **you** need to make a shift in behaviour, and adapting in order to mobilise the behaviour of those around you.

There are a number of questions leaders can ask themselves for guidance on becoming a curator of culture: What are the lived behaviours I want to see across the organisation? How do I demonstrate these behaviours through my actions and words? What do I do when I encounter behaviours that are counter-cultural? What do I currently stand for? What do I want to stand for and be remembered for?

Meaning maker

A shift is happening in the skill and knowledge dynamic between employee and leader. As the traditional evolution of careers changes and people gain experience in a range of roles, across a number of organisations and even industries, any one leader can no longer be expected to be the chief subject-matter expert for their organisation. Instead, it is highly likely that as a leader you will have teams with superior technical knowledge to yours in multiple areas.

As a result, leaders have to motivate, inspire and grow their people without necessarily being able to teach them about their subject area. It is now a leader's responsibility to **make meaning** for the individuals and teams in their employ. First and foremost this is about leaders **understanding their own purpose**. Once they have this valuable insight, their objective is to enable that for their team — ensuring that each team member feels that the work they do is important, that they are contributing to something bigger than themselves and that their work is adding value to the company's products, services and reputation.

Recent research conducted internally by Facebook utilised people analytics to predict who would stay with the organisation, and who would soon leave. The research provided interesting insight into those who stayed: "they found their work enjoyable 31% more often, used their strengths 33% more often, and expressed 37% more confidence that they were gaining the skills and experiences they need to develop their careers. This highlights three key ways that managers can customise experiences for their

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people: enable them to do work they enjoy, help them play to their strengths, and carve a path for career development that accommodates personal priorities[21]". (Goler et al., 2018).

In addition to supporting others in the pursuit of their personal purpose and aligning this with organisational purpose, the meaning-making dimension of leadership is not about controlling employees, but about **providing clarity of direction** and **providing context** within which their efforts make sense.

At a time when strategic directions can turn on a dime, and when all too often the leadership within businesses struggles to regularly communicate what is currently important and what is not, it falls on leaders at all levels of an organisation to understand what is business critical within their context and to translate that priority both up and down to people in their area of influence.

Without clear direction and with enormous and unidentifiable change on the horizon, how do you empower your people to do amazing value-adding work while they develop their skills and enjoy their working life?

Fundamentally, this is about creating momentum throughout your team by focusing them on the things that matter — it requires great communication skills. Leaders also need upward-management skills to be able to successfully navigate those brave conversations that elicit and clarify the required direction.

On a practical level, the meaning-making dimension requires leaders to be able to answer the following questions: What are your values? What is your purpose? How can you help others unlock their personal purpose? How will you provide clarity in uncertain times? How can you help employees to contextualise the direction and decisions that are guiding the business?

Performance activator

In order to mobilise a culture in a common direction, leaders need to be clear about how to activate performance in their employees. Again, this mechanism is impacted by emotional commitment — if employees are not emotionally committed to the culture and the leader, performance activation becomes extremely difficult.

Utilising the performance-activator dimension means recognising that humans adapt to changing circumstances and their environment. In many organisations, teams are now quickly assembled in response to emerging needs, influence is distributed away from traditional command-and-control roles of leadership to more complex matrix-based structures, and as previously noted, leaders more frequently have to manage a variety of technical experts who know significantly more about their topic area than they do.

Performance activation refers to the interactions, dialogue, and language you as a leader must model in order to create constant feedback loops. This is important in the age of disruption because traditional top-down performance evaluations, generally conducted at six-monthly intervals, are out of step with our understanding that culture is an organism which adapts to changes in operating environment. The standard feedback cycle of performance assessments and KPI setting is far too infrequent to nurture a culture capable of rapid adaptation. Instead, like a sports coach, leaders should give almost constant feedback.

Recent research conducted at Stanford Health Care supports the premise that the frequency of conversations between leader and employee is important: "team leaders who check in once a week see, on average, engagement levels 21 points higher than those who check in only once a month[22]". (Buckingham and Goodall, 2019.)

Maximus advises leaders to embed frequent dialogue rhythms into their behaviours and their work schedules. Our previous work into the power of habits to create macro behaviour change has explicitly focussed on increasing the regularity and quality of feedback, leading to a marked effect and impact in a very short period of time. This component stretches beyond leadership: there is great value in equipping everyone in an organisation with the skills and language used to effectively give and receive feedback.

Value architect

Traditionally, strategies to grow future organisational value were dictated from the top. Opportunities could be identified at some distance, directions for the business were sensibly and thoughtfully planned, the required capabilities could be developed or hired, and everyone would be suitably prepared to execute the strategy. Organisations typically made a few big plays in big leaps.

Value creation in 2020 and beyond looks very different. How do we enable value creation throughout our teams and the organisation at

21
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BUCKINGHAM AND GOODALL, 2019

ONE PRACTICAL CAPABILITY LEADERS CAN WORK ON TO BUILD THEIR VALUE-ARCHITECT CAPABILITIES IS FUTURE-STATE THINKING — CONSTANTLY ENGAGING WITH POSSIBILITIES OF TOMORROW

a time when we are less certain of specifically where growth will come from in the next three-to-five years, when senior leadership has an increasingly short tenure, and yet iterative value creation must be distributed throughout the organisation and absolutely championed by leadership?

Maximus believes that leaders must actively distribute and disseminate the accountability and drive to create value. Allowing people and teams the freedom to be curious and to innovate by empowering them in processes, people and technology, is the way to add long-term value within each person's role. The key to this commercially-focused aspect of leadership is to help individuals understand where they contribute and how their work adds value in the organisation's current and future state.

One practical capability leaders can work on to further build their value-architect capabilities is future-state thinking — constantly engaging with possibilities of tomorrow. This means broadening the traditional strategic planning cycle into exercising longer-term visionary thinking, with shorter and more adaptive action and execution plans co-created within teams to bring it to life. The conditioned thought processes of leaders also need to shift from current inductive reasoning and

the assumption that we can model and predict the future based on what happened in the past. Leaders can remedy this by practising curiosity about new technological, social and economic developments throughout the world, and then encouraging that curiosity and open-mindedness in others. This helps foster strategic planning and articulation of value-creation opportunities around **what could be**, not what we currently know to be true. The value-architect dimension of leadership again encourages emotional commitment between leader and employees because both share and are involved in the creation of more impactful, value-generation opportunities.

Together, these four dimensions of leadership are effective in curating culture because they equip leaders with profound skills: the ability to tap into a basic human desire among employees to connect with meaning and purpose in work; the human-relationship skills needed to make ongoing feedback and personal growth a reality in their organisation, leading to an improved focus; building autonomy at all levels by letting employees contribute to the growth direction and creation of value; and creating flourishing workplaces by role modelling behaviours that each leader wants to see.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Deep within each organisation and extending to the customer-contact extremities, culture holds the potential to transform organisational responsiveness and relevance to rapidly changing environments. Culture, skilfully curated by leaders who model resilient behaviours and inspire from within their companies, can mobilise organisations to adapt to change and innovate to thrive.

In this whitepaper, we have explored the criticality of getting culture right as a partner to strategy. While strategy must adjust from planning around predictable states to a more flexible and opportunity-seeking approach, culture is the key to accelerating adoption of new ideas, to innovation and, ultimately, to in-market execution.

Recent Australian corporate experience has underscored that culture is vital to the sustainable performance of organisations. Within that context, leaders cannot shy away from the responsibility they have to act, as culture curators and custodians. By establishing a better understanding of the culture that currently defines their companies with the right tools and methodologies, leaders can future proof their operations by exercising new transformative skills.

The juggernaut of change and disruption affecting industries from within and without will only be harnessed by active participants. The reward, at a personal and organisational level, is the ability to embrace challenge and change, a mindset which then radiates into supremely adaptable business cultures.

It's no time to be a bystander; rather, leaders must realise their responsibility and constructively wield their considerable influence. As role models of ethical, supportive and open, opportunity-seeking behaviours; as performance-activators and meaning-makers for their people; and as creators of value and disseminators of responsibility for creating value…leaders can shape agile businesses that are engaged with global markets.

The quality of leadership we develop in Australia today will absolutely define our future.

Published June, 2019

For more information on how your organisation can deeply understand culture, activate future-focused and future-proofed leadership, and create lasting change within your organisation, please contact Maximus.

ABOUT MAXIMUS INTERNATIONAL

We are for leaders with ambitious agendas. We exist to move minds, transform businesses, and leave a legacy of proven value. With over 17 years of experience with a range of Australian and global organisations, we have gained deep insight into leadership and organisational behaviours, adopting progressive approaches to create the conditions in which leaders and their teams can thrive.

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At Maximus, Dr Nora Koslowski is Associate Director — Leadership Research. She has over 10 years' experience as an executive advisor, thought leader, and researcher. Nora's passion is applying the latest ideas and concepts from the world of research to solving her clients' most challenging problems. With a PhD in Management, a BA (Hons) in Applied Psychology, and a Postgraduate Diploma in Learning and Teaching, Nora enjoys encouraging her clients to think differently and to move outside of their comfort zone in order to generate meaningful change and deliver impact. Before joining Maximus in 2016, Nora was Head of the Department of Human Resources and Organisational Behaviour at the Lord Ashcroft International Business School in Cambridge, where she led a team of researchers and educators, and managed a large client portfolio. Nora has a track record of speaking at international conferences and being invited to deliver expert commentary by the media.

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James Aris is Head of Innovation, Offerings and Marketing at Maximus. With over 10 years' experience working with some of the world's biggest consumer brands, James brings a global mindset and FTSE10 training in marketing to his role at Maximus. A graduate in English from Warwick University with several post-graduate digital and strategic accreditations, James applies his specialisation in digital technologies and marketing capability to transformation of large corporate organisations. He has helped innovate, build capability and grow brands in Africa, the Americas and across Europe. Now focused on Australia, James is passionate about pushing the boundaries of leadership development, weaving elements of communications, behavioural psychology, digital technology and mass behaviour change into the work that Maximus does with leaders in our region.

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