

How the Inner Development Goals Can Increase the Success and Satisfaction of Your Organizational Culture

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Introduction: This document will define the specifics of workplace culture and present the Inner Development Goals as an emerging international framework for supporting positive change – for individuals, teams, organizations, and larger systems. I share this as a certified IDG Ambassador, and not as a representative of the IDG organization.

The Two Components:

- A. The definition of organizational or workplace culture is often misunderstood. When I first started Business Culture Consultants over twenty-five years ago, people would often ask, “Flip, what do you mean by ‘business culture’?” Now, no one asks, but they all have their own definitions. Here’s what this means to me on both a comprehensive and practical level (with gratitude to Dr. Edgar Schein, one of my key mentors – author of “Organizational Culture and Leadership,” first published in 1985 and now in its fifth edition):

“Culture is defined as the values, beliefs, and patterns that guide the vision, strategy, and behaviors in an organization. Cultural elements are deep and pervasive, and often unknown or not fully realized by the participants of the culture. The longer you’ve been in the culture the more it’s like asking the fish to describe the water.”

Unfortunately, there has been reductionistic trend to define workplace culture as “what does it feel like to work here?” If we defined the culture of Vermont - my unique home state - by simply asking residents what their experience is, we would be ignoring key elements like Ben & Jerry’s, Bernie Sanders, the ski industry, mud season, and the fact that we outlawed billboards in 1970.

Thus, workplace culture essentially covers everything – from the colors of your logo, to the ways in which decisions are reached, to the story that is at the core of your marketing, and so much more. Therefore we need a lens to look at certain aspects of the culture, otherwise we are substituting a part for the whole.

Much of what is currently referred to as “workplace culture” is more accurately labeled as either “workplace wellness” – which not only covers the subjective experiences of the workforce, but includes benefits, policies, and tangible staff support options, or what I call “behavioral culture” – the patterns of how people actually engage.

B. Here's what the originators of the Inner Development Goals say:

“In 2015, the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provided a comprehensive plan for a sustainable world by 2030. However, progress is not happening fast enough, and we urgently need to increase our collective abilities to face and work effectively with complex challenges.

This is why we are co-creating the Inner Development Goals (IDG) – a non-profit initiative committed to fostering inner development towards more sustainable futures. We research, collect, and communicate science-based skills and qualities that help us to live purposeful, sustainable, and productive lives.

Global challenges, including sustainability, require inner development to complement external solutions because they are ‘adaptive challenges’, rather than technical ones.”

Here are the Purpose, Vision, and Mission statements of the IDG movement:

Purpose

“The purpose of the Inner Development Goals (IDG) is to harness the power of inner development to address global challenges faced by humanity. By focusing on inner growth, we aim to create a foundation for meaningful, sustainable engagement and change that tackles these challenges at their roots.”

Vision

“IDG envisions a world where inner development unlocks human potential, allowing people to build a thriving future for both people and the planet. This vision centers on empowering individuals and communities to create a sustainable and flourishing world.”

Mission

“IDG is a global movement advocating for inner development and its integration into society. By promoting inner growth, IDG seeks to embed transformative practices within communities, organizations, and institutions, fostering positive change worldwide.”

Here's a video about the IDGs: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xsB5ci-rgGg>

In April of 2026 I spent four days at a retreat center on a Swedish island with twenty-four colleagues from fifteen countries to become certified as one of five hundred global Inner Development Goals Ambassadors.

The IDG consists of five thematic areas – Being, Thinking, Relating, Collaborating, and Acting, with five skills under each heading.

Being Cultivating Our Inner Life	Thinking Understanding Our Complex World	Relating Caring for Others and the World	Collaborating Building Trust and Working Together	Acting Leading and Enabling Change
Inner Compass	Critical Thinking	Appreciation	Relationship-Building Skills	Courage
Integrity & Authenticity	Perspective Skills	Connectedness	Inclusive Mindset & Intercultural Competence	Hope & Optimism
Openness & Learning Mindset	Systems Thinking	Humility	Co-creation Skills	Conscious Use of Resources
Self-Awareness	Long-term Orientation & Visioning	Empathy & Compassion	Communication Skills	Proactivity
Presence	Creativity	Forgiveness	Mobilization Skills	Resilience

As a certified IDG Ambassador, I can facilitate programs, coaching sessions, and change initiatives using the depth and range of this framework to produce results that previously were not possible in such a comprehensive and integrated way.

After twenty-five years of doing this work, I feel like someone has given me a box of jewels!

Core Premise: The most significant root cause of employee dissatisfaction and disengagement, and/or loss of customer/client relationships is the gap between the espoused values of an organization, and the felt experience of the interactions.

This opens the door for the question “How do we work together in empathic and effective ways, so that the organization succeeds while at the same time providing for an appropriate sense of belonging, respect, and trust?”

Of course, if your only mission as a business is to maximize profits for executives and shareholders, it won’t be a match for us to work together.

Incorporating the Inner Development Goals provides a matrix of defined competencies that not only serve internal cultural alignment, but has the additional benefit of supporting individual growth and an increased capacity for broader systemic change. Given the polycrises of climate change, political polarization, marginalized individuals and populations, income inequity, and

military conflict (to name just a few categories, unfortunately) the IDG can also equip us to be more resilient and effective in larger change initiatives.

Therefore optimal engagement and performance requires certain shared skills and attributes. The Inner Development Goals provides a comprehensive framework for conversations on multiple levels. These will be unpacked further in the text below.

Specific Areas of Integration: Note that these are suggestions, rather than definitive requirements. You may choose your own mix of IDG elements under each category

1. **As a foundation to set values.** Values can be expressed as “what we believe in.” Some IDG elements that can serve this area could include:
 - a. Integrity & Authenticity
 - b. Openness & Learning Mindset
 - c. Appreciation
 - d. Connectedness
 - e. Empathy & Compassion
 - f. Inclusive Mindset & Intercultural Competence
 - g. Hope & Optimism
2. **Create behavioral norms.** While there needs to be concurrence between definition and practice, some relevant conceptual elements are:
 - a. Self-Awareness
 - b. Relationship-Building Skills
 - c. Humility
 - d. Communication Skills
 - e. Courage
3. **Reinforce decision-making processes.** In my experience in working with a wide variety of organizations across multiple industries and countries, the practice of “decision ownership and clarity of implementation” are often unclear.
 - a. Critical Thinking
 - b. Systems Thinking
 - c. Perspective Skills
 - d. Long-term Orientation & Visioning
4. **Customize professional development plans.** Employees generally do better when they have path towards increased learning and opportunity:
 - a. Inner Compass
 - b. Openness & Learning Mindset
 - c. Self-Awareness
 - d. Communication Skills
 - e. Relational-Building Skills

- 5. Support skill-building for leaders, managers, and supervisors and as a toolbox for mentoring, coaching, and supervision (along with almost everything in the IDG!).**
 - a. Self-Awareness
 - b. Integrity & Authenticity
 - c. Presence
 - d. Long-term Orientation & Visioning
 - e. Communication Skills
 - f. Humility
- 6. As a counter-balance to the implementation of AI**
 - a. Presence
 - b. Creativity
 - c. Long-term Orientation & Visioning
 - d. Connectedness
 - e. Empathy & Compassion
- 7. Specify ways of increasing collaboration**
 - a. Relationship-Building Skills
 - b. Inclusive Mindset & Intercultural Competence
 - c. Appreciation
 - d. Openness & Learning Mindset
 - e. Co-creation Skills
- 8. Enhance the ability to take action on community and environmental causes**
 - a. Communication Skills
 - b. Mobilization Skills
 - c. Proactivity
 - d. Conscious Use of Resources
 - e. Courage
 - f. Resilience

Suggested Exercises with the IDG as Context (you can choose one or more):

- A. Co-create an Organizational Manifesto – The dictionary definition is “a written statement declaring publicly the intention, motives, or views of its issuer.”

What does your business or nonprofit stand for? What are the primary drivers for your enterprise? How do these relate to the elements of the IDG? What do you want to accomplish in your efforts?

- B. Specify These Three Elements:
- a. Values – what you as an organization believe in (and which IDG components support your choices)
 - b. Mission – what you excel at, what makes you different than your competition
 - c. Vision – where do you see yourself at a given point in the future, with some clear metrics (menu of products/services, staff size, overall revenue, etc.)
- C. Collaborate on a Team Charter: Craft a document that spells out the ways in which you want to engage, support, and challenge each other, with IDG attributes as references. Sample items could include:
- a. We practice being curious rather than judgmental
 - b. We deal directly with each other to avoid triangulation
 - c. We do not participate in gossip, rumor, or innuendo
 - d. We deliver clear, specific praise when we “catch somebody doing things right”
- D. Stakeholder Feedback: Choose multiple items from the IDG and ask people whom you serve (or whom serve you) what their experience is around the item. For example, if you choose “Communication Skills” then how would others rate you in this area?
- E. Wins and Opportunities Rituals: Create space for successful interactions and results, no matter how small or what level of the organization they come from. Reframe failures as opportunities for learning, not fault or blame. Reinforce the IDG attributes that are involved.
- F. Vulnerability Party: By establishing an environment of psychological safety, a team member may choose to share what they’ve learned from their own Self-Awareness, Inner Compass, Resilience, Courage, or Empathy & Compassion. This deepens trust and connection.
- G. Marketing Story and Sales Process Alignment: Are your marketing materials in alignment with your values, and demonstrate Integrity and Authenticity? Does your sales team practice Relational-Building Skills, Creativity, and Connectedness?

- H. Systemic Change Advocacy: Are you being “swept along” by all the societal, political, and economic challenges, or are you practicing Long-term Orientation & Visioning, Proactivity, and Resilience?

When we encompass and view the totality of culture, rather than just the “feel goods (or bads)” this opens up a holistic approach to choose what parts of the culture we want to focus on.

Sometimes it’s the seamless collaboration between the Integrity & Authenticity of the marketing story, the Openness & Learning Mindset to the sales process, and the Communication Skills of customer service that produce better financial and growth outcomes in a synergistic way.

Sometimes it’s supporting the Self-Awareness, Empathy & Compassion, and Relationship-Building Skills of a coaching culture for managers and supervisors that increased employee productivity, positivity, and retention.

Workplace culture exists whether we explore it, acknowledge it, and steward it or not. The Inner Development Goals provide a valuable tool box for greater alignment, fulfillment, and success.

I’m always delighted to continue these conversations – please reach out!

In service,

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