

Strategic snippet #3



Mastering the connection between strategy and culture

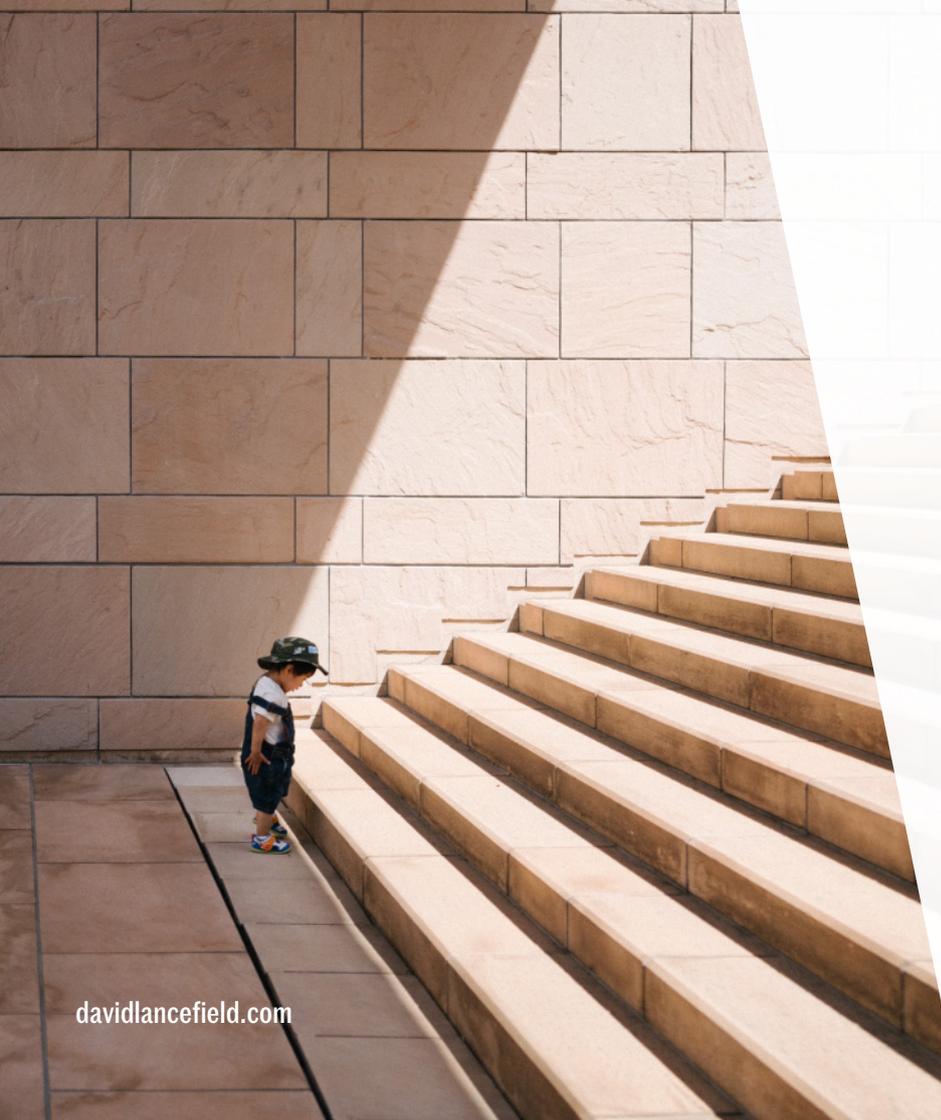


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Business leaders are often tempted to focus on strategy over culture. But the strongest companies take four key actions that deliver the best of both.

What does it take to master the connection between strategy and culture? At the heart of this endeavour is an appreciation and incorporation of the perspectives, mindsets and skill sets of others.

WHAT DOES IT TAKE
to master the
connection between
strategy and
culture?

A young child wearing a hat and a striped shirt stands on a set of wide, light-colored stone steps. The child is looking up towards the top of the stairs. The background is a wall made of large, rectangular stone blocks. The scene is brightly lit, with shadows cast across the steps and wall.

Start in the right place

Ideally, you develop strategy and organisational culture together in a connected, integrated approach from the beginning. But sometimes it's not possible. Ask yourself:

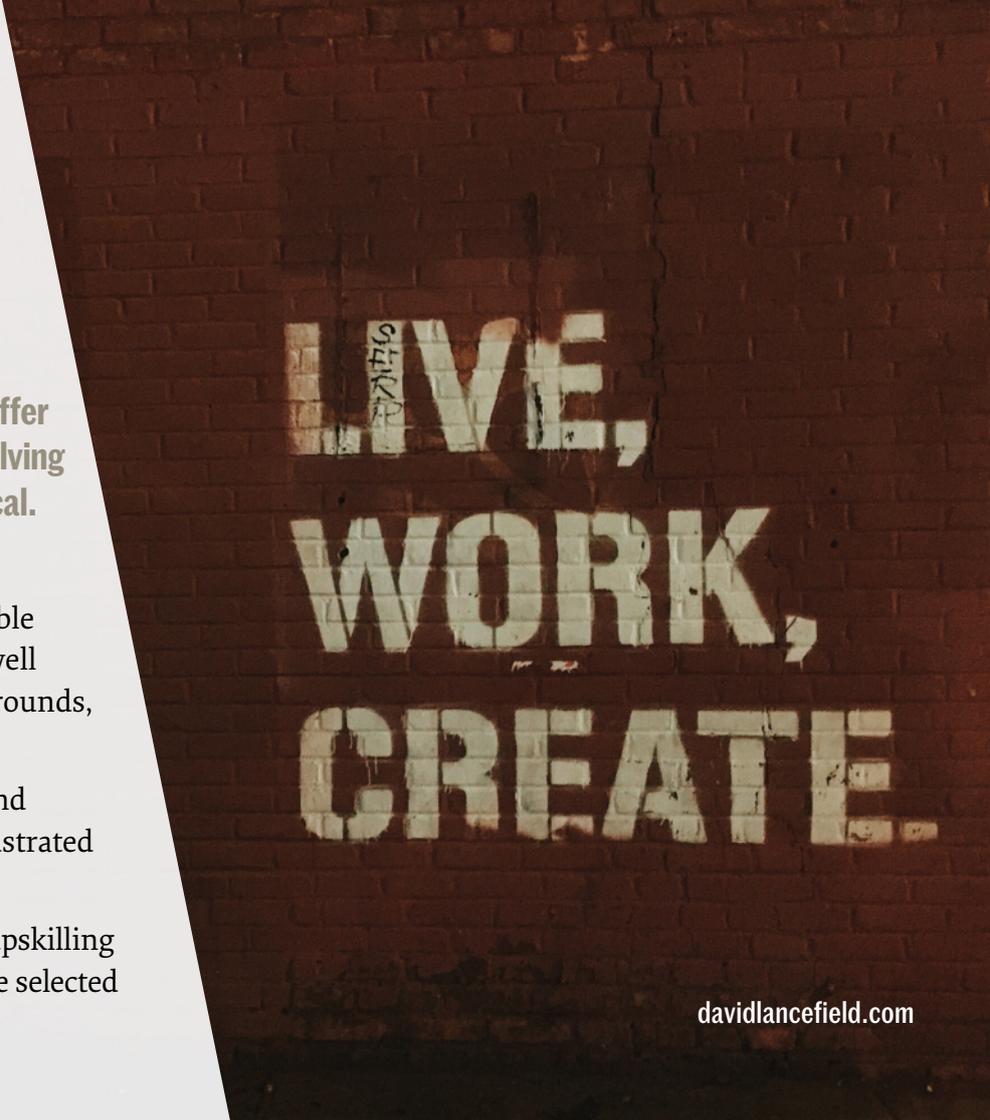
- If we're facing difficulties, to what extent do they relate to strategy or culture?
- What are the most important decisions we can make to fix the issue, or at least create some momentum?
- What are the implications of delaying work on strategy or culture, and how material are they?

Create a common language

The work involved in developing strategy is often undertaken by people whose roles, backgrounds and styles differ from those of the people involved in evolving culture. Bringing them together is critical.

Ask yourself:

- Who are the people we need to assemble to drive this work forward, and how well do they represent the skill sets, backgrounds, and constituents in the organisation?
- What are the most important terms and concepts, and have we defined and illustrated them?
- How much effort are we putting into upskilling people to master the frameworks we've selected to develop strategy and culture?



LIVE,
WORK,
CREATE.



Explore the potential of the culture

As you develop strategy, learn how the culture really works. It can be the source of strategic differentiation and a key ingredient of the value proposition to customers. Ask yourself:

- When we've been at our best, what have we done, and what have others said about us?
- What sustains the traits and behaviours we want to nurture and evolve?
- What are the assumptions that we make about who we are, and how we work, that hold us back?
- How can we overcome inertia, laziness, procrastination and other limiting traits?

Understand the expectations of the strategy

If you're looking to evolve the culture and encourage participation, you'll need to understand the need for a new strategy. Ask yourself:

- What are the compelling reasons for making a change in the direction of the organisation, and why make it now?
- What weak signals of change in customer sentiment, competitor activity or internal performance should people be aware of?
- What are the most exciting opportunities ahead, and why is this organisation best placed to pursue them?
- What are our differentiated capabilities, and what are we doing to invest in them?





Identify and harness the imprintable moments

They relate to:

- Strategy development.
- Negotiations.
- Recruitment.
- Critical conversations with employees.
- Crisis performance.
- Launch of new services.
- Performance reviews.

Getting them right creates a multiplier effect on other activities as people learn new ways of working.



READY FOR MORE?



This is based on an article in *Strategy+Business* called 'Mastering the connection between strategy and culture'.

For more resources go to davidlancefield.com:

- Listen to, and watch, the *Lancefield on the Line* podcast.
- Take the *Extraordinary Essentials* test to identify your strengths and development points.
- Read my articles in *HBR* and *Strategy+Business*.

If you're a CEO or founder looking for help while you tackle a complex strategic challenge or pursue a transformational opportunity do get in touch on david@davidlancefield.com

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