

# Culture and Climate - similar but different

## CULTURE & CLIMATE

GOOD CLIMATE

**Mediocre performance**

A great place to work but energy not aligned to strategic directions

**Sweet spot**

A great place to work with energy aligned to strategic direction

**GOOD CLIMATE**

**A healthy work environment where people can thrive and perform at their best**

Typically where people...

- Feel supported, valued and safe
- Are clear about roles and expectations
- Feel they are empowered
- Are doing meaningful, purposeful work
- Feel part of a team
- Are learning and growing

**RIGHT CULTURE**

**The 'way things are done around here'**

Is driven by...

- behaviours, symbols + systems aligned to strategic direction

What type of culture do we need?

- achievement-oriented, customer focussed, people first, innovative, collaborative, socially responsible?

*Derived from the work of Carolyn Taylor - Walk the Talk*

WRONG CULTURE

**Disaster zone**

An unhealthy work environment where energy not aligned to strategic directions

RIGHT CULTURE

**Unsustainable performance**

Organisational energy aligned to strategic directions but with an unhealthy work environment

BAD CLIMATE

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## The concept

Organisational Culture and Organisational Climate – is there a difference? And does it matter?

**Organisational culture** is a key a strategic question: *What is the culture that we need that will support our strategic direction?* Rather than the idea of having a good/bad culture, it is more about the idea of having the **right culture** – the unique culture we need to support our strategy.

Typical cultures, as mentioned in the info-visual, are created through organisational messages sent through the right set of behaviours (what people do that is visible to others), symbols (reminders of what is important – priorities, titles, resource allocation etc) and systems (mechanisms by which the organisation is managed). These all need to work in unison to create the right culture that supports the organisation strategy.

**Organisational climate**, however, is more about organisational health – a good (healthy) climate versus a bad (unhealthy) climate: *Is it a workplace where people can thrive and perform at their best?*

The typical conditions for a healthy climate, as mentioned in the info-visual, are relatively universal in nature and not dependent on organisational strategy. These conditions are created through leadership practices, oftentimes at the local level in organisations.

## Why it's useful

Organisational culture and climate are related but different concepts. The terms, however, are often used interchangeably in conversation and practice.

The difference matters because the strategies to address each are different and may influence where you prioritise your effort. It can also be important to understand which you are measuring when undertaking staff surveys and related interventions.

## How/when to apply it

This is a useful visual to get out when you hear the words *culture* and *climate* used in conversations.

If you are focussing on **culture**, have you described the required culture relevant to your strategic directions; identified the key behaviours, symbols and systems; and implemented and measured the impact of key changes?

If you are focussing on **climate**, have you understood the key climate conditions that underpin a healthy work environment; developed leaders and teams; ensured accountability for effective people leadership; and regularly measured the climate?

<https://discoveryinaction.com.au/is-there-a-difference-between-organisational-culture-and-organisational-climate/>

