Culture 101

How Does Your Board Conduct Itself?

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"Culture eats strategy for breakfast."

— Peter Drucker

Board Culture Defined

- The underlying beliefs, assumptions, values, and the ways of interacting that contribute to the unique social and psychological environment of an organization or group

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Five Practices to Strengthen Your Board Culture

- Recognize the ***importance*** of a strong and healthy board culture
- ***Assess*** your organization's current culture
- Be ***intentional*** about working together towards improving it
- Understand and ***utilize practices*** that support a healthy board culture
- ***Reassess*** your culture annually and ***emphasize*** it during times of change and transition

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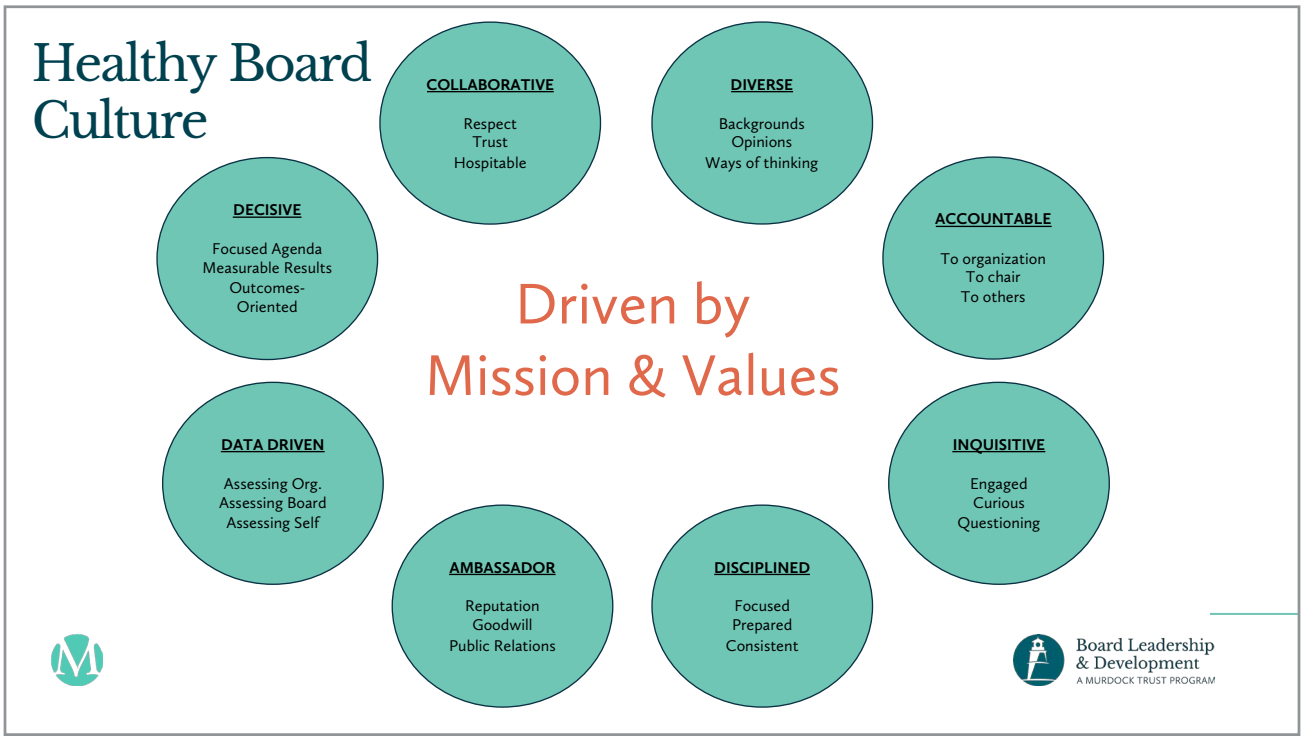
Healthy Board Culture
COLLABORATIVE
Respect
Trust
Hospitable
DIVERSE
Backgrounds
Opinions
Ways of thinking
DECISIVE
Focused Agenda
Measurable Results
Outcomes-Oriented
ACCOUNTABLE
To organization
To chair
To others
Driven by Mission & Values
DATA DRIVEN
Assessing Org.
Assessing Board
Assessing Self
INQUISITIVE
Engaged
Curious
Questioning
AMBASSADOR
Reputation
Goodwill
Public Relations
DISCIPLINED
Focused
Prepared
Consistent
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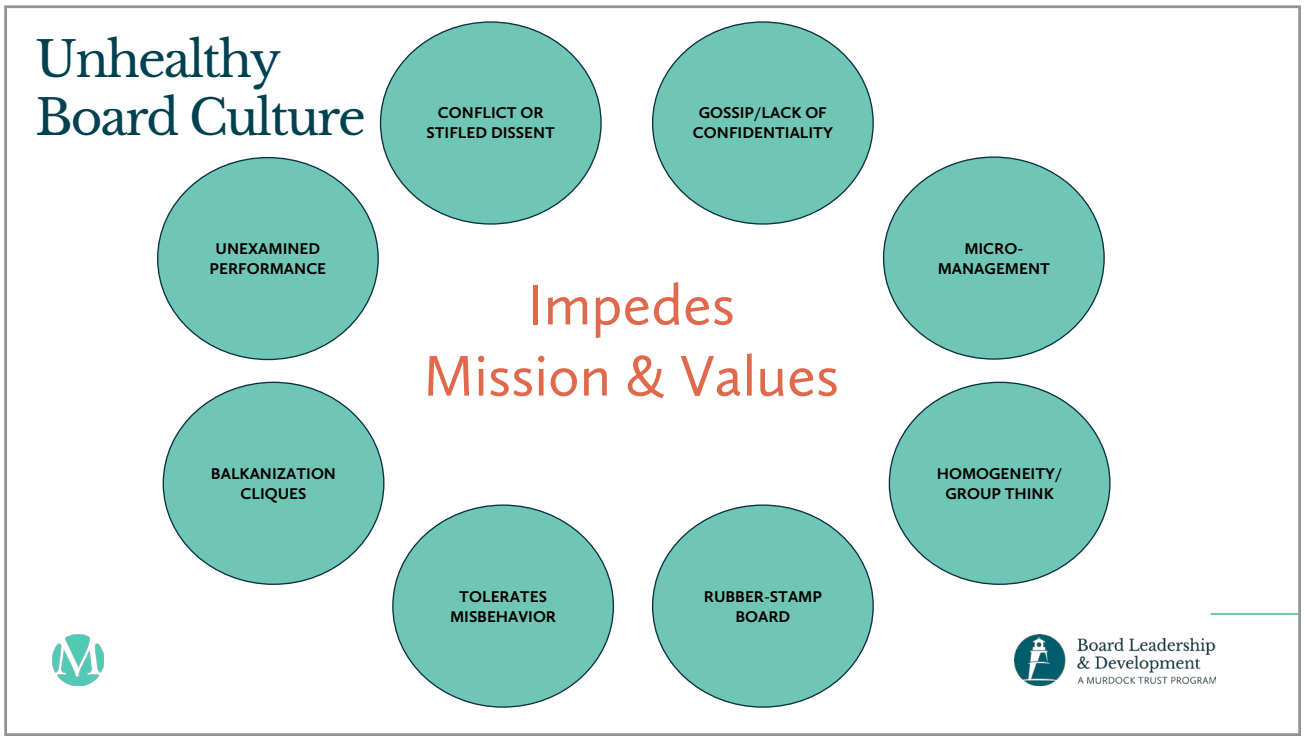
Unhealthy Board Culture
CONFLICT OR STIFLED DISSENT
GOSSIP/LACK OF CONFIDENTIALITY
UNEXAMINED PERFORMANCE
MICRO-MANAGEMENT
Impedes Mission & Values
BALKANIZATION CLIQUES
HOMOGENEITY/ GROUP THINK
TOLERATES MISBEHAVIOR
RUBBER-STAMP BOARD
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Board Culture Survey

Please indicate where you believe our Board is on the continuum:

DISTRIBUTED INFLUENCE — **DOMINANT INNER CIRCLE**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

COLLECTIVE WISDOM — **INDIVIDUAL CONVICTIONS**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

OPEN-MINDED — **CLOSE-MINDED**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

TRANSPARENCY — **OPACITY**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

CONFIDENTIALITY — **LACK OF CONFIDENTIALITY**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

DILIGENCE — **DISENGAGEMENT**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

RESPECT AND TRUST — **DISREGARD AND DISTRUST**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

CLEAR EXPECTATIONS — **AMBIGUOUS EXPECTATIONS**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

MUTUAL ACCOUNTABILITY — **COLLECTIVE IMPUNITY**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

For any of the areas identified above, are there specific ones where you might offer a suggestion as to how we could improve on your assessment?

FILL-IN-THE-BLANK:

Provide as many answers as you would like for each blank.

1. I believe our Board values:

2. If you were to describe our Board, what word(s) would you use?

3. What does it take to be a successful Board member for this organization? Have you encountered any unwritten rules or assumptions that foster or inhibit success? If so what are they?

4. I feel our Board could improve in/on:

5. What brings life to the Board and the work we do?

6. Three wishes I have for the Board are:

   a.

   b.

   c.

SOURCE MATERIAL: Association of Governing Boards

Be *Intentional* about Improving Culture

- Work together to improve and maintain
- Owned by the entire board
- Monitored and assessed by a specific committee
- Led by Board Chair and Executive Director

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Utilize Practices that Drive a Healthy Culture

1. A chair who is an ***effective facilitator***

2. ***Strong relationships*** among board members, with Executive Director and senior leadership

3. Board cultures that take the ***long view***

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Chair Facilitates Healthy Culture

- Cultivates a strong partnership with Executive Director
- Resolves conflicts
- Builds consensus and reaches compromise
- Fosters an environment that builds trust
- Frames questions and discusses issues strategically

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Build Strong Relationships

- Manage expectations on the front end
- Ensure board feels appreciated
- Leverage gifts and skills of board members
- Value all perspectives and opinions, while speaking with one voice

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Take the Long View

- Spend 70%-80% on future vs. 20%-30% on current issues
- Use longer time horizons when making decisions
  - 3 years or more
- Strategic vs. tactical focus—creates robust discussions
  - Makes most of diverse perspectives
- Challenges leadership to consider different future scenarios

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Reassess and Emphasize Culture

- Include questions in annual or bi-annual board evaluations
- Emphasize the importance of culture during times of transition
- When it's broken, be intentional about fixing it.

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Quick Review—for a Healthy Culture

- Recognize the ***importance*** of culture
- ***Assess*** current culture
- Be ***intentional*** about improving it
- ***Utilize*** healthy board culture practices—3 Drivers
- ***Reassess*** your culture regularly

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Breakout Discussion/Work with Coach

1. Discuss the healthy and unhealthy aspects of your board culture based on the board assessment.
2. Discuss unwritten rules as well as clear and hidden assumptions within your board's culture.
3. Does your board have specific values it aspires to? If so, what are they?
4. How do you describe board culture to a prospective board member?
5. What might you want the board culture to look like in two years?
6. What steps could you take to make shifts in board culture?
7. Should we add board culture to your Top 5 Strategic Next Steps?

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ARE ANY ACTION ITEMS IN THIS SECTION A CANDIDATE FOR THE TOP 5 STRATEGIC NEXT STEPS?