Culture 201

Board Table Manners:
Four Conversations about Culture
that Every Board Must Have

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Have you ever been in a meeting in which you had to figure out a strategy to "Speak Up?"

Talk to the colleagues at your table about a time you were compelled to "Speak Up" or a time you were compelled to "Hold Your Tongue."

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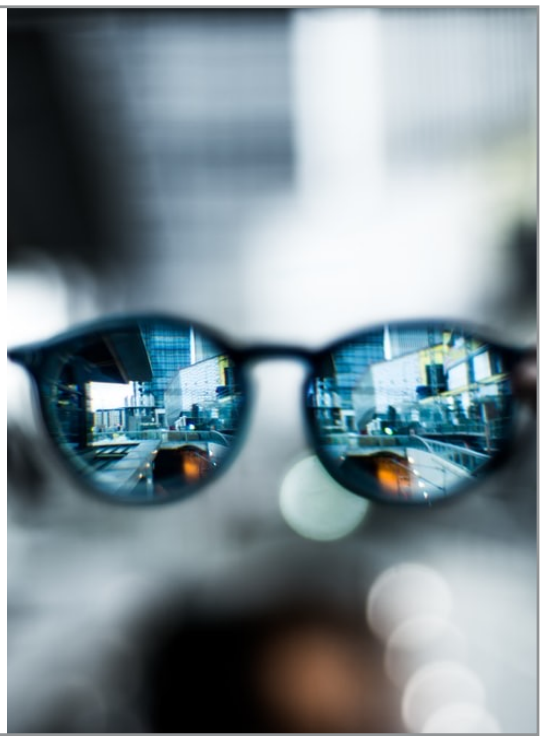
Setting the Context

- **Stewardship**—the careful management and care of something that has been entrusted to you
- **Hospitality**—the act of welcoming the stranger
- **Humility**—knowing who you are, recognizing the value of others in the context of something greater than yourself
- **Culture**—the way we say we get things done and the way we really get things done



Cultural Humility

- Competence is what we have to know in order to achieve an outcome, but….
- Cultural humility implies a posture of listening to learn, being other-oriented, and willingness to change systems.
- A board must recognize that its organization's goals, culture, and environmental constraints, along with each member's personal experiences, will influence their own viewpoint, which is why a board must be always growing in this area.

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Pivoting Between Host and Guest

- Host
  - Inviter, advance team, greeter, chef, in-charge, ready for reciprocity
- Guest
  - Stranger, newly arrived, recent hire, not from around here, ready for reciprocity
- Where have you been the host and the guest?

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Stewarding our Mission

To more fully live into our personal and organizational missions, we must first recognize what perspectives are missing and why.
Doing this is an act of hospitality and stewardship.

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Cultural Humility Benefits Everyone

When teams diversify, they become more innovative and financial postures improve.

Boards with greater diverse demographic representation – ethnicity, gender, age, capability – have higher engagement.

Diversity, applied, improves decision-making, improves creativity, diligence and work ethic.

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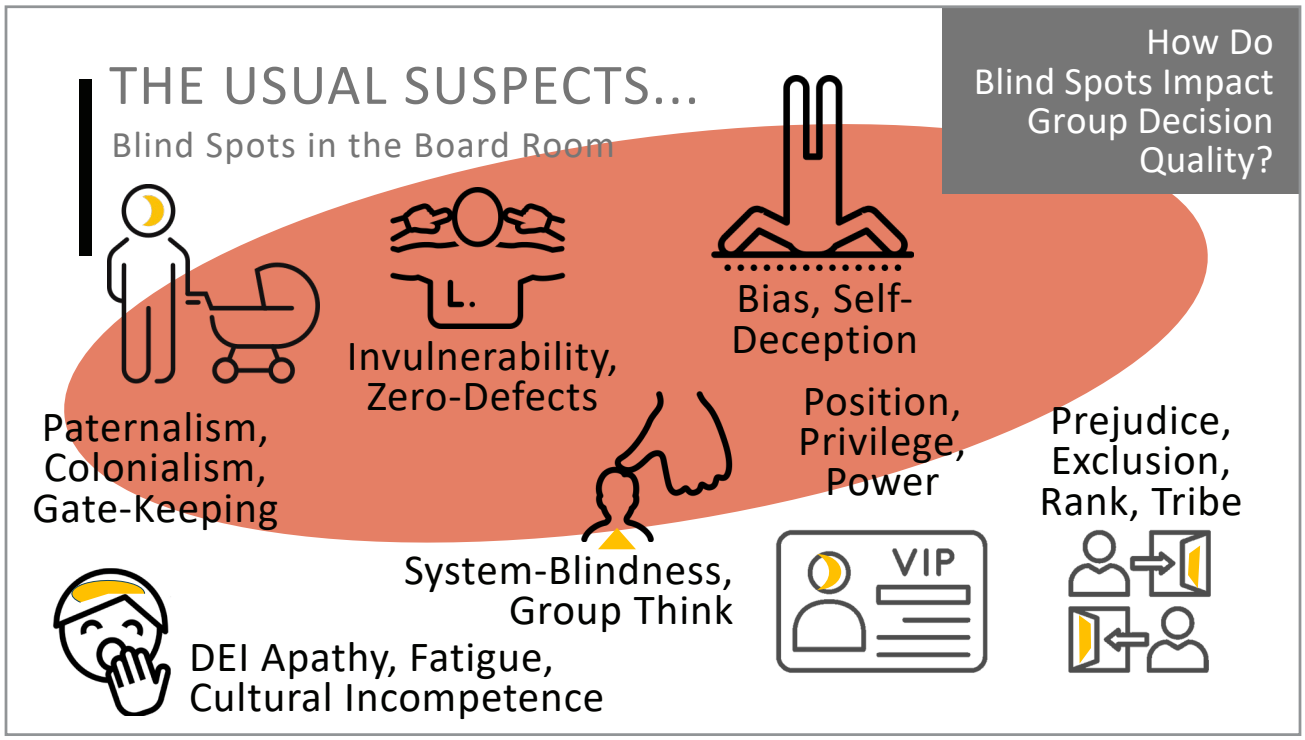
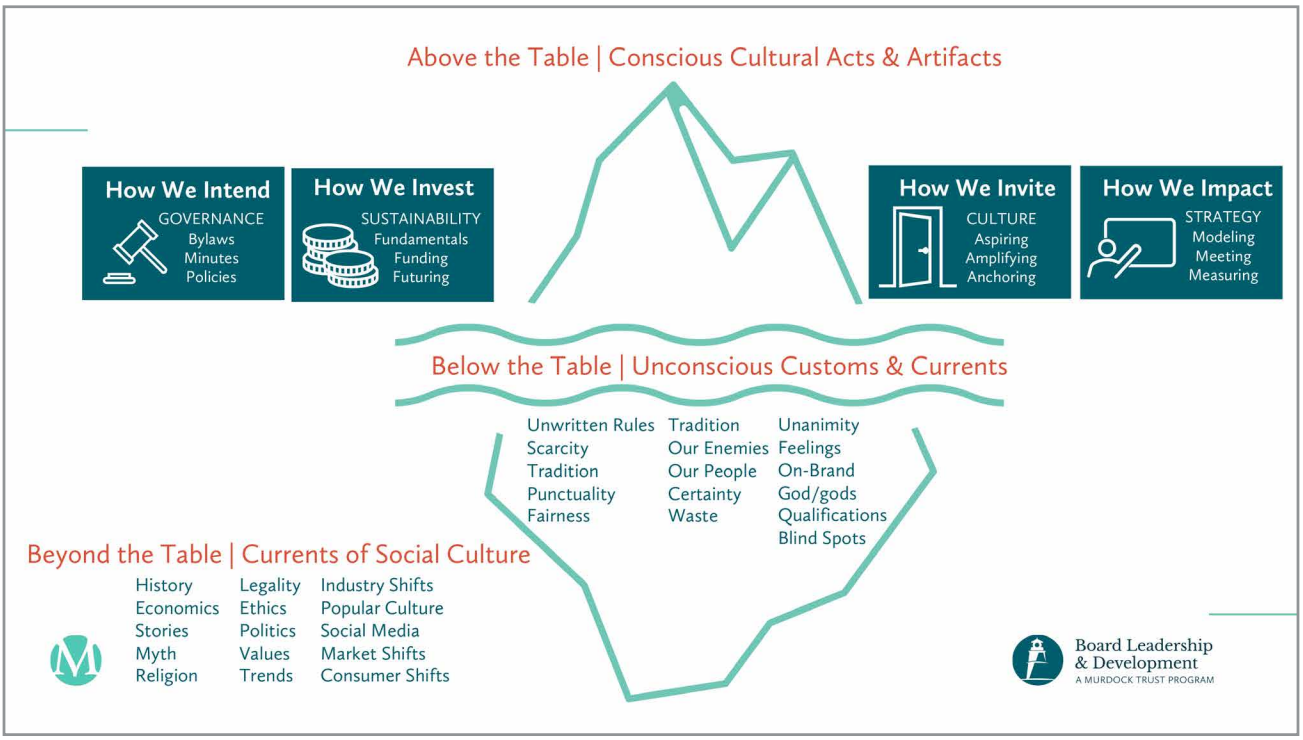

THE USUAL SUSPECTS...
Blind Spots in the Board Room
How Do Blind Spots Impact Group Decision Quality?
Paternalism, Colonialism, Gate-Keeping
Invulnerability, Zero-Defects
Bias, Self-Deception
Position, Privilege, Power
Prejudice, Exclusion, Rank, Tribe
System-Blindness, Group Think
VIP
DEI Apathy, Fatigue, Cultural Incompetence


Above the Table | Conscious Cultural Acts & Artifacts
How We Intend
GOVERNANCE
Bylaws
Minutes
Policies
How We Invest
SUSTAINABILITY
Fundamentals
Funding
Futuring
How We Invite
CULTURE
Aspiring
Amplifying
Anchoring
How We Impact
STRATEGY
Modeling
Meeting
Measuring
Below the Table | Unconscious Customs & Currents
Unwritten Rules
Scarcity
Tradition
Punctuality
Fairness
Tradition
Our Enemies
Our People
Certainty
Waste
Unanimity
Feelings
On-Brand
God/gods
Qualifications
Blind Spots
Beyond the Table | Currents of Social Culture
History
Economics
Stories
Myth
Religion
Legality
Ethics
Politics
Values
Trends
Industry Shifts
Popular Culture
Social Media
Market Shifts
Consumer Shifts
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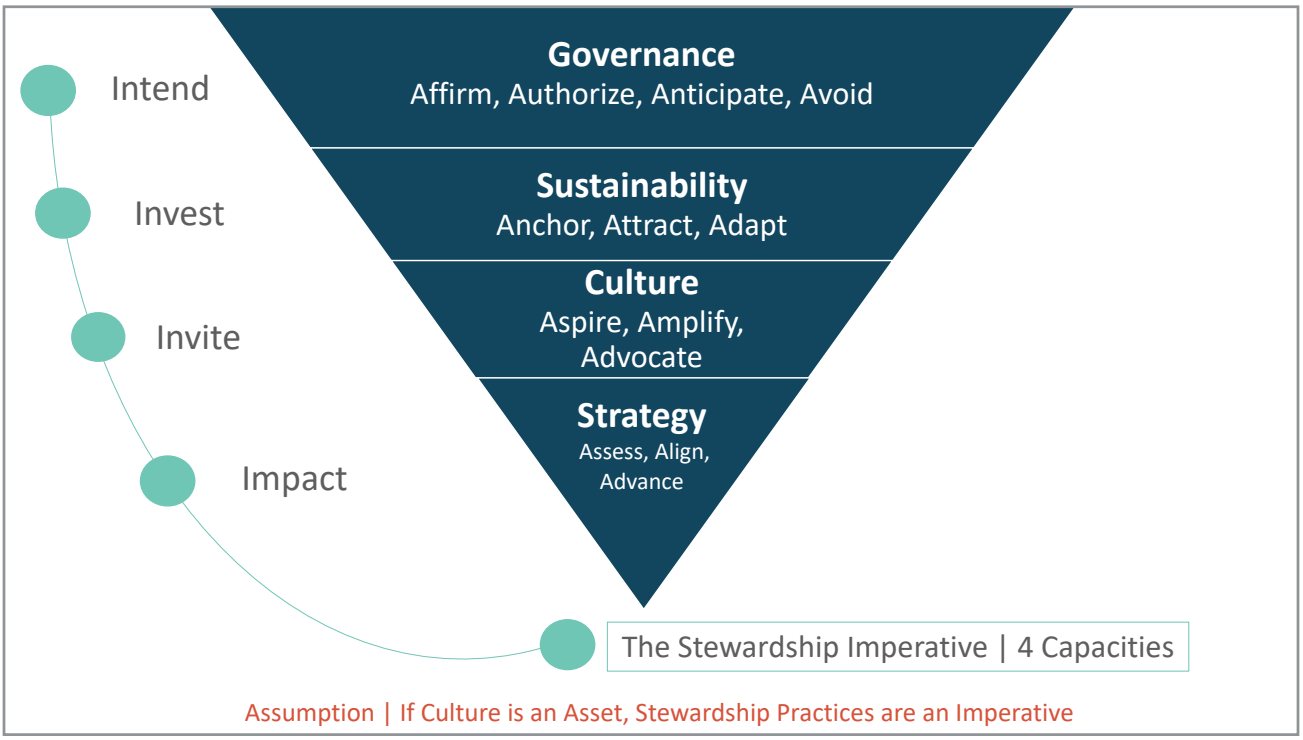
Intend
Invest
Invite
Impact
Governance
Affirm, Authorize, Anticipate, Avoid
Sustainability
Anchor, Attract, Adapt
Culture
Aspire, Amplify, Advocate
Strategy
Assess, Align, Advance
The Stewardship Imperative | 4 Capacities
Assumption | If Culture is an Asset, Stewardship Practices are an Imperative

The Placemat | 4 Conversation Starters

Organization Member Date

OUR BOARD CULTURE IS EXPRESSED IN HOW WE INTEND, INVEST, INVITE & IMPACT.

BOARD CULTURE PLACEMAT

A. Intend

Definition | Having a Purpose or Goal, Designing for a Specified Future, Proceeding on a Course.

- ❑ 1. We consult mission, vision and values during decisions.
- ❑ 2. We examine by-laws/policies for alignment, fairness, inclusion.
- ❑ 3. We translate intentions to action plans, roadmaps, playbooks.
- ❑ 4. We orchestrate our progress through a strategic plan, goals.

C. Invite

Definition | Welcoming Participation, Politely Increasing Chance, Offering Incentive.

- ❑ 1. We recruit members who add capacity, not merely fit.
- ❑ 2. We invite those we serve to help us identify our blind spots.
- ❑ 3. We survey board members to assess their comfort to speak freely.
- ❑ 4. We have a board matrix and cultivate diverse candidate pools. when recruiting.

B. Invest

Definition | Committing Resources, Earning a Return, Acting for Future Advantage, Engaging Emotionally.

- ❑ 1. We ask, "How can we afford it?" instead of "Can we afford it?"
- ❑ 2. We show 'buy-in" through 100% financial participation.
- ❑ 3. We build board capacity through cultural mentors or advisors.
- ❑ 4. We invest in customer, staff and board surveys to find gaps that need to be addressed.

D. Impact

Definition | Producing a Result, Force of impression Left, Lasting, Durable Outcome.

- ❑ 1. We measure our efforts by evidence-based outcomes.
- ❑ 2. We compare our results to stated intentions, promises.
- ❑ 3. We harvest learning after events, milestones, fails, wins.
- ❑ 4. We recognize, celebrate and encourage efforts of staff team.

KEY
1=NOT TRUE,
3=UNSURE, 5 =TRUE

Start

Stop

Conversation Starters

- Score Each Item, Using a 1-5 Scale.
- Compare Results with Members.
- Host a Conversation: "I Propose We Start, Stop, or Strengthen ____." Use Your Notes.

Strengthen

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Intend

Having a Purpose or Goal, Designing for a Specified Future, Proceeding on a Course.

- We consult mission, vision & values during decisions.
- We examine policies for fairness, equity and inclusion.
- We expect status reports on the promise to stakeholders.
- We are convinced our theory of change makes a difference.
- We orchestrate our progress through a strategic plan.

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Invite

Welcoming Participation, Politely Increasing Chance, Offering Incentive.

- We leverage our mission and story to attract stakeholders.
- We recruit members who add capacity, not merely fit.
- We seek & use stakeholder feedback on our blind spots.
- We embody a partnership of equals, a participatory approach.
- We cultivate diverse candidate pools when recruiting.

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Invest

Committing (Resources)) Earning a Return, Acting for Future Advantage, Engaging Emotionally.

- We require budget priorities to reflect missional intent.
- We fund evidence-based efforts-to-outcome strategies.
- We ask, "how can we afford it?" instead of "can we afford it?"
- We model missional engagement by participating financially.
- We build board capacity through cultural mentors & advisors.

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Impact

Producing a Result, Force of impression Left, Lasting, Durable Outcome.

- We measure our efforts by evidence-based outcomes.
- We avoid provider/recipient resourcing mindsets.
- We compare our results to stated intentions, promises.
- We harvest learning after events, milestones, fails, wins.
- We recognize, celebrate & encourage efforts of staff or team.

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The Placemat | 4 Conversation Starters

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Strengthen

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