





created making a “wait and see” approach a risky proposition.

Culture generally begins with a founder or early leader who articulates and implements particular ideas and values as a vision, philosophy, or strategy. By convening a group that has a common goal or interest, leaders give incipient shape to culture. For example, think about how you will speak to the vision and goals of this board? How will you make sure the vision is shared? How will you agree on ground rules for the meetings? How will you self-police? How will you manage conflict?

Culture is learned, and it evolves with new experiences. Members will spend time at the beginning trying to figure out the new group. This does *not* mean that a culture can be imposed. It develops during the course of social interaction, so a manager who wants to change or create culture must create conditions or set parameters for this interaction. Culture ultimately arises as shared meaning. Thus a skilled manager must be able to manage meaning by symbolizing the values of the organization, exerting power to develop codes of conduct, and shaping opinion. Promote desired assumptions. Recognize and reward behavior consistent with these assumptions.

Through actions such as rewarding behaviors, shared meaning is created about these actions and their value to the group. The same event can mean very different things to different people because of the different perspectives they use to interpret experiences. These perspectives are shaped by the organization or group. What is important about any event, therefore, is *not* what *happened*, but *what it means*. Many events are more important for what they express than for what they produce. Consider for example what having the mayor give the group a charge for action would imply compared to the same message delivered by a staff member.

The economic development board for Oceanboro has the opportunity to make an impact on the town, through thoughtful management and leadership of this group the board’s ability to work well together, to meet the needs of the town and each board member will be enhanced.

*Willow Jacobson is a School of Government faculty member.*