

# Culture Change Programmes In Unforeseen Times



## IS IT A GOOD TIME TO DEPLOY A CORPORATE CULTURE PROGRAMME IN THE CONTEXT OF A GLOBAL PANDEMIC?

Culture change programmes are mostly initiated as a response to internal or external challenges, e.g. after a merger, when a new CEO is appointed or when a market is changing sustainably through new competitors or new technologies. The bigger the challenge, the more credible the call for action.

Corona is a call for action on various levels: lock-down, digitalisation, new ways of working together and communicating at a distance. Corona changes (corporate) culture whether we aim for it or not, and some companies are better at adapting than others:

### 1) Culture matters

What reactions do you observe in your company? Corporate culture boosts either Constructive or Defensive behaviours, and crisis is the moment of truth. Showing “Blue”, Constructive behaviours when the markets are good is possible for many (“Blue” refers to Human Synergistics’ research and instruments, describing the “Constructive styles” in the [Circumplex](#), contrasting the “Red” Aggressive/Defensive and “Green” Passive/Defensive styles). The art is, to stay “Blue” when put under a stress-test: are your company’s customer relationships strong enough, is your leadership team adaptive to change, are the employees pro-active and supportive in the current situation? Do people in your company rather turn “Red” (Aggressive/Defensive) or “Green” (Passive/Defensive)? **Which of the current changes are useful and worth maintaining in the long term, and can the situation be leveraged as an opportunity to finally initiate long necessary evolutions?**

### 2) Constructive collaboration matters

**People realise in their daily work that culture matters even more when working remotely.** In my current coachings, participants report of the struggle to build new routines when working remotely, particularly in existing teams, where they have unspoken rules and procedures that suddenly don’t work out anymore. They ask, **how to foster trust and strengthen relationships in uncertain times and at a distance.** When working remotely, all the “Blue” Constructive virtues, be it motivation, enjoyment of task accomplishment or the ability to work well with others are even more important than in “normal” times, yet more difficult to achieve. On the other hand, **the awareness and willingness to develop these qualities are higher than usual at this time.**

### 3) Leadership matters

Leadership is particularly important in crisis times, as it sets the tone and example for collaboration and hence shapes the culture. Not only employees, but all other stakeholders are observing closely whether the leadership team is providing direction, working on and achieving good solutions and taking care of their people. **Which leadership style will help to steer out of crisis most effectively?** “Blue”, Constructive leaders are needed more than ever, as they know how to give reassuring signals that they are proactively responding to the challenge. People with blue styles know how to communicate efficiently and act accordingly – and at the same time integrate the human dimension, integrating their people’s perspectives and listen to their concerns, addressing them. **Fostering blue styles and behaviours in leaders is hence particularly important at times like ours.**

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From a Human Resources (HR) / Organisational Development (OD) / Learning and Development (LD) perspective, right now might be the best point in time to start developing and/or strengthening Blue culture/collaboration/leadership: it really matters, it really helps to address the crisis and steer out of it! At the same time, HR/OD/LD budgets are on ice – so the key question will be to ask those who decide on budgets: what’s our plan to emerge stronger from the crisis, and as quickly as possible? How can we allocate budgets most efficiently in order to foster a culture that will help in and through a crisis? What plan do we follow to get out of this crisis as a winner?

Now may be a great time to develop and strengthen the “Blue” muscles in your company – and such an endeavour can, at the same time, be a great way to offer first-hand experiences not only with new digital platforms and meeting etiquettes but also at the same time be the training room to discuss culture-related soft skill topics such as leadership, communications and self-management in new ways. Big parts of culture change journeys can be conducted virtually – Circumplex questionnaires are online, in-depth culture diagnostic interviews and LSI or L/I debriefs are conducted in video calls (as they often have been in international teams), and culture focus groups and blended learning journeys including behaviour trainings can be delivered in online-formats, enhancing remote skills in your company.

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## Human Synergistics

As the creators of the world’s most widely-used and researched culture survey, we’ve pioneered culture and leadership research for more than 40 years. We’re committed to helping you measure and develop your Real Culture in terms of „what’s expected“ of people in your organization. Through the use of our tools, we enable individuals, groups, and organizations to initiate changes and realize their potential.

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