

How to Keep Your Organization  
Afloat and Sailing for Success

**SAIL**

**OR**

**SINK**

**CAPPY LELAND**

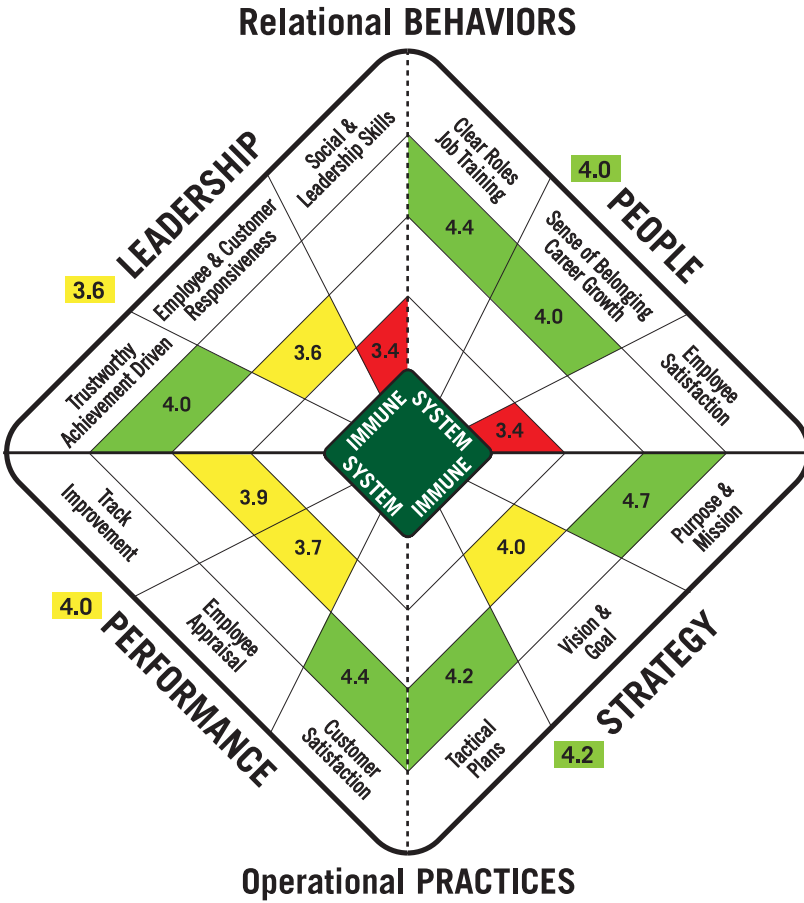
**PATRICK RAINEY**

# **SAIL OR SINK**

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**Illustration 1. Color-Coded Quadrangle Chart**

Colors identifying assessment scores from red (low), yellow (medium), and green (high). However, throughout *Sail Or Sink*, the OES charts are reproduced in shades of gray; in an actual OES report, the charts appear with the colors shown here. The vibrant color coding helps leaders quickly see and understand the scores related to their organization's OES results.

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All case studies used in this book come from the collaborative efforts of the Performance Dashboard team, as well as accredited Organizational Effectiveness Survey<sup>SM</sup> (OES) independent consulting partners working with actual clients who took the OES.

Names of client organizations and personal identifiers, along with specific identifying facts, were changed or omitted to protect their confidentiality.

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## **Dedication**

In memory of my son, *Skye Christopher Leland*, whose good-hearted spirit, love for adventure, and tough-mindedness encouraged me to write this book.

I Love You, forever and always, Pops (Cappy)

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES AND ILLUSTRATIONS	xi
LIST OF FORMS, CHARTS, AND TABLES	xiii
PREFACE	xv
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	xix
INTRODUCTION	01
CHAPTER 1. The OES Model	09
CHAPTER 2. Organization Culture—What It Is, and Why It Matters	25
CHAPTER 3. OES—Assessing Your Organization's Culture Type	43
CHAPTER 4. Suggested Solutions—How to Sail and Not Sink	81
CHAPTER 5. The Interpersonal Culture—Healthy Caring Relationships	155
CHAPTER 6. The Relentless Culture—Effective in Getting Results—No Excuses	177
CHAPTER 7. The Detached Culture—Coming Undone at the Seams and Sinking	197
CHAPTER 8. The Engaged Culture—Healthy, Effective, and Resilient	221
EPILOGUE. The OES Lifeline	247
APPENDIX 1. OES Validity and Reliability Study	251
APPENDIX 2. Business Performance Review (BPR)	257
APPENDIX 3. Books, Journals, Websites, Video, and Film Resources	265
NOTES 1. About the Authors	303
NOTES 2. Contacting Cappy Leland and Patrick Rainey	307
BIBLIOGRAPHY	309
INDEX	315

## **LIST OF FIGURES AND ILLUSTRATIONS**

FIGURE 1. OES Model Showing Culture Types and Organization Traits	02
FIGURE 2. OES Model Illustrating the Trilogy of Culture Traits	08
FIGURE 3. OES Model Showing Interpersonal Culture	73
FIGURE 4. OES Model Showing Relentless Culture	75
FIGURE 5. OES Model Showing Detached Culture	77
FIGURE 6. OES Model Showing Engaged Culture	79
FIGURE 7. OES Model Showing Interpersonal Culture	154
FIGURE 8. OES Model Showing Relentless Culture	176
FIGURE 9. OES Model Showing Detached Culture	196
FIGURE 10. OES Model Showing Engaged Culture	220
ILLUSTRATION 1. Color-Coded Quadrangle Chart	iv
ILLUSTRATION 2. OES Quadrangle Chart Showing Traits and Functions	7
ILLUSTRATION 3. Immune System Values Gap Bar Chart	66
ILLUSTRATION 4. OES Bar Chart	153
ILLUSTRATION 5. OES Aggregate Subculture Chart	195

## LIST OF FORMS, CHARTS, AND TABLES

FORM 1. Circle a Rating Score 1-6 for Each OES Statement	45
FORM 2. Enter Scores for Numbered Statements	51
FORM 3. Example of Numbered Statements with Scores	53
FORM 4. Circle a Rating Score for Each OES Statement Immune System	60
FORM 5. Enter Scores for Desired, Current, and Values Gap	65
FORM 6. Final Total Scores	69
CHART 1. Relational Behaviors and Operational Practices Grid	55
CHART 2. Example Result–Interpersonal Culture Grid	57
CHART 3. Example of Scores for Values Gap, Change Readiness, and Diversity & Inclusiveness	67
TABLE 1. OES Range of Scores Possible	10
TABLE 2. OES–B&P with Immune System Scoring Scale from Dark Gray to Lightest Gray	70
TABLE 3. Where to Find Suggested Solutions to Obstacles Affecting B&P Competencies and Immune System Components	82
TABLE 4. Immune System Components Linked to B&P Competencies	148
TABLE 5. OES Interpersonal Culture Scores	162
TABLE 6. OES Relentless Culture Scores	182
TABLE 7. OES Detached Culture Scores	206
TABLE 8. OES Engaged Culture Scores	230
TABLE 9. Nine-Year Case Study—Staffing/HR Solutions Organization	235
TABLE 10. Four-Year Case Study—CCE	237
TABLE 11. Business Performance Review (BPR) Assessment	258



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**Family.** They put the wind in the book's sails with their love and their encouragement to stay on course.

**OES Independent Consulting Partners and OES Clients.** This book owes much to the consulting partners who willingly administer the Organizational Effectiveness Survey<sup>SM</sup> (OES) to their clients, and to the thousands of men and women from organizations of all sizes across the nation. These people shared their experiences and insights about the health, effectiveness, and resilience of their organization's culture. Their anonymous responses provided invaluable data and case studies that made this book possible.

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**Amber Romo,** member of the Educational Training, Evaluation, Assessment, and Measurement (E-TEAM) department at the University of Oklahoma. Her statistical analysis of the OES verifies the data and case study claims of this book to be accurate, valid, and reliable.

**Robert Rainey,** JD, former vice president and general counsel of Performance Dashboard. His steadfast confidence in the value of the OES has been inspirational for more than seventeen years.

# Introduction

**M**ismanaging culture can sink an organization. This book helps you avoid such a fate. *Sail Or Sink (SOS)* introduces the Organizational Effectiveness Survey<sup>SM</sup> (OES). The OES provides data to assess an organization's three major traits: Relational Behaviors, Operational Practices, and Immune System.

The book's subject matter comes from sources collected over a period of 23 years. Those sources include (1) consulting clients in the private and public sector and (2) case studies drawn from the findings of the (OES).

## What is the OES?

The OES is a validated diagnostic assessment. It records data about an organization's Relational Behaviors, Operational Practices, and Immune System. The OES data gives leaders knowledge about (1) the health status of their organization's Relational Behaviors, (2) the effectiveness of their organization's Operational Practices, and (3) the resilience of their

organization's Immune System. These traits and the four organization culture types are illustrated in this book by the OES model, the first of its kind (Figure 1).

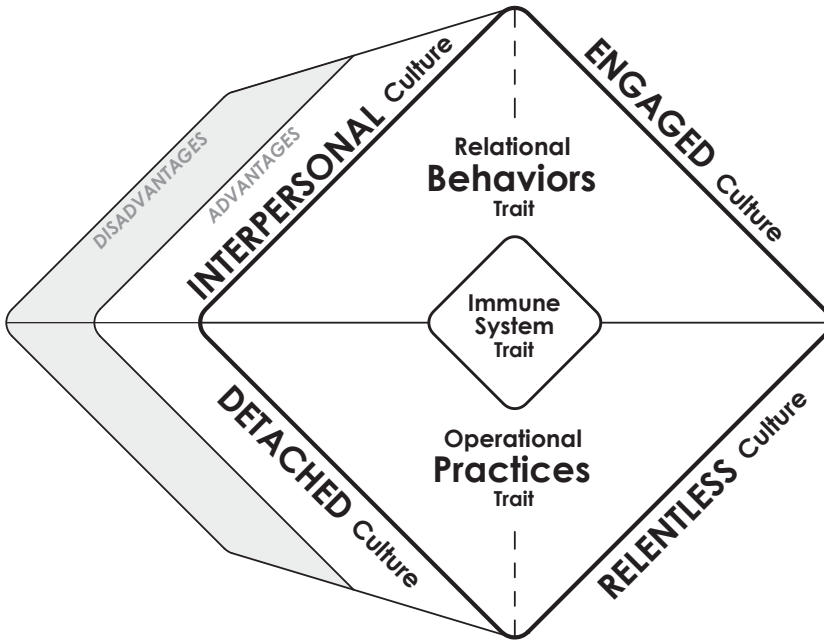


Figure 1. OES Model Showing Culture Types and Organization Traits

### How does the OES process work?

The OES works much like the process used by a healthcare provider. The provider collects a blood sample from a patient. Once collected, the blood is sent to a pathology lab to be analyzed. The analysis of the blood provides accurate information the provider can use to make a diagnosis and prognosis and develop a specific treatment plan. Organizations use the OES in a similar way.

### *Phase 1: Set Up and Launch*

To begin, an organization contacts a consultant accredited in administering the OES. The consultant provides all the organization's employees with an OES assessment, either online and/or paper and pencil, and in foreign languages. The consultant collects scored responses from the information-seeking statements. Responses also take the form of written comments to open-ended questions.

Along with the OES, the consultant asks a top executive to complete a Business Performance Review (BPR). This assessment measures the organization's recent business outcomes (see Appendix 2).

### *Phase 2: Analyze Data, Generate Reports, Debrief Results*

The consultant collects a predetermined percent of all employee scores. He sends this data to the OES pathology lab to be analyzed. The lab's findings provide an accurate and comprehensive view of the organization's culture type and its health, effectiveness, and resilience. The findings, along with a narrative summary, are sent to an OES-accredited consultant to share with the organization's leaders.

With a clear picture of their organization's culture status in hand, the leaders can take action on areas identified as needing improvement.

Thus, the OES gives leaders an advantage over their competitors. They can use OES findings to unleash human potential and subsequently increase their organization's performance, growth, and success.

## **How is the OES different from all other assessment tools?**

As of this book's publication, only one assessment exists that can verifiably measure the trilogy of traits that make up organization culture. Plenty of various assessments can be found to evaluate Relational Behaviors and Operational Practices (B&P). But none empirically and verifiably assesses the critical third trait, the Immune System. None, that is, except the OES.

*Sail Or Sink (SOS)* identifies and defines the organization's Immune System, how it differs from the human immune system, and how its core harbors the essential undercurrents of change.

## **How does the Immune System work?**

The organization's Immune System function detects what behavioral, operational, and immune system activity is normal (an advantage) or abnormal (a disadvantage) in an organization's culture. The range between normal and abnormal is represented as a scale of numerical scores. If leaders see that a scored value has deviated from a normal range, they know the health of their organization is in jeopardy. Thus, they can take quick action to remove the toxic virus infecting their organization's performance.

Strictly speaking, the organization Immune System is nothing new. It's an age-old trait dating back to the earliest humans who gathered in groups or tribes. However, the trait owes its name *Immune System* to the twentieth century. Early use of the term appears in the writings of educator al-Saidi Muayad (2020). Using the term *Immune System* is convenient for painting a quick image of this trait within a

work environment, but the image relies on a false analogy. For example, the human immune system detects a threat (a stimulus, such as a toxic microbe invading the body's cells), then it involuntarily reacts by attacking the threat (white blood cells destroy the invader).

In contrast, the organization Immune System does more. It involves a voluntary thought process to consider how to react to a threat (stimulus). The following comparison of the human immune system and the organization Immune System shows how the two systems differ.

- Human Immune System—Stimulus (Threat) + Involuntary Reaction
- Organization Immune System—Stimulus (Threat) + Thought + Voluntary Reaction

The author proposes the following definition be the standard used by leaders, consultants, researchers, academicians, authors, and anyone else dealing with organization development:

*Organization Immune System—a network of people linked by their behaviors and practices and capable of voluntarily reacting to a perceived threat.*

If this definition seems to be another way of saying change, it is. Arguably, most—if not all—attempts to explain change fall short. They focus on the process and results of change, rather than the components that make up the core of organization change.

Diving deep into the organization Immune System, this book discovers those components, the stimuli driving change.

For the first time a direct and definitive answer is given to the question: What core components make up organization change? It's a breakthrough discovery advancing the knowledge of organization development.

### **How do we know the OES is valid and reliable?**

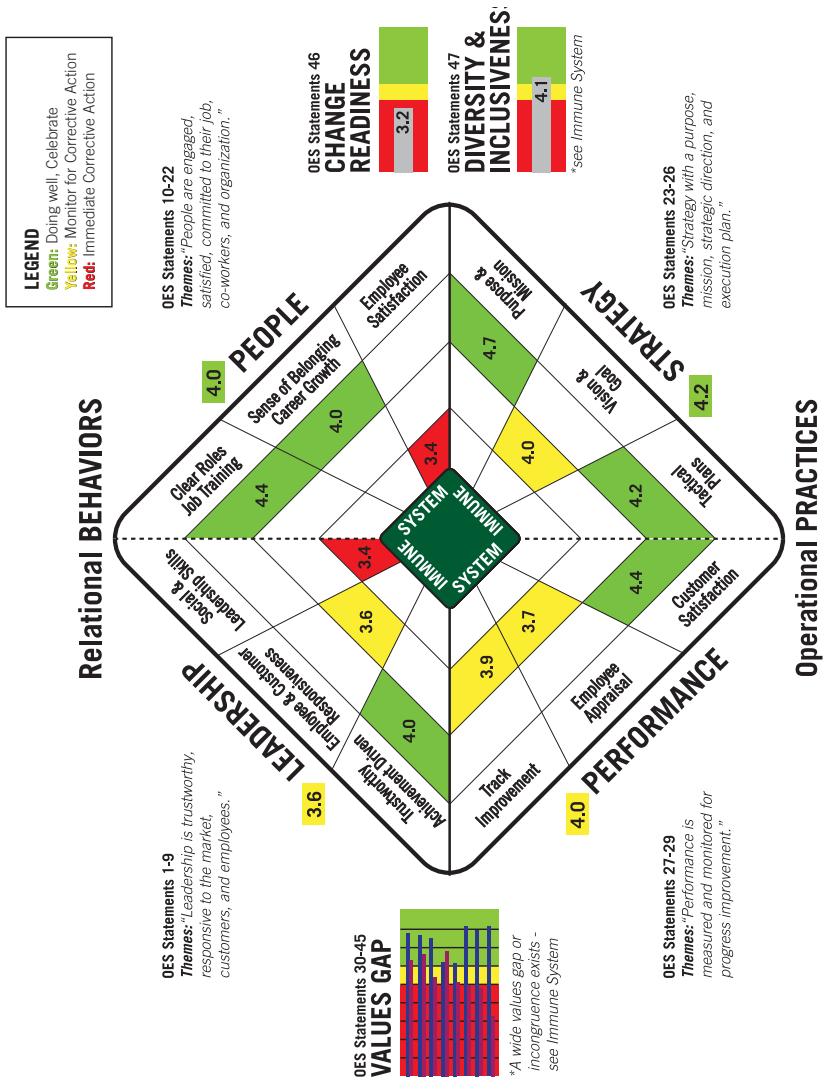
The credibility of the OES was scrupulously tested for validity and reliability by the University of Oklahoma's Educational Training, Evaluation, Assessment, and Measurement department.

Using principal component analysis with orthogonal (varimax) rotation with Kaiser normalization, analysts tested forty-six items for construct validity. Reliability was assessed using Guttman split-half reliability and Cronbach's alpha coefficients (see Appendix 1).

Simply stated, statistical analysts found the OES to be valid. The statements measure what they are intended to measure, they do so reliably and consistently.

Not only has the OES proven to be valid and reliable by statistics but also by results from actual client cases. OES clients include large government agencies, Fortune 100 companies, departments and colleges within universities, and entrepreneurial start-ups. For more than 20 years, OES findings have been helping these organizations stay afloat and sail for success.





**Illustration 2. OES Quadrangle Chart Showing Traits and Functions**  
 Quadrangle Chart depicting segments assessed by the OES. They are organization traits (Relational Behaviors, Operational Practices, Immune System), as well as the OES' seven functions (Leadership, People, Strategy, Performance, Values Gap, Change Readiness, Diversity & Inclusiveness).

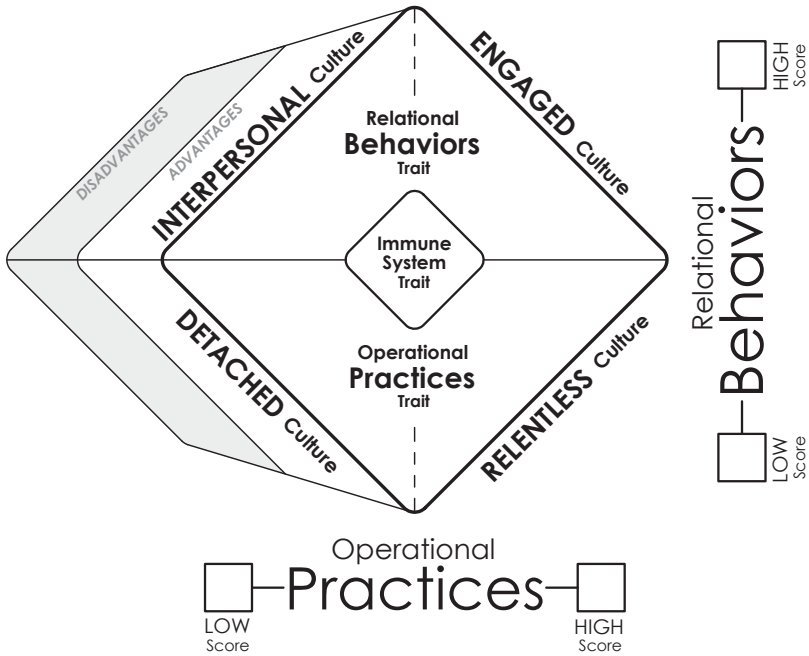


Figure 2. OES Model illustrates the trilogy of culture traits: (1) Relational Behaviors and (2) Operational Practices, each with its high-low score range; (3) Immune System, whose high-low score range measures an organization's resilience level of Behaviors and Practices (see Chapter 3, Table 2).

## Chapter 1

# The OES Model

**A**ll organization cultures are composed of three traits: **Relational Behaviors, Operational Practices,** and **Immune System**. It is these traits the Organizational Effectiveness Survey<sup>SM</sup> (OES) targets (Figure 2). These traits manifest in one of four dominant culture types: Interpersonal, Relentless, Detached, and Engaged.

The Relational Behaviors trait forms the vertical axis. The Operational Practices trait fills out the horizontal axis. Both are measured from low to high. It is the scores of these two traits that numerically identify an organization's culture type. Every organization is dominated by one of four culture types: (1) Interpersonal (2) Relentless, (3) Detached, and (4) Engaged Culture. (See Figure 2 and Chapters 5-8.) The Immune System's range of scores reveals the resilience level of Relational Behaviors and Operational Practices. (See Chapter 3, Table 2.)

Table 1 shows the range of OES scores used to evaluate the Relational Behaviors and Operational Practices. In the Low Zone, scores range from 1.0 to 3.5 (*dark gray*); in the Medium

**Table 1. OES Range of Scores Possible**

<b>LOW</b> DISAGREE	<b>MEDIUM</b> SOMEWHAT	<b>HIGH</b> AGREE
1.0 to 3.5	3.6 to 4.0	4.1 to 6.0
CORRECTIVE ACTION	MONITOR	CELEBRATE

Zone, 3.6 to 4.0 (*light gray*); and in the High Zone, 4.1 to 6.0 (*lightest gray*). For example: 3.4 is a Low Zone score.

However, high scores in Relational Behaviors and Operational Practices fail to reveal any underlying toxic force posing a threat to the organization's culture. Thus, the third trait—the Immune System—must be examined in detail.

The cells composing the Immune System are the people in the various subcultures that make up the organization's dominant culture. Examples of such cells are people embodied in location sites, divisions, departments, teams, positions. Each of these subculture types may exhibit different Relational Behaviors and Operational Practices from the dominant culture. However, no matter how different Relational Behaviors and Operational Practices are, each one shares a common thread with the other. They are all linked and collectively include the Immune System.

Great care must go toward avoiding the notion that the Immune System (people of the organization) prevents, monitors, or does any other kind of willful preemptive act. All it does is exist—people going about the business of living and doing their job. They are not solely concerned about preventing attacks on their organization's culture. They just are. They exist with the capability to detect, analyze, and voluntarily react to each and

every kind of stimulus that comes their way. For example: "No more paid vacations" is the news (stimulus [threat]). Employees hearing this news are angry and disappointed (thought). They decide to strike back by slowing their productivity (voluntary reaction).

It is the people's scored answers (reactions) to the numerically rated statements that are measured with the OES. The results indicate whether or not Relational Behaviors and/or Operational Practices have been affected by a change that is threatening the organization's culture.

### **Functions of the Organization Immune System**

The following three functions make up the Immune System:

- *Values Gap*. Reports on the congruence (narrow gap scores) or the incongruence (wide or inverse gap scores) between desired values (what the people expect) and the current values (what the people are actually experiencing).

Within the Values Gap, eight values are measured to show the difference between desired expectations and actual current experiences.

The Values Gap components measured are:

- » Efficiency (proving competent and capable of producing required results)
- » Excellence (exhibiting commitment to quality; a willingness to strive to exceed expectations)
- » Performance—No Excuses (delivering what is promised)

- » Tenacity (working long and hard to achieve results)
  - » High Energy (performing tasks with vigor and energy)
  - » Integrity (exhibiting trustworthiness and honesty)
  - » Respect (expressing courtesy and sympathy toward others)
  - » Employee Focus (recognizing people as the most valuable asset)
- *Change Readiness*. Produces a low, moderate, or high prognosis score about the willingness of leaders to take action on the OES results. Thus, the Change Readiness component to be measured is:
    - » Take Action
  - *Diversity and Inclusiveness (D&I)*. Provides a low, moderate, or high score indicating the level of diversity and inclusiveness in the work environment. The D&I's six components are linked to sixteen behavior and practice competencies (see Chapter 4, Table 4).

A change in an Immune System score that deviates from its normal scoring range indicates the organization's culture is infected with a toxic invader.

An infectious attack can happen in the shadows before it noticeably weakens overall performance. But the shadows can't hide a toxin because the Immune System provides a measurable way to spotlight the slightest threat (abnormal change).

The symptom of a toxin is change, and it can appear in many

forms. Examples are: trust turns to distrust; loyalty morphs into passive resistance; valued employees lose their will to be productive and become frustrated, throw up their hands, and walk out the door.

This was the case for a manufacturing company in 2014:

Team-member turnover was increasing while customer satisfaction and retention were decreasing. The company's CEO couldn't put his finger on the source of the problems. Seeking a solution, he called for an OES assessment.

During an OES debriefing session, the CEO shared his thoughts. His company was known for its relentless business strategies, he said. The company was intensely focused on hitting operational and financial goals. A zealous drive to get results created a real fear in people who were making errors and not hitting monthly targets. He admitted that these ambitious and tenacious ways were creating a punitive and unfriendly work environment and were putting his company at risk.

The pivotal moment came, he said, when his leadership team, along with all employees, took the OES. They discovered their organization had an Immune System, and the Immune System results showed that their organization was under siege and at risk.

His company had fallen prey to deadly internal

viruses. They were causing an unwillingness to change within the leadership ranks. They were destroying empathy, integrity, respect, and leaders' awareness of employee needs. They were slowly eroding and weakening the workforce's commitment to the organization. Consequently, productivity in several of the locations was dangerously below expectations.

'No wonder our turnover was high, with valued people leaving the company,' the CEO remarked.

The CEO's astonished reaction to the OES findings is typical of leaders who pay little attention to the status of their organization's culture, especially the Relational Behaviors side. Astute leaders periodically use the OES to check their organization's Immune System. Any abnormal (low) score is a clear sign of a toxic attack. Leaders are quick to nip off the toxin before it can do fatal damage, thereby keeping their organization's culture healthy, effective, and resilient—leading to success. Are Relational Behaviors, Operational Practices, and the Immune System independent of each other? Can an organization operate with either this one or that one or only two but not all three?

The answer is *no*. It's not the tyranny of *either/or*; it's the unity of *and*. All three traits work together like interlocking gears. The results from the interplay of these traits are what the OES analyzes.

With each organization trait come advantages and disadvantages.



## **Advantages and Disadvantages of the Three Organization Traits**

### *Advantages of Relational Behaviors*

The functions making up Relational Behaviors are based on *caring*—how leaders manage, develop, and motivate themselves and other people.

Healthy Relational Behaviors promote high trust in leaders. These behaviors create an environment that motivates people to go above and beyond what they must do to best serve their co-workers, the organization, and external customers. It's an environment set up for success.

### *Disadvantages of Relational Behaviors*

Promoting a workplace where relationships are highly valued, expected, and encouraged has a downside. The push for open, honest communication can suppress healthy conflict, competition, and accountability among team members. People may be reluctant to share their disagreements or their criticisms of a co-worker's ideas. Reluctance to speak up squelches passionate debates about organization and/or department goals and best strategies to get the work done.

If that's not enough, high Relational Behaviors within an organization can lead to like-minded people forming cliques. If these informal groups harbor passive-aggressive tendencies, they can undermine the organization's process of making decisions and executing strategies.

Following is a case in point.

This particular company specializes in training and

development. An OES assessment showed that the company's dominant trait was in Relational Behaviors; the heart of its culture was that of a caring servant. On the surface, the company's culture appeared to be healthy, effective, and resilient. However, Immune System scores revealed a slight Values Gap between desired scores and actual current scores in Efficiency. Employees believed the firm was not as competent in and capable of producing required results as it could be.

In addition, an inverse values relationship existed. The desired scores were less than the actual current scores in Tenacity. Simply put, employees were working longer and harder than normal to achieve the same results.

Efforts to keep up with the firm's rapid growth in sales and revenues were ineffective—so much so that the morale of both leaders and staff was low.

Yet the company was still hitting sales targets and winning the game. But winning at what cost? The employees were exhausted. They didn't have the capacity or the business software and processes to keep pace with the ever-increasing sales goals. They asked for the resources needed to do their job. Their requests went unanswered.

The gap separating healthy, open communication between team members and managers kept widening. The culture was shifting from a highly functional team—*one for all and all for one*—to a nonfunctional team—*ask not what you can do for your organization, ask what you can do for yourself*.

Over time, high morale and the open sharing of information, as well as group consensus and camaraderie, shifted to low morale and closed secretive conversations. A highly

dysfunctional, if not toxic, practice was brewing between *the haves* (management) and *the have-nots* (team members), the *us* versus *them*. The leaders had become the enemy. Behind the scenes, people formed informal cliques to oppose the enemy (management).

This animosity could have been avoided by balancing the organization's Operational Practices with its already strong Relational Behaviors. But the organization's leaders resisted taking corrective action. The end result was several key people leaving the organization.

### *Advantages of Operational Practices*

The functions making up Operational Practices are focused less on caring for colleagues and more on getting results, doing what it takes to achieve their organization's mission. The functions are based on a clear understanding of the mission statement, future vision, strategic goals, and action plans. These functions involve monitoring progress and continually improving performance results. They apply to people working with shared interests and values to accomplish the mission, whether or not the people like and care for one another.

Examples of people engaged in high Operational Practices are police officers tracking down criminals; firefighters battling flames; an emergency-room team rendering medical treatment. Individuals in these pursuits may not care for each other; they may even dislike each other. But when on the job—making decisions and taking action—they depend on and work with each other. They function like a highly tuned engine, hitting on all cylinders to catch the bad actor, put out fires, save lives.

Strong Tenacity drives the strategy of Operational Practices. All eyes are focused on achieving the defined goal. No idle activity. No small talk in meetings. No excuses. Underperformers are dispensable—one day they're here, the next day they're gone.

Operational Practices can sound cold, cruel, and even ruthless. However, in the workplace they can be efficient and effective in getting the job done. They can satisfy customers and shareholders. After all, consumers expect an organization to deliver the success it promises.

### *Disadvantages of Operational Practices*

Increased levels of distress and anxiety can come from a relentless focus to achieve the mission. The workplace can turn brutal, ruthless, and even mercenary. Executing a cold, heartless zero-sum game—*we win, you lose*—can break down communication and teamwork, thus stifling performance.

The game becomes even more relentless if an intensely result-driven organization is losing market share and the competitive advantage. To win, the organization will do whatever it takes to neutralize or crush its competition.

For people who want to work in a fiercely competitive culture, a relentless environment is a win-win for them. However, individuals who are unfit for such a workplace will eventually leave, if they are not let go first.

### *Advantages of the Immune System*

The Immune System findings give organization leaders a heads-up about any toxic virus silently at work in their

otherwise seemingly healthy organization.

### *Disadvantages of the Immune System*

Toxic Relational Behaviors and Operational Practices can leave the organization open to internal and external attacks. These assaults can sink high performance levels and business outcomes.

Responses to these assaults can lead to a major disadvantage. For example, an organization leader sees a new idea as a threat; thus, he or she moves to reject it because it is too different and hard to understand or because it threatens the status quo (Birkinshaw & Ridderstråle, 1999).

From Apple Computer comes an example of teams of people attacking the very host they were part of.

‘Those of us who were managers often failed to insist that our teams work together,’ said Michael Mace, director of marketing at Apple from 1987 to 1997. ‘Instead of integrating them [the teams] to cooperate toward a goal, we settled into walled fortresses, protecting our projects and budgets from attack by others.

Ideas and initiatives from the outside were rejected as vigorously as your body's immune system rejects a germ. Many of these attacks came from a perceived threat that the new idea could bring to the sales of an existing product’ (Bangeman, 2003).

Another situation that can impact the organization's

Immune System score is the lack of a safe environment. This condition can create a negative effect known as *submit and resent*.

Unlike human white blood cells that attack a toxic invader, people (organization cells) often do just the opposite. They refuse to intervene when internal danger threatens their workplace. In fact, they are predisposed not to intervene (Ragain, 2015).

One reason for their reluctance is they don't feel safe about voicing an opinion or making a critical remark about a co-worker's ideas. They fear retaliation—defensive body language, possible verbal attacks, a lawsuit.

Thus, instead of speaking up, people shut up. They submit and resent. They *submit* to the threat, but in their heart they *resent* being shut down, not heard, not valued.

They express their seething in negative ways. They quash brainstorming of ideas, stifle competitive debates, form passive-aggressive gripe groups. They do whatever they can to undermine the organization's process of making decisions and executing strategies. Their resentment spreads throughout the organization; it causes people to become detached from the organization, their co-workers, and their job. (For more about conflict when a merger brings together two companies with opposite dominant traits, see this chapter's Field Perspective.)

In summary, the fiber of organization culture is the trilogy of traits—Relational Behaviors, Operational Practices, and Immune System. No other force driving an organization's success is as powerful as culture.

“Using culture to lead is among the few sources of

sustainable competitive advantages left to organizations today. Successful leaders will. . . use it as a fundamental management tool,” says Harvard Professor Boris Groysberg (2018).

The lesson is clear: To manage culture, you must first understand it. Thus, you must ask yourself: What exactly is organization culture?

## Field Perspective

*Patrick J. Rainey, MBA,  
Certified Executive Coach (CEC)  
and Videographer and Video Editor*

*Resentment bleeds away vital organizational energy which could be better spent in other areas. Take action on it now before it becomes a thorn in your side.*

—Lizzie Benton, culture specialist.

## Submit and Resent

Behaviors threatening organization health come in many guises. Among the hardest to detect is a silent animus known as *submit and resent*. This was the emotion playing out in a company that brought me aboard as their executive coach and management consultant.

This company was headquartered in the central U.S. Its dominant organization trait was healthy Relational Behaviors. Growth by acquisition was a major part of its business strategy.

Acting on its growth strategy, the company was acquiring smaller organizations with some noteworthy success. That is, until they purchased a geographically distant company with a dominant trait of effective Operational Practices.

The process followed a standard post-acquisition script. Leaders set up departmental meetings to iron out operating procedures, eliminate duplicity in operations, assess personnel, and align strategic and operating visions. All the efforts to make the acquisition seamless were carried out by people of good



intentions. However, the leaders of the acquiring organization failed to conduct a cultural assessment of the company they were buying. They seemed to think their caring, soft-skilled Relational Behaviors could blend seamlessly with the company they were taking over, a company steeped in results-driven Operational Practices. They seemed to think they could fit a round peg in a square hole.

Repeated attempts to align their softer relational ways of doing business with the hard-nose operations of the acquired company only made matters worse. The friction from this mismatch caused a clash of dominant organization traits hard enough that it impacted both work environments. Within months, key employees were at each other's throats. The chaos stemmed directly from the behavior of the hard results-driven CEO of the acquired company. He outwardly agreed to *submit* to the softer Relational Behaviors of the acquiring company's CEO, but inwardly, he *resisted* it.

He decided to fight by using passive-aggressive tactics. He quietly ignored the requests for operational and relational alignment. Instead, he stuck to his own operating plans. After all, he had been very successful in pre-acquisition. He had driven and was continuing to drive success by taking advantage of some cost savings that came with shifting some overhead to his new parent company. He was very proud of his success—previous and ongoing. His stubborn resistance to change spilled over and affected employees who sided with him.

When I came aboard as the acquiring company's consultant, the heat from this friction was nearing a flash point. It was detracting from the organization's mission, sapping creative

energy, and fostering cynicism and animus. This kind of out-of-sorts atmosphere infects every fiber of an organization's health, effectiveness, and resilience. Ultimately, it poisons the organization and drags the entire entity downward.

As an outsider with an objective view of the conflict, I could see one clear solution. It was futile for the acquiring leaders to try to force a round peg into a square hole. I said as much, suggesting they let the acquired CEO entrepreneur run the company the way he wanted, the way he was running it before the acquisition.

In the end, that's what they did. Consequently, the overall organization's health, effectiveness, and resilience rolled back onto an even keel. Success continued on a smooth course for the CEO of the acquisition, and overall profitability won the day.

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