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TINYcon 2018

SCALING UP CULTURE THROUGH RAPID GROWTH

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“ Culture eats strategy for breakfast. ”

PETER DRUCKER

CULTURE

Think about a time you had to make a big decision...

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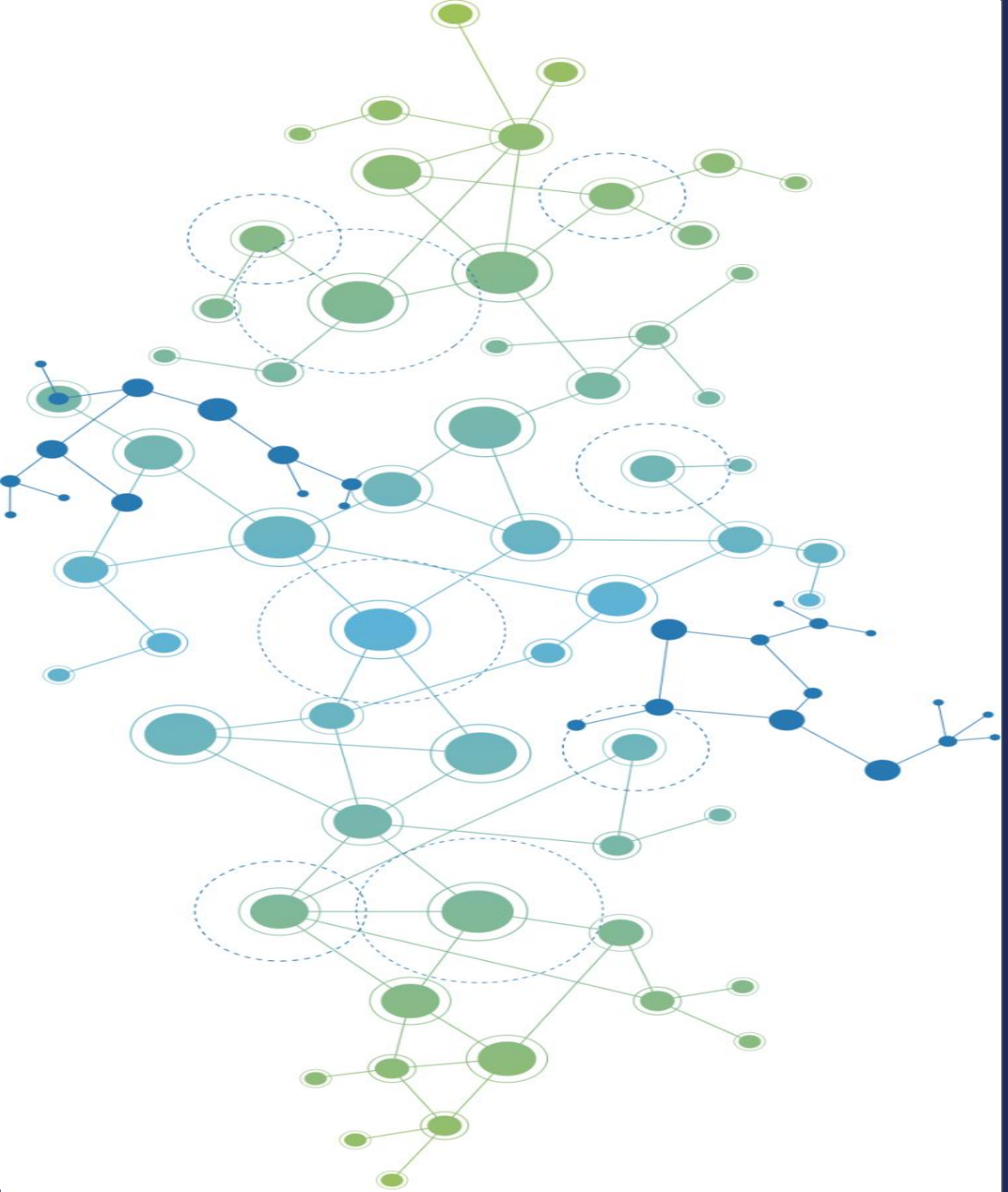
Culture is an evolving, shared mental model for how we make decisions, interact with each other, and deliver value to our customers

How would you define culture to a five year old?

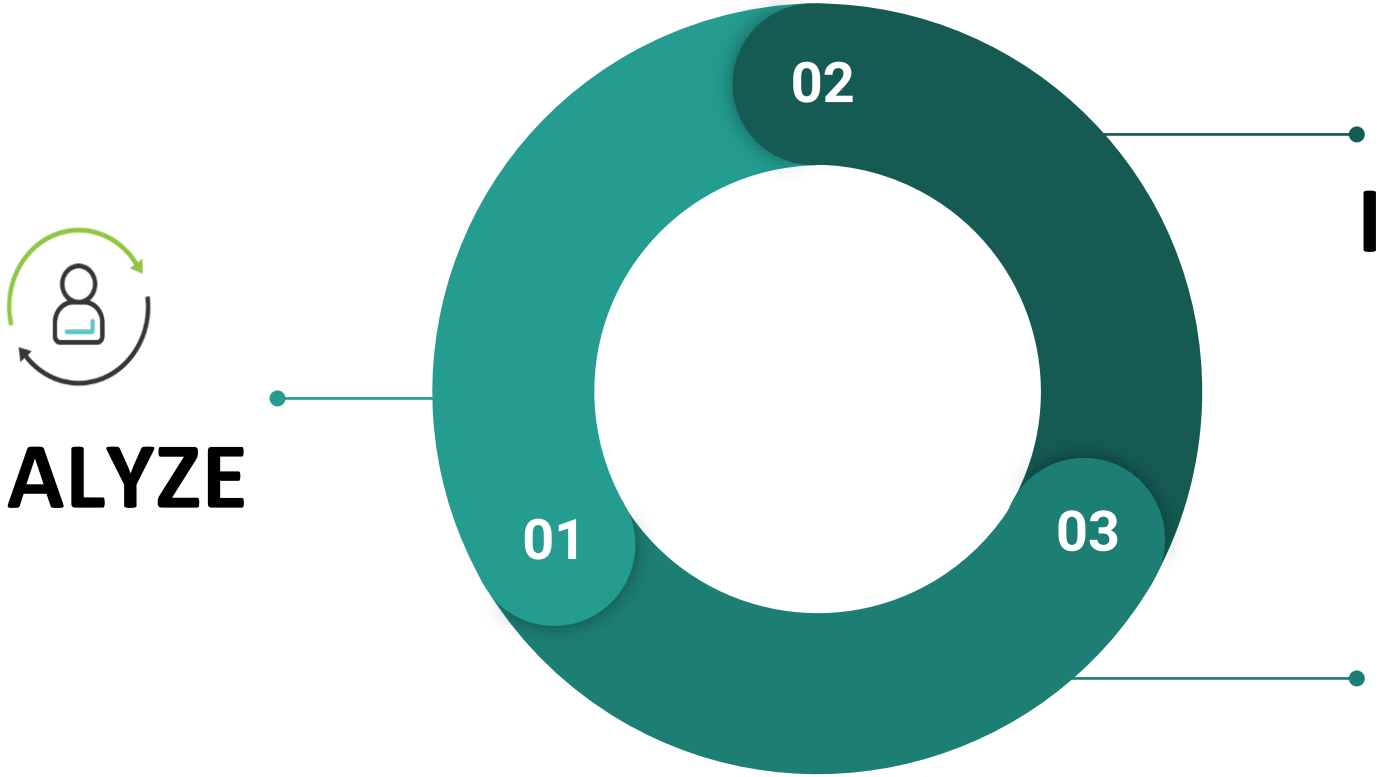


1 DEFINE IT

2 BUILD IT

3 LIVE IT

1. DEFINE IT



ANALYZE

INTERVIEW

TEST

Resource: Discovery Interview Tips

SECTION 1: Planning. So you've made the decision to talk to your customers, and now you need to decide how to use the time. Here are some tips for preparing:

- Know your goals: The more focused you are on what you want to get out of the interview, the more likely you are to walk away with focused learnings. Prioritize your hypothesis/assumptions ahead of time; this will help you decide who you want to talk to, and target your customer accordingly.
- Request Time: Never ask for more than 30 minutes. Sometimes the key points are covered in only 15 minutes and other times the person is still engaged/elaborating an hour later. Plan for 30 minutes; if the person is still interested and adding a lot of value, they'll make the time.
- Prepare Open-Ended Questions: Questions used for discovery should give your customer the space to step back and examine his/her experiences and the ways he/she is currently working with them. You're looking for them to describe their experiences, not just answer yes or no. Therefore, you want to use open-ended questions throughout the interview. In drafting your open-ended questions, it can be helpful to think about the first word as open-ended questions often begin with "what," "how," "who," "where," "when" or "tell me about..."
- Set Boundaries: Because your questions will be open-ended and not a true/false format, the conversation risks going in many directions. To get ahead of this, set-up some personal boundaries beforehand so when a customer gets totally off-topic, you can steer them back into a meaningful conversation that will help you in your discovery work.
- Format: Interviews are more effective when done one-on-one to give the customer the freedom to independently speak their mind without caution, distraction, or risk of "group think." That said, it may be helpful to have a note-taker in the room if it doesn't disrupt the experience. Personally, I prefer to do one-on-one interviews because I think people loosen up and thus open up a bit more.

SECTION 2: Interviewing. Remember, the interview time is not about you or your point of view. It's about the customer. All you have to do is ask open-ended questions, listen, and be authentically curious. Here's a very loose format to consider:

- Start with an open-ended question to capture the customer behavior and mindset. If you're working to validate a hypothesis, take the problem you have in mind and abstract it by a level in your first question. The point is to discover what experiences they think of on their own, and how they think about the culture in general. For example, "What are the words you use to describe this place?" "What's working?" "What's not working?"
- Listen, don't talk. Try to shut up as much as possible, and keep your questions short and unbiased. Don't rush to fill the silence when the customer pauses because they might be thinking or have more to say. As an exercise, shut up for 60 seconds. It feels awkward, I know, but it also encourages the customer to go beyond the short answer and expand into detail which will often be the source of rich insight. (It's worth noting that you need to strike a balance on silence. If you stay too quiet, some customers might get uncomfortable and think they aren't adding value / boring you. Make gestures of encouragement to overcome this risk such as nods, "I see," or "interesting." Just be cautious to not influence the customer in the direction you're hoping they will go. Reminder: let go of your own POV. 😊)
- Listen for energetic spikes to dive into. Pay attention to non-verbals and/or emotion in the customer voice (ie: excitement, disappointment, frustration) and drill down to learn more. Drill down using open-ended questions, asking why, how often, who, and/or where questions. It may take 2-3 follow-ups before you reach interesting detail so be persistent. If the person starts complaining within their story, listen (and encourage it!). People are more specific with complaints than praise, and specificity is where you learn.
- Try repeating back what the person said to confirm understanding, and elicit more insight. You can occasionally get one of two interesting results through this tactic. One, they may correct you because you've misinterpreted what they said. Two, by hearing their own thoughts, they may actually realize that their true opinion is slightly different and they will give you a second, more sophisticated answer. Paraphrasing in this way can happen throughout the interview, not just toward the end. You can start this off by saying, "So what I understand you're saying is....is that right?" or "It sounds like x is very important to you, while y is not. How accurate is that?"
- Be thankful: At the end of the interview, thank them for their time and reinforce one concrete point that you learned.

SECTION 3: Post Interview Habits. The details behind a conversation fade fast, so write up your notes and color commentary as soon as you can. (NOTE: I typically only note keywords, direct quotes, and observations during interviews to make the customer feel they are engaged in a natural conversation and less of a formal interview. I do not type notes in real-time because it is distracts me from deeply listening; instead, I schedule time for myself after the interview to write up notes.) Discovery interviews will not give you statistically significant data, but they will give insight based on patterns. To more objectively identify patterns among customers and minimize personal bias, I track specific highlights/lowlights referenced per interview after writing up my notes and save it in a google sheet / excel record. As I complete each interview, I begin to see patterns more clearly because of the quantitative tracker.

REMINDER: When engaging in discovery interviews, avoid leading the customer in the direction you want them to go; avoid being attached to your own ideas/assumptions; avoid talking too much, asking yes/no questions, pitching, and sticking to the "script". All you have to do is ask open-ended questions, listen attentively, and be authentically curious about the customer perspective. The result will be new insight which you can in turn use to define your culture and/or improve your current programs.

Write down an action step: what is the first thing you'll do to better define your company's culture?

2. BUILD IT

Resource: Tips for writing company values

- **Keep the list memorable.** Use language that resonates with the culture and can effortlessly flow off the lips in conversation, whether in the boardroom or the boiler room.
- **Make them tangible.** Enable new hires, candidates, and customers to immediately grasp your company culture and clearly see what you care about.
- **Turn them into operation principles.** If you want people to truly live the values, make them actionable rather than generalized concepts “What does this look like in everyday behaviors?” and then spell that out.
- **Introduce tension**. Include tension between values to guide more deliberate decision-making.
- **Seek employee feedback and be open to iterating.** Find out what people think about the values - their perspective on how they align with the current culture (as well as how the culture needs to change), the specific language used, and the stickiness of each.

Write down an action step:

Who on your leadership team is most likely to be a culture champion?

How can you engage them?

3. LIVE IT | At All Levels

Board
CEO
Co-Founders

Prioritize | Monitor | Communicate

+

Managers

Anchor | Train | Measure

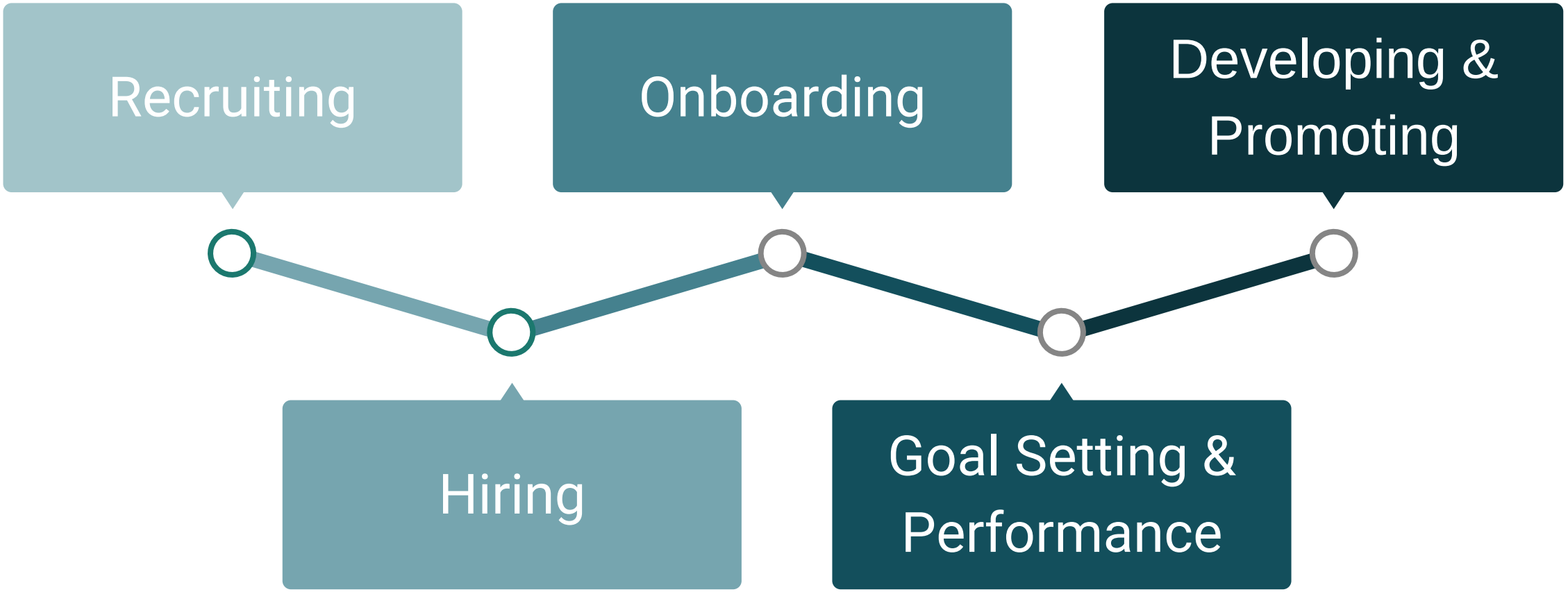
+

Individuals

Engage | Reinforce | Celebrate

How will YOU exert influence on others?

3. LIVE IT | At Every Stage



Write down an action step:

What is the most impactful way to start anchoring your culture across levels?

It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the **most** intelligent; it is the one **most adaptable to change**."
-Darwin

THANK YOU

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APPENDIX
AMPERITY VALUES

CONFIDENTIAL 2018

amperity

Build for durability.

Make something better today.

Play for each other.

Make our customers successful

Create real value that empowers customers to move their careers and businesses forward. Be curious and creative in your effort to understand and empathize with customers. Identify the biggest opportunities, the most egregious obstacles, and carve out alternative paths to success.

Think 10x

Develop your teams, products, and customer relationships for long-term scale. Keep your eye towards building high quality systems and realizing outsized outcomes. For every problem, spend time on the long-term solution even if you have to put a quick fix in place in the short term.

Earn the right

Recognize where we are and what it will take to win. Success comes from a great blend of humility, ambition, discipline, and patience. Tackle the problems within reach first and deliver at a high standard. Be in the here and now - and crush it - before dreaming of what could be.

BUILD FOR DURABILITY.

Try it

Experiment, learn from mistakes, and iterate quickly. Invest in unproven ideas, create new opportunities, and do something that's never been done before in order to make things better. Whatever you start, take it over the line and always finish.

Act with urgency

Speed matters. Have a real sense of urgency - a fire in the belly - to deliver meaningful results. Solve the right problem by addressing the root cause, not just symptoms, and iterate to success quickly. Know a good plan executed now is better than a perfect plan next week. We're not here for *the* coffee.

Step up and fill the gaps

Opportunities are everywhere - so are challenges. It might not be your domain, but if you discover an opportunity, own it or mobilize the team to tap into it. Face challenges with optimism, embrace the unknown, and rise to the occasion - we’re all in this together.

MAKE SOMETHING BETTER, TODAY.

Bring yourself

Come as you are without feeling pressure from the company to conform to any specific mold. Work in ways that honors involvement, respect, collaboration and connection—where the richness of ideas, backgrounds, and perspectives are cultivated to create business impact.

Join the tribe

Build, commit to, and pursue shared goals. Celebrate success. When you see others struggling, take proactive steps to help them. Check egos at the door, and hold your team members to do the same.

Act with empathy

Ask questions with sincerity, be curious about others' perspectives, and listen with purpose. Tell the truth and seek the truth, and do both with empathy. Treat others respectfully and be mindful of how you impact the people around you.

Learn together

Approach each day with a commitment to developing yourself and others. Be curious, share ideas, and leverage the collective brainpower. Seek and offer mentorship and opportunities to grow - inspiration can come from the team and the broader community.

PLAY FOR EACH OTHER.