

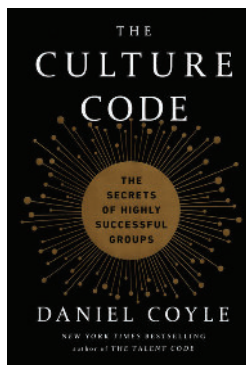


THE CULTURE CODE

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THE BOOK



The Culture Code

By Daniel Coyle



INTRODUCTION

Why do some teams succeed while others repeatedly fall flat?

This is the question that Daniel Coyle, the New York Times bestselling author of *The Talent Code*, set out to answer with *The Culture Code*. Spending his time with some of the most successful teams on the planet, including Pixar, the San Antonio Spurs and the Navy SEALs, Coyle dug deep into what exactly makes a team hum.

With in-depth examinations of how different highly successful teams work, Coyle breaks down what it means to collaborate successfully and what sets one group apart from others. Coyle also combines science and practical advice to make *The Culture Code* a handbook for creating an effective team at a workplace or school.

Let Coyle guide you through the ins and outs of working effectively in a group and teach you how to make all your teamwork far more successful and productive. *The Culture Code* is a must-read for anyone who works in or with a group.



5 BEST QUOTES

“One misconception about highly successful cultures is that they are happy, lighthearted places. This is mostly not the case. They are energized and engaged, but at their core their members are oriented less around achieving happiness than around solving hard problems together. This task involves many moments of high-candor feedback, uncomfortable truth-telling, when they confront the gap between where the group is, and where it ought to be.”

“While successful culture can look and feel like magic, the truth is that it’s not. Culture is a set of living relationships working toward a shared goal. It’s not something you are. It’s something you do.”

“Building purpose in a creative group is not about generating a brilliant moment of breakthrough but rather about building systems that can churn through lots of ideas in order to help unearth the right choices.

“Stories are not just stories; they are the best invention ever created for delivering mental models that drive behaviour.”

“When you enter highly successful cultures, the number of thank-yous you hear seems slightly over the top.”



9 BIG IDEAS

1. THE GOOD APPLES

In the Culture Code, Coyle outlines an Australian experiment where groups were given tasks to achieve. The twist was that one team member was a plant and did everything he could to steer the team astray. While most teams struggled because of this, a small number of teams still thrived. How is this so?

The successful teams all had one member that Coyle dubs the 'Good Apple'. This team member was supportive and encouraging and helped the team to stay positive and productive despite the efforts of the plant. In short, the good apple helped people feel safe.

Do you have a Good Apple in your class or staffroom? Take note and allow this person to help others.

2. BUILDING SAFETY

A feeling of safety is one of the keys to creating a successful and productive team. In a team where there is a constant fear of failure or criticism, creativity and innovation are smothered. Nobody on a team like this feels secure to take steps outside their box or to push boundaries.

Coyle describes a very different situation at the Google offices in their early days. The staff had a board where they shared their issues. One day, one team member saw a problem, took it home and solved it. The problem was not targeted at his department, and if he had not felt safe to step outside his box, he wouldn't have solved the problem. This particular technical problem just happened to be the last hurdle to Google hitting the big time and becoming the giant they are today.

3. LEARNING TO BUILD SAFETY

Coyle says, "Building safety isn't the kind of skill you can learn in a robotic, paint-by-numbers sort of way. It's a fluid, improvisational skill—sort of like learning to pass a soccer ball to a teammate during a game."

It is a skill that needs to be practised and constantly applied. You need to always think about whether you are making people safe and how you can ensure they are comfortable and valued. It all comes down to small, subtle signals and moments and keying into the needs of your team.

This can be applied in a classroom; when students feel safe they are more active and able to support their own learning through curiosity and experimentation.

**9 BIG IDEAS****4. TELL ME WHAT YOU WANT, AND I'LL HELP YOU**

After a catastrophic engine failure on United Airlines flight 232, the pilot and his co-pilot were struggling to control the plane. Denny Fitch, a professional who specialised in training pilots, was on the plane. He rushed to the cockpit and said, "Tell me what I can do, and I'll help."

The beauty of this phrase is that Fitch, who was probably the most highly qualified to take over, did not do so. Instead, he signalled with what he said that he was not in charge but was there to help. In this way, the three men worked cooperatively and, ultimately, landed the plane in the best way possible, preventing a greater loss of lives.

5. SHARE VULNERABILITY

In the above example, Denny Fitch was not afraid to be vulnerable. Sharing vulnerability is a way to form bonds and strengthen working relationships.

When you signal your own vulnerability, it often triggers others to do the same. Coyle explains it like this:

- Person A sends a signal of vulnerability
- Person B detects this signal
- Person B responds by signalling their own vulnerability
- Person A detects this signal
- A norm is established; closeness and trust increase

This is exactly what Fitch did when he signalled his own vulnerability to the pilot and co-pilot of United Airlines Flight 232. By doing so, they immediately knew not only that they could trust him, but that they could be vulnerable in front of him as well. This led to a smooth level of natural cooperation that saved over 100 lives.

6. BUILDING HABITS OF VULNERABILITY

One of the best methods Coyle presents in *The Culture Code* for sharing vulnerability is the debrief.

For example, the US Navy SEALs call theirs the After-Action Review (ARR). This is a judgement-free session of discussing everything that happened on the mission in minute detail and assessing what went well and what went not so well. In a session like this, a team is completely open and is able to practice candour so that problems can be addressed and it can be accepted that no one is infallible.

**9 BIG IDEAS****7. JOHNSON & JOHNSONS CREDO**

Johnson & Johnson has a company credo. It is three hundred and eleven words long and outlines, among other things, how their first responsibility is to doctors, nurses, and patients, to mothers and fathers and all others who use their products and services.

In the 1970s, it was questioned whether this credo was still of any use in the modern era. Then a number of Tylenol bottles were poisoned in about the worst PR disaster any company can face. Despite advice to the contrary, Johnson & Johnson followed their credo and withdrew Tylenol across the entire US. The result of this, along with their renewed focus on secure packaging, was a magnificent resurgence of Tylenol sales after an event that should have destroyed the product forever.

Johnson & Johnson had used their credo as a concrete purpose.

It's easy to create a simple credo for your class and to remind them of it when things get tough.

8. ESTABLISHING PURPOSE

Every team needs a reason to be. Johnson & Johnson has their credo, but any team can use a code or credo or mottos to motivate and derive their members.

It doesn't even have to be as explicit as a written code, although that helps. The way you communicate with your team and others around you can display how you expect them to behave as well.

Take the Portuguese police and their unique strategy of dealing with soccer hooligans during the 2004 European Cup. They cast aside visible riot gear and aggressive police officers and instead set up a liaison crew to talk to potential hooligans and be on their side. When the hooligans saw that there were no expectations of bad behaviour, bad behaviour dropped. The Portuguese police had changed the narrative, and the nation suffered no riots and minimal violence during the event as a result.

9. CREATING PURPOSE

The first thing to do is to understand what your team aims for. Once you truly understand this, you know everyone is heading in the same direction.

Mottos and catchphrases can help, but they should be repeated often. It may seem cheesy, but reiterating a purpose helps keep it fresh and vital in every team member.

Finally, focus on those specific bar-setting behaviours that keep your team moving in the right direction.

**3 ACTION STEPS****1. BUILD SAFETY**

The first step to creating a successful team culture at a workplace or school is to build safety.

When people feel safe to communicate their needs, make mistakes and put forward ideas, a far more creative and productive environment is created.

Let people know that they are valued and safe in your team and that their opinions matter.

2. SHARE VULNERABILITY

Team members and students respond well to leaders and teachers who show that they, too, are vulnerable. Let your team know you are human and fallible, and they will rise to the occasion.

Vulnerability doesn't have to mean sharing personal secrets; it can also be as simple as letting people know you are willing to listen.

3. ESTABLISH PURPOSE

All teams need a purpose to keep them looking in the same direction.

A purpose is not as simple as 'finish this project', though. It needs to be more impactful and frequently expressed in the form of a credo or code.

**1 KEY TAKEAWAY**

The key takeaway of The Culture Code is that culture is not something you are. It is something you do.

A successful culture may look like a work of magic, but it is actually a set of living relationships working towards a shared goal.

By putting in that thought and effort and understanding that teamwork is integral to success, you can create a high-functioning team in any work or school environment.



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Read the full book

The Culture Code

by Daniel Coyle

The three skills that turn a group of people into a real team.

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