



Elevated Leadership

The People & Culture Playbook

How do we understand our people? How do we support their growth? How do we build a strong culture together?



Building culture through connection.

Thank you for being here and for taking a moment to explore this space. If you believe that people matter and that strong cultures are built through care, curiosity, and connection, you belong here.

This document, *The People and Culture Playbook*, was created to help leaders and teams have more meaningful conversations. The kind of conversations that help people feel seen, understood, and supported. At its heart, this playbook is about slowing down long enough to truly understand one another, to learn what motivates people, and to create environments where individuals and teams can grow together.

Inside, you will find thoughtful questions and conversation prompts designed to open dialogue, build trust, and encourage reflection. These questions are not about having the perfect answer. They are about creating space for honesty, learning, and genuine connection, whether you are welcoming someone new, supporting ongoing growth, or simply checking in.

There is no right place to begin. Start wherever it feels natural. Select a few questions, listen with intention, and allow the conversation to unfold naturally. Often, the most meaningful moments come from being present rather than being prepared.

I hope that this playbook serves as a helpful companion as you build relationships, strengthen your culture, and lead with empathy and purpose.

Let's Dive In!
Mark



Introduction: Conversations That Build Culture



The most meaningful conversations, whether during hiring, onboarding, or ongoing 1:1s, are the ones that help people tell their stories. When leaders create space for authentic experiences, honest reflection, and personal insight, they learn who their people are, what drives them, and how best to support their success.

Thoughtful questions spark connection, trust, and growth. This playbook empowers leaders to create meaningful moments that shape every employee's journey on your team.

Inside, you will find practical questions and conversation prompts organized around core competencies that support meaningful growth and performance.

How Will I Know What To Ask?

Open Questions

Open questions encourage people to share real experiences, ideas, and reflections, giving you deeper insight into who they are and how they work. These questions prompt thoughtful analysis and help individuals reflect on what was meaningful, challenging, or impactful. Just as asking a child, "What was the best part of your day?" instead of "How was your day?" creates richer, more engaging conversations with team members and customers alike, so do open questions.

Closed Questions

Closed questions are simple, short-answer questions that typically prompt a yes-or-no response. They require minimal thought and are best used to ease into a conversation or clarify basic information. While not ideal for more profound insight, they help create a sense of comfort before moving into more meaningful questions.

Behavioral Competencies Behavioral competencies help leaders understand how people think, act, and contribute to the team. By recognizing the behaviors that reflect your values and expectations, you can better support each person's growth. Developing these competencies takes intention, consistency, and a genuine commitment to helping team members succeed.

Two

Flexibility & Punctuality

Flexibility

The quality of bending easily without breaking.

1. What is the most significant change you are driving on your current team?
2. Describe situations in which you had a variety of projects simultaneously.
3. How have you responded to your greatest disappointments?
4. How do you respond to change?
5. What happens when two priorities compete for your time?
6. How do you build strong relationships with people who think or work differently than you?

Punctuality

The fact or quality of being on time.

High performers rely on their past experiences when answering questions, which makes sense because it's how we talk about things that really happened to us, instead of using hypothetical.

1. How do you ensure you start your day prepared and ready?
2. How do you decide what to prioritize?
3. How do you adapt to changes?
4. What does showing up on time mean to you professionally?
5. Tell me about a time when you were accountable for a mistake you made, and what you learn about yourself.

Three

Empathy & Selflessness

“When you show deep empathy toward others, their defensive energy goes down, and positive energy replaces it.

That’s when you can get more creative in solving problems”

—Stephen Covey

Empathy

The ability to understand and share the feelings of another.

1. What kind of things inspire you?
2. What qualities do you rely on to grow in your career?
3. How do you react when someone comes to you for some help?
4. How do you take feedback?
5. How do you handle situations that trigger frustration?
6. How do you handle positive emotions?
7. Describe something you have learned from caring for or helping others?

Selflessness

Having little or no concern for oneself.

1. Who inspires you and why?
2. If you were starting a company tomorrow, what would be its top three values?
3. What skill or expertise do you feel like you’re still missing?
4. Can you teach me something, as if I’ve never heard of it before?
(It can be anything: A skill, a lesson or a puzzle.)
5. What do you do when someone comes to you with a problem?
6. What is your first step when someone asks you for help with a problem?

Four

Communication & Resourcefulness

“It is under the greatest adversity that there exists the greatest

potential for doing good, both for oneself and others.”

—Dalai Lama XIV

Communication

The exchange of thoughts, messages, or information, as by speech, signals, writing, or behavior.

1. How would you go about persuading someone to see things your way at work?
2. How have you handled working with someone you felt was not good at communicating?
3. Have you had an experience where you felt you hadn't communicated something effectively?
4. How do you show your co-workers the importance of communication in the workplace?
5. If communication is so critical to leadership, why isn't there enough communication in business today?
6. What steps do you take to establish a rapport with others?

“Make the most out of what you have.”

—Anonymous

Resourcefulness

Able to act effectively or imaginatively, especially in difficult situations.

1. When deciding how to organize your work, how do you assess what tasks need to be given priority?
2. Describe a time when you made your resources stretch beyond the point that you or others thought was realistic?
3. Tell me about a time when you went the extra mile when it would have been just as acceptable to perform the bare minimum? Why did you exert the effort? What was the outcome?
4. What steps do you take when there is an immediate decision to be made, but without having all the data available?
5. When was the last time that you tried a new idea to improve your performance?
6. How will you help your company and team, when the company faces some uncertain events?

Five

Feedback & Confidence

“When we make progress and get better at something, it is inherently motivating. In order for people to make progress, they have to get feedback and information on how they’re doing.”

—Daniel H. Pink

Feedback

The return of information about the result of a process or activity; evaluative response.

1. What are the characteristics exhibited by the best boss you have ever had —or wish that you have had?
2. Describe what you believe are the most effective roles that a good manager plays in his or her relationship with reporting staff members.
3. What is the single most important factor that must be present in your work environment for you to be successfully and happily employed? Now that you have answered that question, what were two others that you debated about responding before you gave the response that you chose?
4. When you work with a team, describe the role that you are most likely to play on the team.
5. What is the Best / Worst Feedback You’ve Received? Did you agree with it?

Confidence

A belief or conviction that an outcome will be favorable.

1. How do you identify challenges and opportunities on the job?
2. How would you define self-confidence?
3. Tell me about a situation or situations that might demonstrate your confidence to do this job?
4. How do you balance confidence with humility??
5. How confident are you that you can successfully perform the duties of this position and why?
6. What skills come naturally to you, and which ones are you currently developing?

“When we make progress and get better at something, it is inherently motivating. In order for people to make progress, they have to get feedback and information on how they’re doing.”

—Daniel H. Pink

Six

Creativity & Authenticity

“You can’t connect the dots looking forward; you can only connect them looking backwards

—Steve Jobs

Creativity

The return of information about the result of a process or activity; evaluative response.

1. What is your most significant accomplishment?
2. If you could invite 3-dinner guests who would they be?
3. Tell me about a time when you tried to solve a problem with a totally different approach than is normally used. What was the result?
4. What is the most creative or innovative project you have worked on?
5. What is your superpower?
6. What is one thing you wished others knew about you, but don't?

Authenticity

The quality or condition of being authentic, trustworthy, or genuine.

1. What interests you most about this job?
2. What sort of work environment brings out the best in you?
3. What could your last manager / teacher / coach have done better?
4. What do you think is the biggest issue in our field today?
5. What's a new skill you have developed this year?
6. What are the top three factors you would attribute to your success?

Seven

Versatility and Energy

With a versatile player, there's no spot on the court you can't pass him the ball. You can do anything

-Kevin Durant

Versatility

Capable of doing many things competently.

1. What would you say is the overall purpose of the job?
2. What growth or progress do you want to see in the next three months?
3. What two or three things would be most important to you in your ideal job, and why?
4. Tell me something you are passionate about.
5. How do you show your team they can rely on you??
6. How do you overcome the hurdles?
7. How do you stay effective when your tasks or priorities shift?

Energy

The ability to act, lead others, or effect things forcefully.

1. At times your work load may feel unmanageable. Describe a time when you recognized that you were unable to meet multiple deadlines. What did you do about it?
2. When you have extra time available in your life, describe ways you found to use your time wisely?
3. What does having a positive attitude mean to you??
4. Why do you think that you can handle this position or promotion?
5. What are the top three factors you would attribute to your success?
6. What factors give you the most energy in your work?

“I like to think of ideas as potential energy. They’re really wonderful, but nothing will happen until we risk putting them into action.”

—Mae Jemison