

Case Study: Culture Change Diagnosis  
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**Context:**

A large energy company with an award-winning sustainability approach were experiencing a noticeable slowing down of success in achieving their sustainability targets.

When completion of actions and goals were dependent on employees across the business in different business units, success was limited and sporadic. Sustainability was not part of the culture of the organisation. Recognising the need for the entire business to 'own' sustainability, their suspicion was that if sustainability was not embedded into the organisational culture, then operational goals would continue to not be achieved.

**What the client needed:**

The client had a robust and business-relevant sustainability approach and strategy. But the business had evolved from mergers and reshuffling of business units with a mix of different employee populations working in silos and with very different loyalties, motivations and ways of working. Cascading sustainability across the business was proving hard because of the (often perceived) differences between business unit processes and status, leadership, identity, loyalties, and demographics.

The client needed to understand what specifically these differences – and similarities were – and how they were barriers or enablers to further driving the sustainability strategy and achieving operational goals. They also needed suggested solutions that could be realistically implemented by the sustainability team, in cooperation with the HR team.

**Our approach:**

Embedding sustainability into organisational culture was a research programme Nadine had developed whilst at Cranfield University. She had researched both the literature and best practice case studies and had developed and tested a diagnostic model. This model was used for the client to first identify the 'As is' state of the organisational culture, and then identify the resulting enablers and barriers for the sustainability team's objectives. This involved:

1. A culture audit using: site audits; interviews; existing data such as previous culture analyses, employee engagement surveys and exit interview insights; trend analysis using internal comms/messaging/strategy/codes/processes and policies as data input; stakeholder feedback.
2. Benchmarking and comparisons of similar organisations and their approach to embedding sustainability and success levers.
3. Workshops with the sustainability teams to help articulate their analysis, facilitated conversations on observations and the start of problem identification. A workshop with a broader team to identify what a productive culture could look like ('To be' state), where - using an Appreciate Inquiry approach - an initial gap analysis was scoped.
4. A subsequent report summarised the suggested 'As is state', identified enablers and barrier for the sustainability team with concrete examples; articulated the discussed 'To be state'; provided a detailed Gap analysis and possible levers that could be used to create the desired 'To be' cultural state; desired outcomes and goals for embedding sustainability and a business case proposal.

**Impact:**

The process started an internal conversation on the current culture and how enabling it was generally (not just for sustainability) for supporting business success. The importance of managing culture was recognised, and Culture Change Managers were embedded within each business unit, working cross-border to work on a set of prioritised characteristics that had been identified as barriers. This work is still ongoing.

The 'Culture for sustainability' diagnostic model was then used with a luxury car manufacturer, who had a remit to embed ZeroWaste into the culture of the organisation as it was recognised this approach from the start would create longer-term success. Post-diagnosis, a ZeroWaste scorecard was developed to identify and track the enablers and barriers to embed sustainability into 'ways of thinking and working', sculpting the programme of activities specifically for long-term embedding. The ZeroWaste programme achieved its targets ahead of schedule.