

# SURFACE TO SOUL

Live Well | Lead Well | Coach Well

## Elements that Impact Church Culture

**1 | VISION.** Vision is a future-oriented picture of what your organization sees or what it wants to be. It's your unique organizational fingerprint that describes a preferred future. If leaders want to develop a healthy organizational culture, it begins with a clear, conviction-filled vision, and preferably one that wasn't taken from somebody else's playbook. Claim your vision or else your culture is haunted by aimlessness.

**2 | VALUES.** Values describe what your church considers to be most important. Values drive behaviors and programs. To clarify your values, try filling in the blanks in this statement, "Our church does \_\_\_\_\_ because we value \_\_\_\_\_." In the first blank, put the **WHAT** - any program, strategy, or behavior your church practices. In the second blank, put the **WHY** - the value that's driving whatever you wrote in the first blank.

**3 | PHILOSOPHY.** Every leader has a philosophy that guides his or her decision-making and this philosophy is tied to deeply held beliefs, history, assumptions, values, education, attitudes, or preferred practices. Some philosophies have labels such as "purpose-driven," "seeker-sensitive," "emergent," "missional," "multi-site," or "cell church." To better understand your church's culture, consider the assumptions you hold and how they shape what you do.

**4 | TRADITIONS.** Every organization has traditions, even organizations that are just a few years old. Traditions are the rituals and routines that you normalize and celebrate in your organization. Which traditions are allowed into the normalcy of your culture? Ask yourself: Can you describe—in writing—what your traditions are, and how they shape "normal" in your church's culture? Your answer to that question provides you with definition to your culture.

**5 | LANGUAGE.** Words frame culture. Every word you speak has benefits and baggage. The language you choose defines your organization's culture in the minds of the people you lead and the people you serve. If you want to understand your culture, make a list of the words and phrases used frequently at your church and ask, "What baggage or benefits do those words carry for you, your volunteers, your guests, and for the people you serve?"

**6 | SYSTEMS.** Every church has systems - or processes - for welcoming and following up with guests, forming faith, developing programs and ministries, hiring staff, communicating with teams and members, managing facilities, raising money, measuring results, etc. The question is, are your systems effective, efficient, and user-friendly? When systems change, behaviors change. When behavior changes, the church's culture follows suit.

**7 | SCORECARDS.** Every organization measures something - attendance, donations, testimonies, life change, projects completed, etc. Whatever you choose to measure in your church will reveal and reinforce your culture. The real question is this: "What measurements will create a healthy culture aligned with your vision and values?"

**8 | BEHAVIORS.** The behaviors that matter most are the behaviors of the church's leaders, beginning with the pastor. A leader's behaviors shape the behaviors of team members directly and indirectly. Leaders shape behavior directly by modeling the way for others and indirectly by the systems they create in the organization.

**9 | ENERGY.** What does people's energy level within church say about your culture and congregation? Whether the energy is negative (based on people's unmet expectations) or positive (based on people's hopes for a better future), it's worth paying attention to this energy. Does the energy level reflect hope for a better future?

**10 | MOVEMENT.** Is your church moving forward with new ideas, new initiatives, and new approaches? Is there a willingness to experiment and learn from both successes and failures?



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