



Roundtable Member

**Shana McEachren,**

Executive Coach, shared  
her perspective on how  
to build a kind culture.

## Mentoring **MATTERS**

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*The previous leader of my unit was a real 'command and control' type who led by fear. I am trying to build a culture of kindness and generosity within my team. What are some tactical things that I could do to build that type of culture?*

Your awareness of how the previous leader operated and the kind of culture you want to build is an important starting point. In today's ever-changing, fast-paced world where most businesses still focus solely on results and numbers, it's inspiring to see more people wanting to nurture organizational cultures that have a more "human" approach.

There are many different tactics you can use to build the culture you desire. Culture is driven by the collective beliefs, values, and behaviours of the individuals that make up your team (including yourself), so it's important that you find the tactical steps that work best for you and your team. Here are some techniques that I have found to be useful in building culture.

### *Share Your Vision*

In the famous words of Simon Sinek, "Start with Why", people need a reason to change. The benefits of embracing a culture of kindness and generosity may seem obvious to you. However, if your team has been operating under "command and control", they may question the reasons for doing things differently. What are the benefits you hope to get from this new approach? How might you share your vision with your team in a way that is inspiring?

### *Set Clear Expectations*

In a workplace setting, kindness and generosity can mean a lot of different things to different people. What does kindness and generosity in the workplace mean to you? Does your team have the same definition?

It sounds like your team has been operating in a very different culture. It might be hard for them to even imagine what it would look and feel like to operate in a culture of kindness and generosity. What are some concrete examples you can share? What does it look like? What behaviours do you expect to see? Be as clear as possible to help avoid frustrations and misunderstandings as your team creates this new culture.

### *Live it Everyday*

As a leader, you set an example for your team. They will look to you and your words, actions, and behaviours to set the tone for the team.

Are you living and breathing this culture yourself? Are there any of your own behaviours that you need to change or moderate?

### *Encourage and Support*

Change can be hard. Our brains crave mastery and control over our environment. When things change, it can create feelings of uncertainty in people's minds. Some members of your team may embrace the change with enthusiasm, while others may be skeptical and wonder if this is "too good, to be true". How will you know how people are feeling? How can you support members of your team who aren't comfortable with the new culture? How might you encourage the new behaviours in your team? What can you do to show your commitment to the culture you want to create?

All change takes time and there are likely to be some days when you see progress and other days when you might feel like the new culture is not working at all. Who can you share your wins and challenges with and who can provide you with support and encouragement?

### *Anticipate Potential Barriers*

Despite your best intentions, other factors may work against the culture you want to create. All organizations have a larger culture, along with both formal and informal structures that influence culture. Consider how formal elements of the organization, including the organization's values and what people are rewarded and compensated for doing (or not doing) influence behaviour. How might these larger organizational elements support or deter the culture you are creating? What about informal elements such as the behaviour and dynamics of other teams and leaders in the organizations—how might they influence the behaviours of your team members?

### *Recognize and Celebrate*

As you see your team demonstrating the behaviours you want to see in the new culture, it's important to recognize and celebrate those behaviours. Affirming desired behaviours is one of the best ways to reinforce the thoughts and actions you want to see people do more. When you recognize and celebrate the behaviours you want to see, you send a message to your team that you are committed

to creating this culture. How can you recognize members of your team? How might you encourage them to recognize each other? What will you celebrate as a team?

As a leader, you have an opportunity to make a significant impact on your team. Your desire to create a culture of kindness and generosity is inspirational. While there may be some challenges, the potential benefits for you, your team, and your organization are significant. I wish you all the best and hope there are more leaders like you who are looking to instill a more human approach to work.



**Shana McEachren** is an experienced executive coach and organizational development consultant who is passionate about helping people learn, grow, and achieve their goals. She works one-on-one with senior leaders and business owners and has extensive experience working with organizations to operationalize strategy and cultural shifts by engaging and aligning employees and creating a sustainable mindset and behaviour changes. Shana has a Masters of Education in Workplace Learning and Change from OISE/UofT and a Graduate Certificate in Executive Coaching from Royal Roads University.



**Glain Roberts-McCabe** is passionate about the art of leadership and supporting ambitious mid-career leaders. She created **The Roundtable** to provide emerging leaders with the navigational skills, tools and savvy needed to manage increases in scope, pressure and leadership complexity.