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Make Culture Your Competitive Edge

How high-performing organizations build cultures
that deliver results



Hello! We're bink.

The life sciences industry is experiencing unprecedented change and accelerated growth.

From mergers and acquisitions to a constant stream of new competitors and the demands of digital transformation, companies are challenged to evolve faster than ever.

And this is happening at a time when employees demand more than just a job – they want purpose, connection and engagement.

When intentionally managed and consistently reinforced, culture becomes the glue that creates a sense of connection and the compass that guides organizations through rapid change, uncertainty and transformation. In fact, culture is one of the most powerful – and most underutilized – tools for driving organizational performance.

At bink, we help life sciences companies harness culture as a strategic asset – one that connects leadership vision to employee action, especially in moments of accelerated change.

Whether you're scaling a new therapeutic area, integrating global teams post-merger, or facing market disruptions, culture is what helps employees stay grounded and move forward. While your strategy tells them what to do, your culture guides them on how to make decisions, collaborate and take action.

What holds many companies back is a lack of understanding about how to shape and shift their culture. This white paper dives deep into the topic of high-performing cultures – what they are, how they drive outcomes, how to build them and how to sustain them over time.

Our approach draws from decades of experience helping life sciences companies navigate transformation and build cultures that thrive. Read on and let's make culture your competitive edge.

Why culture is crucial

When it comes to culture, the stakes couldn't be higher.

In the life sciences industry, a strong, aligned culture doesn't just support growth – it helps teams move faster, collaborate better and ultimately deliver better outcomes to change patients' lives.

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4x

Workers in positive organizational cultures are almost four times more likely to stay with their current employer.¹

72%

72% of workers report that culture helps successful change initiatives happen.²

3x

Healthy organizations deliver three times the total shareholder returns compared to unhealthy organizations.³

1: SHRM State of Global Workplace Culture 2024, 2: PWC 2021 Global Culture Survey, 3: McKinsey Organizational Health Index

Understanding high-performing cultures

A high-performing culture is a living system of values, behaviors, beliefs and practices that empower employees to make smart decisions, take purposeful action and stay aligned – especially when the path forward is unclear.

Even the best business strategy can't account for every twist, disruption or shift in direction. That's where culture comes in.

In moments of rapid change, transformation or ambiguity, a strong culture serves as a compass. It helps employees make decisions, prioritize their work and stay aligned with the organization's values.

When culture is deeply embedded, it builds confidence and cohesion. Employees don't need to wait for instructions – they know how to move forward because the behaviors, values and expectations are already clear.

With culture as your compass, performance will follow.



Mission

- What's our north star?
- What's our purpose?

Vision

- Where are we going?
- What are we dreaming to be or become?

Values & behaviors

- How do we want to behave?
- What's important to us as people and as a company?

Leaders

- Who's leading us there?
- How do our leaders set the tone and model the behaviors they want to see?

People

- How do our people feel about our company?
- Do they feel informed, empowered and supported?

Who owns culture?

Culture isn't owned by a single person or department – **it's a shared responsibility.**

- ✗ **HR** does not own culture.
- ✗ **Communications** does not own culture.
- ✗ **Leaders*** do not own culture.
*But leaders do shape culture.

So, whose job is it to define, shape and nurture company culture?

Culture isn't something you simply launch or unveil.

Even well-meaning leaders often fall into the trap of thinking a culture is something you can "roll out" with a big splash.

Culture isn't a one-time event. To make culture stick, it must be embedded in your ecosystem, including the ways in which people are recognized, rewarded and supported in their roles.

Instilling culture requires creating systems, programs and processes that guide your people toward the behaviors and mindset you want to see.

It's a continuous effort, reinforced daily, and demands involvement from HR, Communications and leaders at all levels.

How to transform culture into a driver of performance

Every organization already has a culture, whether it's intentionally shaped or not.

Consider:

- Is your culture creating a meaningful connection between employees and your company's purpose?
- Is your culture guiding decisions when strategies shift and uncertainty rises?
- Is your culture giving you an edge?

For many organizations, the honest answer is "not yet."

Culture often exists in the background – undefined, unmanaged and untapped. So how do you turn culture into a true differentiator – one that fuels performance and sustains success, even through growth and change?

The path to culture transformation

Five steps for lasting culture change

There are five key steps for driving culture transformation in any organization:

- 1 **Listen:** Gather insights from your people.
- 2 **Align:** Partner with leadership to define a shared cultural vision.
- 3 **Define:** Uncover and articulate the foundational elements of your culture.
- 4 **Embed:** Use strategic communication to build clarity, connection and consistency.
- 5 **Sustain:** Build the systems and structures that keep culture thriving.

01 Listen:

Gather insights from your people.

Culture transformation must begin with understanding the culture that exists today and where it needs to evolve.

That's why the critical first step is to listen to your people.

Start with listening sessions or focus groups to understand how employees perceive the way work gets done. Be sure to differentiate between the experiences and perceptions of different employee segments. For example, what your lab teams experience day-to-day may be very different from what your commercial teams feel. Culture isn't one-size-fits-all, and understanding those nuances is key.

These conversations should explore how well employees connect with your mission, vision, values and strategy, and how those elements show up in their daily work. Supplement this input with data from existing sources: employee engagement surveys, participation in recognition programs, performance feedback, content analytics and more.

And don't overlook leaders and managers. Talk with functional leaders to surface cultural differences across teams. And engage mid-level managers to uncover disconnects between leadership messaging and employee realities.

These insights will lay the foundation for a culture transformation that's both grounded and actionable.

01 Listen:

Tips to get started

Setting these conversations up for success

Focus groups can be one of your most powerful tools for ultimately driving culture change, if you approach them with intention. Here's how to make them count:

- **Be clear on your goals.** Define what you want to learn – whether it's perceptions of culture, alignment with values or gaps in communication.
- **Segment your sessions.** Different employee groups experience culture differently. Group participants by function, level or location to uncover meaningful patterns.
- **Create a safe space.** Make it clear that feedback is welcome, anonymous and without consequence. Ensure managers and direct reports are separated. Consider using a third-party facilitator to build trust.
- **Ask specific questions.** Go beyond "What do you think of our culture?" Try questions like: What does success look like on your team? What behaviors are celebrated? What makes it hard to do your best work?
- **Balance listening with probing.** Encourage dialogue, but don't be afraid to dig deeper when answers feel surface-level or vague.
- **Close the loop.** Let participants know their voices were heard. Share high-level insights and how you plan to use them to drive change.

02 Align:

Partner with leadership to define a shared cultural vision.

Before shifting or scaling culture, leaders must align on what it means and how it drives performance.

This step is about helping leaders build a shared understanding of the culture you're trying to create and why it matters.

The goal isn't absolute consensus – it's strategic clarity. You're working to build a common foundation that connects culture to outcomes, so leaders across functions can consistently model and reinforce the right messages, behaviors and decisions.

This alignment work also surfaces disconnects between intent and reality – the places where current systems, structures or leadership habits and beliefs may be sending mixed signals. Addressing those gaps early sets the stage for more effective culture-building later.

When leaders are aligned on the purpose, direction and role of culture, they can lead with consistency, set the tone for their teams, and make culture a visible part of how the organization performs, not just how it feels.

02 Align:

Tips to get started

Aligning around a shared cultural vision

Culture transformation starts with a clear, shared vision that's defined and owned by senior leaders. Use these questions to spark meaningful dialogue:

- **What does a high-performing culture look like here?** Define the specific mindsets, behaviors and ways of working you want to see.
- **What aspects of our current culture enable performance, and what holds us back?** Identify both strengths to build on and barriers to overcome.
- **What do we want our culture to look and feel like at its best?** Paint a vivid picture of the employee experience you're aiming for.
- **How will our culture help teams move faster, collaborate better and make smarter decisions in the face of change?** Connect cultural aspirations to business agility and performance.
- **How should culture support our business goals, scientific mission and growth strategy?** Ensure your cultural vision is aligned with where the organization is headed.

03 Define:

Uncover and articulate the foundational elements of your culture.

To build a culture that truly drives performance, you need a clear, cohesive foundation.

That means taking a fresh look at the core elements that shape your culture daily: your mission, vision, values and strategy. These components are defined and captured in most organizations, but they're not always aligned, well-understood, or meaningfully connected to how people work and make decisions.

This step is about refining and reconnecting the cultural foundation so that it not only inspires employees but drives alignment, supports business goals and guides behavior during periods of rapid change and uncertainty.

Defining culture isn't just about introducing a new set of statements. It's about ensuring that your mission, vision, values and strategy reinforce each other and that they are expressed in a way that employees can understand, connect to and use as a compass in their day-to-day decisions.

When these foundational elements are clearly defined and aligned, they serve as the infrastructure for everything else – enabling leaders to communicate consistently, employees to act with confidence and the organization to move forward with clarity and cohesion.

03 Define:

Tips to get started

Defining the core of your culture

When examining the foundational elements of your culture, work with senior leaders to reflect on what truly drives and defines your organization:

- **Revisit your mission.** Is it still relevant and motivating? Does it clearly express your purpose for existing?
- **Pressure-test your vision.** Is it future-focused, realistic and aspirational? Can employees see how their work connects to where you're headed?
- **Make your values actionable.** Are your values observable in daily behaviors? Or are they simply words on a poster?
- **Align strategy and culture.** Does your business strategy reflect the culture you want to build? Do your cultural expectations support your strategy in practice? For example, if your strategy prioritizes innovation, does your culture encourage experimentation and learning? If collaboration is key to the company's success, are employees rewarded for teamwork rather than only individual achievements?

04 Embed:

Use strategic communication to build understanding, alignment and belief.

Once the components of your culture are clearly defined, the real work begins: bringing it to life in meaningful, visible and consistent ways.

This requires a multi-layered communication strategy, from leadership messaging and all-hands meetings to micro-moments in digital channels and daily team conversations. Every touchpoint is an opportunity to reinforce your culture and strengthen alignment among employees.

Effective culture communication must do three things:

- Build clarity around the organization's direction and expectations
- Foster emotional connection to the purpose and values
- Reinforce desired behaviors through stories, signals and systems

Culture change also depends on feedback loops and dialogue, not just one-way messaging. Ongoing employee input, pulse surveys and active listening mechanisms help you adapt your communication approach and address what people are actually experiencing.

A well-executed communication strategy doesn't just share culture, it strengthens it, creating clarity, connection and lasting alignment.

04 Embed: Tips to get started

Empowering managers as culture builders

Managers play a pivotal role in shaping how culture comes to life on the ground. Here's how to support them effectively:

- **Position managers as keepers of culture.** Reinforce their role not just as people leaders, but as critical drivers of culture in daily interactions.
- **Provide clear talking points.** Equip managers with consistent, easy-to-understand messaging that aligns with company values and strategic priorities.
- **Offer tools and templates.** Make it simple for managers to bring culture into team meetings, 1:1s and day-to-day conversations.
- **Train for real impact.** Build manager capability with coaching and development that connects culture to leadership behaviors.
- **Create feedback loops.** Give managers a voice in the culture conversation, and a way to share back what's resonating (and what's not) with their teams.
- **Celebrate culture in action.** Encourage managers to recognize and reinforce values-driven behavior in real time.

05 Sustain:

Build the systems and structures that keep culture thriving.

Culture thrives when supported by the right mix of communication systems, employee programs and organizational processes that embed it into every facet of the business.

This means operationalizing your culture through the systems people use every day, from how they communicate and collaborate to how they're recognized, developed and supported.

Begin by assessing the communication systems and channels you rely on to sustain culture at scale. Your intranet, messaging platforms, meeting cadence and overall channel strategy all play a role in how effectively culture is reinforced across locations, functions and teams. As your organization grows or changes, these tools may need to evolve too.

Next, consider key moments in your employee lifecycle where you can reinforce the culture. From onboarding and career development to performance reviews and internal mobility, each of these touchpoints is an opportunity to bring your culture to life.

With aligned systems and processes, culture becomes more than an aspiration. It becomes an engine for sustained performance, clarity and connection through every stage of growth and change.

05 Sustain: Tips to get started

Reinforcing culture throughout the employee experience

To make culture transformation stick, it must be reinforced in the everyday moments that shape how people work, grow and connect. Focus on these key levers:

- **Orientation and onboarding.** Set the tone from day one by introducing new employees to your values, behaviors and cultural expectations early and often.
- **Recognition programs.** Spotlight and reward behaviors that reflect your values. What gets recognized gets repeated.
- **Performance management systems.** Align performance reviews, goal-setting and feedback with your cultural priorities and values-based competencies.
- **Learning and development programs.** Equip employees with the skills that support cultural evolution and behavior change.
- **Leadership development and manager enablement.** Ensure consistency by helping leaders at all levels model and reinforce cultural expectations.
- **Symbols and shared practices.** Create tangible ways for employees to experience culture in action, such as through storytelling, events, ceremonies and everyday habits.

Culture change in action

Culture change doesn't happen in a vacuum. It's sparked by business inflection points, leadership shifts, strategic ambitions and employee expectations.

The following examples illustrate how life sciences organizations have navigated meaningful transformation by anchoring their efforts in purpose, aligning leadership and messaging and embedding culture into their employees' day-to-day experiences.

Turning vision into action with a high-performance culture

A global pharmaceutical company set out to evolve its culture by embracing a high-performing organization (HPO) philosophy – not just in theory, but in practice. Leadership knew that for this shift to take hold, it couldn't remain an abstract ideal. It had to be visible, tangible and lived across every level of the business.

The challenge was twofold: creating a culture where employees felt inspired, empowered and accountable for success, while ensuring leaders had the tools, language and behaviors to bring that vision to life.

The company took a holistic approach, aligning core elements of the employee experience with its HPO ambition. Leadership messaging was sharpened to reflect a clear and consistent narrative. Recognition programs were refreshed to spotlight values-driven behaviors and team impact.

The company also reimaged its career philosophy to promote growth, ownership and performance. By reinforcing company values and behaviors through these initiatives, the organization didn't just talk about high performance – it built a culture where employees could see it, feel it and live it every day.

Reconnecting to purpose at a legacy life sciences company

A 90-year-old pharmaceutical and medical device company was at a pivotal moment – proud of its rich legacy yet highly aware of the need to evolve. As the business expanded globally, its cultural identity had become fragmented, making it harder for employees to connect to a shared sense of purpose.

Leadership saw the risk: without a clearly defined mission, vision and values, alignment would weaken, and engagement would suffer. To move forward with clarity and confidence, the company needed more than a cultural refresh. It required a transformation that would articulate who they are, why they exist and where they're headed.

The company took a thoughtful, inclusive approach. They engaged employees at all levels to co-create a renewed mission, vision and values, anchoring the process in what was already authentic and resonant within the organization. They also identified key moments in the employee experience where those ideas could be reinforced in meaningful ways, from onboarding and manager training to employee spotlights and a refreshed recognition program.

The result was more than just new language. The organization emerged with a clearer sense of identity, stronger alignment between culture and strategy and a renewed sense of purpose that helped employees connect to the company – and each other – in deeper ways.

Leading through change without losing cultural ground

When a multinational pharmaceutical company appointed a new CEO – its first from outside the organization and from a different sector entirely – it marked a turning point. The leadership shift brought fresh ideas and bold ambitions, but also uncertainty.

Employees wondered: Would the company's identity remain intact? Could a new leader honor the past while guiding the company toward the future?

Leadership understood that continuity and clarity would be essential. Culture had long been a cornerstone of the company's success, and maintaining that foundation was critical to building trust and sustaining momentum. From the start, the new CEO made culture a central focus – using clear, consistent messaging and intentional storytelling to reinforce the company's mission, values and vision.

Open dialogue and transparent communication helped employees see that change didn't mean losing their identity – it meant evolving with purpose. Strategic investments in R&D and an unwavering commitment to core values signaled that progress *and* tradition could coexist.

By anchoring transformation in culture, and using communication as a bridge, the organization emerged stronger, more unified and more confident in its direction.



Build your culture with intent, or let it happen by accident.

Culture isn't a side project – it's a strategic system that drives performance, connection and resilience.

When culture is strong and aligned, it empowers teams to collaborate more effectively, adapt to change with confidence and accelerate progress, ultimately driving better business outcomes and delivering solutions that change lives.

Whether you're scaling a new therapeutic area, integrating global teams or navigating transformation, culture is the throughline that turns business strategy into real-world action.

Strategy tells employees what to do. Culture helps them decide how.

At bink, we partner with life sciences leaders to shape cultures that do more than inspire – they align teams, accelerate progress and fuel lasting growth.

Our approach brings together strategy, communication and systems thinking to build cultures that perform under pressure and thrive over time.

If this paper sparked new thinking or raised new questions,
[we'd love to keep the conversation going.](#)

Let's build a culture that works as hard as your science does.



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The image features a central white circle on a dark blue background with a fine dot pattern. Two larger, lighter blue circles are partially visible on the left and right sides, overlapping the central one. Inside the central circle, the word "bink." is written in a bold, lowercase, sans-serif font. Below it, the tagline "Culture powers performance." is written in a smaller, lighter blue, lowercase, sans-serif font.

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