

KILLING YOUR CULTURE (WITH KINDNESS)

By Judy Hissong, CLM
President, Nesso Strategies



Culture is that thing growing in your petri dish, aka your organization, whether or not you are investing in it. We measure culture at the organization level, looking at the top leaders to shape and drive the values that are desired for success. Recently there has been much more attention at developing values and strategic vision to form the culture that produces results.

As we have become more aware of micro-climates in our weather patterns, we are also aware that climate lives inside the departments, silos, teams, and other groups in your organization. Climates are often shifting, even as the culture remains steady, and are strongly influenced by team leaders. Are you preparing your team leaders to develop and embody the climate of your teams? Because killing a climate is simple to do, silently happening while your attention is elsewhere.

What kills a climate? Fear. Fear of rejection, of not belonging or being accepted in the team. Fear of inferiority where we may lose our status or significance, or ability to have them. Fear of vulnerability which would vacate our autonomy or power. And fear of being trapped, losing our freedom and individuality. Our brains have a negativity bias, which results in a fast and efficient result when fear (the “stick” as we commonly call it) is used to drive performance.

By the time we are aware that fear has been the driver for the team, we are already spreading the infection to other teams, beginning to use the same approach to get results there too. Now more and more of the culture has become driven by fear, and the innovation and creativity suffer. When an organization loses its innovation, it falls behind that industry or customer demand, and the fear becomes greater. Now you see how climate is killed, and that spreads to culture.

So how do we infect a climate with the stuff that fosters the values of our culture? Your first instinct might be to employ the “carrot”. Turning your attention to rewards instead of punishment feels like the antidote, rewarding the results you want to see, which provides more results you want to see. Over time you have long term employees who have begun to expect rewards. The risk now becomes killing your climate with entitlement, with attention being placed on expected reward instead of values and contribution of the organization. Imagine the confusion in organizations where long-term employees feel this entitlement after owners, leaders, and managers thought they had their focus on desired culture.

Alternatively, you may look to reward the team for their success, moving away from the individual which will certainly solve the entitlement problem. You are encouraging teamwork, which means high and low performers are rewarded equally. This can create

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complacency and status quo performance. Showing up to do what needs to be done everyday doesn't advance your mission, and represents what we already know - employee engagement is hovering at 30% nationwide.

The best approach is to invest in your people. Start with conversation that underscores what contribution you want from your team, and what you want from each individual member. Creating inspired purpose fuels self-respect, and positive influence, which develops a climate where the mastery of the work is the reward, and now the petri dish is growing with intention. Now your organization is fueled with the positive climate that fosters collaboration, sees failure as an opportunity to learn and grow, and unites teams with the values in your culture.

For more information and further reading on Leadership, visit our [online library](#).



JUDY HISSONG, CLM

President, Nesso Strategies | Founder, Legal Leadership Institute

Judy understands teams. And she knows how to help you maximize the potential of yours. For over two decades, Judy has applied her vast knowledge of team dynamics, emotional intelligence, work/life balance, leadership, finance, and legal management to help law firms improve their people, process, performance and, ultimately, profits.

Bachelor's Degrees in Accounting and Physical Education | Master's Degree in Sports Management | Former Professional Athlete | Licensed Provider of Emotional Intelligence Tools | Certified Living Your Vision Facilitator | ALA Certified Legal Manager | ACE Certified Personal Trainer | ICF Professional Certified Coach

CONNECT WITH JUDY

619.546.7885 | judy@nessostrategies.com | nessostrategies.com | legalleadershipinstitute.com



Join the conversation in her LinkedIn Group: [Engaging Legal Leaders](#)