People and Culture: The Bedrock of Sustainable High Performance

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Our CEO, Paul Murphy, shares why culture isn't a "soft" concept but a practical foundation for high performance - from the 6 Cs framework that guides everyday behaviour, to how regular listening and measurement help teams stay aligned, resilient and productive.

When you speak to business owners across Jersey, whether they're running a small team or a large operation, you tend to hear a similar story. The challenges change, the markets shift, and new technologies keep arriving, but one thing remains stubbornly consistent: people and culture are almost always the biggest factors in long-term performance. It's something we've experienced firsthand at Jersey Business, and something we've seen mirrored across many local organisations.

After decades working with leaders here and internationally, I've come to appreciate that culture isn't an abstract concept reserved for corporate handbooks. It's the day-to-day reality that shapes how people show up, solve problems, collaborate, and grow together. When culture is healthy, things feel easier. When it isn't, even simple tasks can feel heavy.

This doesn't mean strategy and planning don't matter, they absolutely do. But as the well-known saying goes, 'culture eats strategy for breakfast'. That's not about dismissing strategy; it's about acknowledging that strategy only works when people are able, willing, and energised to deliver it. And that's where culture becomes a practical, not philosophical, priority.

How We Keep Culture Real, Not Theoretical: The 6 Cs

At Jersey Business, we realised early on that culture needed to be active and intentional, not just well-intended. To give ourselves a shared language and set of expectations, we developed what we call the 6 Cs of high performance: cooperation, collaboration, cognition, coaching, challenge, and communication.

This isn't a corporate framework for show, it's a simple way for us to check how we're working together, especially because we're a small team juggling a lot of moving parts.

Here's what each C means to us in everyday terms:

- **Cooperation:** helping each other move toward shared goals.
- **Collaboration:** combining strengths so we operate as one team, not as silos.
- **Cognition:** knowing the talent we have and using it well.
- **Coaching:** supporting and developing one another.
- **Challenge:** asking hard but constructive questions.
- **Communication:** sharing information clearly, openly, and at the right time.

None of these exist in isolation. When communication dips, everything else becomes harder. When collaboration is strong, trust strengthens. And when challenge and coaching coexist, people grow without feeling exposed. That's why we come together every quarter as a full team to reflect on how we're doing in each area. It keeps culture present and alive rather than something we "assume" is happening.

Listening Matters: Why We Measure Culture Twice a Year

Culture can't just be observed from the outside; it needs to be understood from within. We use the Jersey-based platform MyAnova twice a year to run a detailed, confidential staff survey covering everything from job satisfaction and inclusion to wellbeing and workload.

One of the metrics we look at closely is eNPS, the employee Net Promoter Score. The question is simple:

“How likely are you to recommend Jersey Business as a place to work?”

The number behind that answer gives us an early sense of how people are feeling. A positive score suggests energy and engagement; a dip signals that something needs attention.

These surveys have directly led to real changes. For example, when the team told us communication could be clearer, we introduced regular all-hands updates. And wellbeing data has often helped us spot when capacity needs adjusting or extra support is needed.

We also use the survey to assess whether people genuinely experience our core values in their everyday lives. It’s one thing to state values; it’s another for people to actually feel them in their daily experience. That gap (or the absence of it) tells us more than any slogan ever could. Overall, the surveys keep us grounded. They reassure us when things are going well and hold us accountable when they aren’t.

What We See Across Jersey’s Business Community

One of the privileges of our work is supporting many Jersey businesses every year, from sole traders and new start-ups to long-established organisations and large industry players. Through this incredibly wide reach, we get a unique window into what’s really happening inside local businesses. And one theme shows up again and again:

People and culture consistently make the biggest difference to performance.

We’ve seen companies with strong products lose momentum because communication or trust broke down internally. We’ve also seen businesses with limited resources thrive because their teams were aligned, motivated, and adaptable. It’s not about size, it’s about clarity, behaviour, and connection.

When we advise leaders on strategy, marketing, governance or productivity, conversations often shift naturally toward team dynamics, values, leadership style, or organisational communication. These areas aren't "soft", they're central to the ability to execute any plan.

Many businesses we work with have even adopted the 6 Cs framework or started running their own pulse surveys after seeing the impact of ours. This creates a ripple effect across the island: stronger internal cultures contribute to stronger businesses overall.

Importantly, we learn constantly from our clients too. Each advisory session gives us insight into emerging challenges and opportunities. We take that learning back into Jersey Business, and it helps us evolve. It's a two-way learning loop that benefits everyone.

Culture as a Competitive Advantage — Whether You Name It or Not

Most business owners don't sit down thinking, "Let's talk about culture today." Yet culture shows up in places customers immediately notice:

- how quickly you respond
- how consistently you deliver
- how warmly your team engages
- how clearly problems get resolved

A healthy culture can quietly create what we call 'raving fans', customers who recommend you because they've had such a positive experience. When culture is neglected, the effects surface just as quickly: slower service, inconsistent quality, increased turnover, lower morale, and ultimately a decline in customer trust.

Culture also provides resilience. Over the past few years, through a pandemic, economic fluctuations, and shifting customer expectations, teams rooted in openness, clarity, and trust were able to adapt more quickly. The same pattern held true for the businesses we support, those that already had strong cultures weathered uncertainty with more stability and less disruption.

In short, culture isn't something that sits on top of strategy. It's the foundation beneath it.

Putting People First: Not a Slogan, but a Practical Choice

For us at Jersey Business, putting people first isn't about being idealistic, it's the most reliable and sustainable strategy we've found for long-term performance. That's why we:

- use the 6 Cs to keep ourselves aligned
- measure cultural health rigorously
- listen carefully to what our team tells us
- share what we learn with the businesses we support

When businesses commit to this kind of people-centred approach, it shows up in better teamwork, clearer communication, smoother execution, and stronger customer relationships. It isn't about being perfect, none of us are, but about being intentional and consistent.

Across the island, we see the same trend: organisations that actively invest in their people outperform those that don't. Not just in financial metrics, but in reputation, resilience, and the sense of purpose their teams feel.

As someone who has spent decades working with leaders and businesses of all sizes, I can say with confidence that when you invest in your people, you're investing in your future. It's the most enduring competitive advantage any organisation has. And unlike markets or trends, it's something you can shape from the inside out.

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