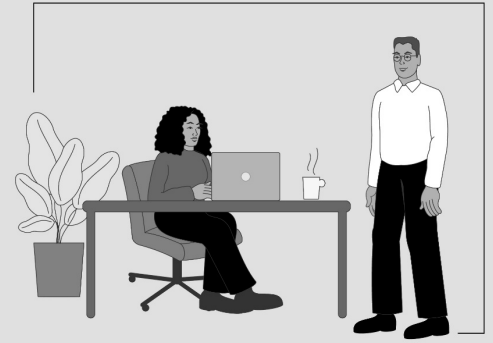


# CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION ROUNDTABLE BREAKFAST



This past Tuesday morning at the wonderfully iconic Wolseley Restaurant in Green Park, I was very privileged to host a packed dining room table of **CEOS and CPOs, as well as a few other C suite professionals from the Digital / Technology & Marketing space.**

As the theme of this event was around cultural transformation: what does this mean and who owns this in a business – I thought it was important to have an eclectic mix of C suite professionals as well as a fairly industry agnostic guest list too. For this breakfast I was thrilled to co-host with **Clare Arksey** – a colleague of mine from our Urban Outfitters days of old and a recent joiner at Vue International as the COO.

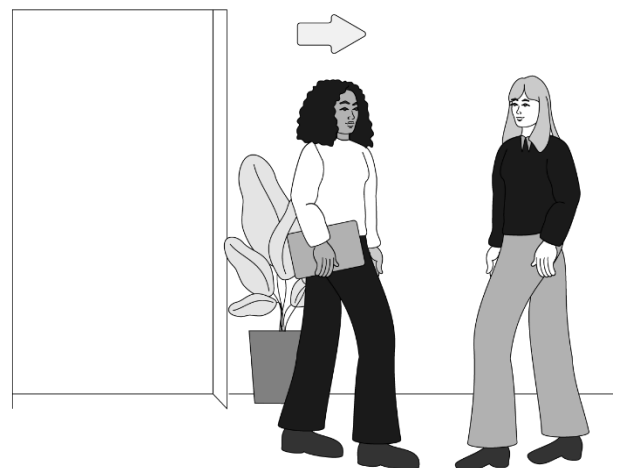


After my usual introduction to the day and outlining how we will, as we always do, utilise Chatham house rules for the forthcoming discussion and for this blog too (to maintain privacy), the group of 14 did their individual introductions and we concluded with Claire who offered up a really interesting perspective on her career journey to date, as well as a really insightful perspective on industry agnostic approaches that centre around the customer, regardless of what you are actually selling.

I got the ball rolling by asking the question: ***who is responsible for the culture in your business? Does it start at the top and trickle downwards, or is it created from the ground up? Or is it something in between?***

**For me, some of the key themes that followed were:**

- Culture is a funny word. What does it mean? Is it a set of values that you live by? Can it be changed? Should it be changed? Should a company culture manifest itself as a set of behaviours which, once followed, create the values that you articulate?
- How to hold onto your culture as you grow and scale? - Hiring people who would make friends with the other employees seemed an interesting approach to this challenge.



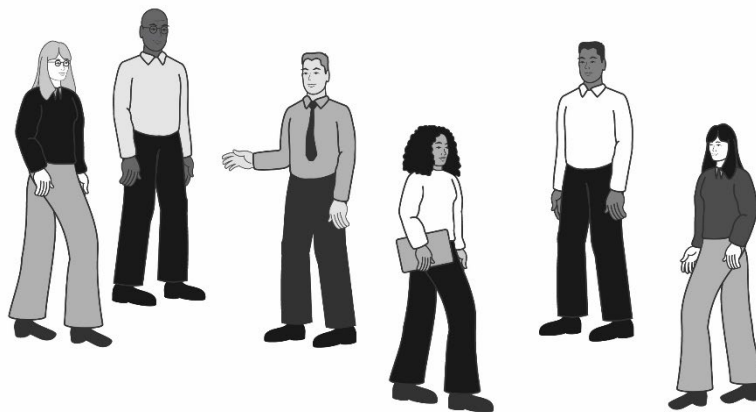
# The Jamestown Group

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- Defining what the 'true north' of your business is by first by determining what the external threats to your business are and work backwards from this point.
- Storytelling as an engrained function of not only the CEO, but of her leadership team – this seemed to be key to me from an influential perspective.
- It's all fine and dandy to have lovely words on your wall that (you think) encapsulate your company culture – but what happens when things go wrong? This is the time to truly double down on these values and ensure that the stories behind the words are felt every day.
- There is value in short, medium, and long-term goals as it relates not only to your top / bottom line, but also towards the culture you aspire to create. When things go wrong, return to these goals, and keep on track.
- A good company culture is also one where you can be honest, including the honesty that comes with making tough decisions. The ability to challenge is paramount.

Once again, this roundtable discussion truly flowed, and time flew. From what I heard it seems to be the case that the best cultures are the simplest cultures:

***Be open, be honest, live by your words, ensure these words are spread around the organisation at all levels, double down on your values when things go wrong and always come back to your short-, medium- and long-term goals.***



The most challenging part of the day was stopping the conversation at our hard stop of 9:30am, as I always promise to do, and getting everyone on their way on time.