



DLA Distribution's culture tip: Use the model...not just the survey

The Defense Logistics Agency's culture survey provides the organization with the opportunity to identify areas for improvement based on the insights of employees across the enterprise. The leaders across the enterprise use the results to guide them to key areas to focus on improving their cultures.

Now that another cycle of survey administration is complete and DLA is awaiting the results, managers at DLA Distribution are encouraged to use the Denison model as a management tool.

"Sometimes, with the amount of focus placed on the survey and results, the power of the Denison Model itself can be missed," said John Destalo, culture champion and member of the DLA Distribution Organization Development team. "The model was actually developed prior to the survey instrument and was developed through a scientific method to identify what elements of an organizational culture drive high performance."

Many years of research went into surfacing these key elements and creating the model. From the model, the survey along with the database was developed as tool to help organizations assess their performance and identify key areas to improve.

"While the survey questions and results have been critically important management tools in DLA for building a high performance culture, it is not the only Denison tool available to managers. It is also important

to recognize that the Denison model itself can be used as a management tool," said Destalo. "In the past, this element has not been recognized or used as effectively as it could have been."

By focusing on the model, leaders and managers of projects and initiatives as well as organizations can use the model itself as a management tool to support all steps of any Plan-Do-Check-Act process.

According to Destalo, one way this is done is for a leader to use the four quadrants as a checklist with the team to stay focused on the key elements that will help a team achieve successful performance. "In leading a team, a leader can engage with the team members to answer the following questions in each of the four Denison Model quadrants."

Mission:

Are we clear about what we are trying to accomplish?

Do we know how our project/initiative connects to the organization's strategy and vision?

Do we have goals and targets established?

Consistency:

What processes will be impacted?

Who do we need to coordinate with?

What are the key issues we need

to resolve?

Involvement:

Who is on the team?

Do we have the skills we need?

Do we have the authority to act?

Adaptability:

How will this effort impact our customers?

What do we need to change and why?

What are we learning in the process?

Using the model in this way helps teams and organizations develop a common language about culture. "Having this common language can help leaders connect the dots for their teams to understand what culture is, why it is important for performance and how it can be managed and changed," continued Destalo. It also helps employees who work on these teams to better understand the elements of the survey as they see how each of the quadrants are enacted in their day-to-day work as a member of this team or project. "This increased understanding of how the four quadrants are enacted on a day-to-day basis helps employees relate the survey questions directly to their work environment," concluded Destalo.

DLA's culture survey results are expected in the December/January timeframe.