

Hi, this is Wayne Rivers at FBI, and *We Build Better Contractors*.

This week I want to ask a question. Does culture really eat strategy for breakfast? All right. So, I have several sources here. I found this quote in an article, in Strategy Plus Business. It's an online blog this year. And then I said, "What is this quote?" I'd never heard it before. Maybe I'm the only one, so I started looking and there's all kinds of articles on the web. So, I got a Forbes article and various blogs. It's all over the web.

So, it supposedly comes from the business guru and writer, Peter Drucker, and he said, "Culture eats strategy for breakfast." And it seems to be untrue. He never wrote those words as far as anybody can find, but it's popularly attributed to him, so let's just roll with it. Okay? Is it true? Does culture eat strategy for breakfast?

First of all, let's define culture. So, culture, my go-to book is *A Culture of Success* by Steven J. Anderson. He's a peer group member of mine, brilliant guy. You should read the book. It's terrific. Culture. He's got two definitions. Okay. The first one is great. The second one might be even better. Culture is a combination of the beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors in an organization. Excellent. The second one's better. Culture is how we treat each other on our shared journey. I like that.

Strategy. Let's define strategy. Strategy is a clear set of plans, actions, and goals that outline how a business will compete. Okay, excellent. I like that. So, we've defined culture. We've defined strategy. Is it true? Does culture eat strategy for business?

There was a man named Mark Fields. He was the president of Ford America, and he said this, "You can have the best plan in the world, but if your culture isn't going to let it happen, it's going to die on the vine." Maybe he's saying culture does eat strategy for breakfast. What he meant was in any organization, large or small, there's what is referred to as the frozen middle, and these are the people that cling to the status quo. So, you've heard us talk about the change model and the graphical representation of the psychological resistance to change. It exists in every organization. It exists at your church. It exists in your community. It exists anywhere. People don't like change. They reflexively recoil from change. So, if you've got this frozen middle in your organization, and we all do, there's going to be a resistance to change. There are going to be people who knowingly or unwittingly block, undermine, or slow down new initiatives. That's part of your culture. Having those people, having that frozen middle, is a part of your culture. So maybe culture does eat strategy for breakfast.

Contractors tend to focus on the concrete, no pun intended. The concrete, the rational, financial, operational aspects of their businesses. Many contractors, most contractors have a culture by default. They don't work on the culture. It just is what it is. Maybe it's great. Maybe it's great because the people in the organization are pure-hearted and it's wonderful, but chances are the culture has just evolved over time, and it is what it is. It's not a conscious thing. It's a default thing. That's not ideal. You can't have a great culture without working on it, but it seems very unlikely, doesn't it?

So, check out this graphic. This is a way of thinking about culture eating strategy. Some people think, most contractors think we'll have a strategy, written or unwritten, and that will lead to business success, and then that business success will build and improve our culture. If culture really eats strategy, then it works a different way. Culture comes first. You build a great culture. You engineer a culture, which you can do, and we support it with a strategy, and that leads to success.

Which is true? Which is true? I don't think either one of them is true. I think they have to be mutually supporting. I think this final graphic, the handshake graphic, culture and success have to agree with each other. They have to reflect each other. They have to be simpatico with each other.

So, the three points I'd like to make here at the conclusion, culture is like the landscape upon which you execute your strategy, right? If you're going to build something, you've got a building site, right? If you're going to pave something, you've got a paving avenue. Culture is the landscape on which you execute strategy.

The second thing is culture will eat your strategy for breakfast if you don't have strong core values, if you don't have a culture that you work on, and you don't have alignment between your culture and your strategy, then the culture will eat your strategy for breakfast. They must nurture and reinforce each other. That's it, the bottom line. Culture could certainly eat strategy for breakfast. But if you work on both, if they nurture each other and support each other, if it's the handshake model, you're unbeatable. Your culture can't eat your strategy because they're in alignment with each other. It's a beautiful thing.

I'd like to hear what you think. Maybe you know the real source. Maybe it's not Peter Drucker. Maybe it was you that said culture eats strategy for breakfast. I'd like to hear what you think. Please reply in the comments below.

This is Wayne Rivers at FBI, and *We Build Better Contractors*.