



‘Culture is a Strategy Execution System’

Not a People Topic

When Familiar Experience Stops Working

For executives leading in this age, it should never be limited to just a morale project; rather, it should be embraced as the system that determines how fast decisions move, how reliably teams deliver, and how early risk surfaces. If you treat it as “soft,” execution becomes expensive: delays multiply, rework grows, and leadership gets bypassed.

From his first weeks in a technology-driven organization, Shola sensed dissonance. Leadership felt informal. Titles mattered less than ideas. Junior employees challenged senior ones openly. Work happened asynchronously, decisions were made quickly, and outcomes seemed to matter more than ritual. To Shola, it looked like a disorder.

He tried to restore what he knew. He pushed approvals, formal reporting lines, and structured escalation. He waited for authority before acting and expected the same from his team. In his mind, discipline preceded performance. Instead, performance slowed.

Projects stalled under his leadership. Decisions happened without him. Teams worked around processes rather than through them. His experience, once a source of credibility, was beginning to lose its impact.

The lesson was uncomfortable but clear: the organization was executing effectively, just not through the systems he was trying to impose.

Culture Is Demonstrated in Action, Not just Declared on Walls

As Shola observed more closely, a different pattern emerged. Despite the apparent looseness, delivery was consistent. Problems surfaced early. Ownership was clear. Accountability existed, but it was embedded in shared expectations rather than enforced through hierarchy. What he had mistaken for softness was precision.

The culture rewarded initiative over permission, learning over tenure, and outcomes over optics. People did not wait to be told what to do; they understood what needed to be done. Execution was not driven by control, but by alignment.

This was the turning point. He realized that culture is not how organizations present themselves. It is how work actually gets done; especially when no one is watching.



The Real Function of Culture

In regulated environments like finance, execution often rides on controls: policies, approvals, and compliance gates. In fast-moving environments like technology, execution must travel faster than authority. It relies on shared rules that reduce friction without increasing risk.

When Culture Is Healthy:



Supervision decreases because expectations are shared, not constantly policed.



Decisions move closer to the work because ownership is explicit.



Risk surfaces earlier because people speak up before problems harden.



Scale becomes more achievable because coordination does not require more hierarchy.

Seen this way, culture goes beyond being perceived as a “people issue.” To an execution infrastructure.

The Culture Execution System

If culture is how work gets done, then you can manage it like any other execution system. In practice, it runs on five levers. When these levers are clear, culture stops being a slogan and becomes predictable performance.

- 1 **Decision Rights:** Who decides; what is delegated; what is escalated.
- 2 **Ownership:** One accountable owner per outcome; no shared accountability.
- 3 **Information Flow:** What must be visible, to whom, and how often.

4 Standards and Consequences:

What “good” looks like; what happens when it is not met.

5

Cadence: The routines that keep delivery, learning, and correction moving.

Most culture problems are not mysterious. One or more of these levers is fuzzy, inconsistent, or performative.

Informality Is Not Indiscipline

What initially looked like looseness ; open disagreement, flat hierarchies, flexible hours, was discipline expressed differently. Accountability was outcome-based rather than authority-based. Rigor existed, but without ceremony.

The organization was not less disciplined than Shola’s previous environment. It was disciplined in service of speed.

The Monday Morning Culture Test

If you want to see your real culture, do not read the values deck. Watch what happens in these moments:

- 1 **When a Decision Stalls:** Do people ask “who must approve?” or “who owns the outcome?”
- 2 **When Risk Appears:** Do teams surface it early, or wait until it becomes unavoidable?
- 3 **When a Junior Person Disagrees:** Is it treated as a signal or as disrespect?

3 When Work Crosses Teams:
Does ownership stay clear, or does accountability evaporate?

4 When Performance Drops: Do leaders fix systems, or hunt for someone to blame?

Your answers tell you if your culture supports execution, or forces work to route around leadership.

Adaptation Without Abandonment

Adapting did not require Shola to discard his financial-sector discipline. It required translation, not surrender.

He shifted from asking who approved a decision to who owned the outcome. He replaced rigid processes with clear principles. He focused less on enforcing compliance and more on enabling accountability. Over time, his experience regained relevance, not as a rulebook, but as judgment.

Most importantly, he learned to work with the culture rather than against it. The Culture Cadence That Makes This Real.

Culture shifts faster when you build a simple operating rhythm. No theatre; just repeatable discipline.



Weekly Execution Review (45 minutes)

Focus: outcomes, blockers, decisions needed, owners, next actions.



Decision Log (Continuous)

One place where key decisions are recorded with owner, rationale, date, and follow-up.



Risk Surfacing Rule (Always On)

Any team member can flag a delivery or risk issue early; leaders respond without punishment.



Monthly Operating Reset (60 minutes)

What is working, what is failing, what must change in decision rights, ownership, or standards.

This is how you turn culture from “a feeling” into an operating system. What You Measure Shapes the Culture You Get

If you want culture to support execution, track indicators tied to behaviour, not slogans:

- 1 Decision Cycle Time:** Idea to decision.
- 2 Rework Rate:** How often work returns due to unclear expectations or ownership.
- 3 Escalation Time:** How long critical issues take to reach decision-makers.
- 4 Delivery Reliability:** On-time outcomes against committed priorities.

5 **Ownership Clarity Pulse:** Do people know who owns what, without guessing?

These signals show you, in real time, whether culture is helping or taxing execution.

The Deeper Lesson

Most organisational failures show up when a prevailing culture cannot translate strategy into behaviour at speed. The strategy may be sound; the execution environment is not.

Strategy lives in boardrooms. Culture shows up in Tuesday decisions; how teams respond when deadlines collide, information is incomplete, and oversight is limited. If your culture cannot produce consistent choices under pressure, your strategy becomes a theoretical asset; strong in presentation, weak in implementation.



Leaders therefore have a practical responsibility: build a culture system that does four things reliably:



Replace Constant Control With Clear Alignment: People should know what matters and act without waiting.



Scale Execution Without Proportional Overhead: Growth should not require more layers to keep work moving.



Surface Risk Early and Correct Fast: Issues should travel upward early, not arrive as surprises.



Make Performance Repeatable: Results should come from the system, not a few heroic individuals.

Culture looks “soft” because its mechanics are not always visible. Its outcomes are measurable and commercial; product quality, customer experience, delivery reliability, risk events, and reputation all trace back to the same root: how work gets done when it is hard.

If you want strategy to perform, do not start by rewriting the deck. Start by upgrading the culture infrastructure that carries it, because this is how performance becomes predictable.

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BROOT Consulting is a strategy, innovation, and transformation advisory firm helping organizations unlock clarity, agility, and enduring value. We specialize in future-focused growth through human-centered change, customer experience innovation, and leadership enablement.

Our proprietary frameworks and diagnostics empower ambitious institutions to rethink how they lead, scale, and adapt in an increasingly dynamic world.

At BROOT, we don't just solve for what's next, we build capabilities that last.

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