

# Culture.

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# The 5 Things That Build a Healthy Team Culture

By Shane Michael Hatton



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When 1,000 middle managers were asked in a McCrindle survey which ingredients contribute toward a healthy team culture, these five were the most popular. If you're looking for a good entry point, these might just be a great place to start.



# 1. Collaboration and teamwork (53 percent)

Not surprisingly, more than half the people leaders we surveyed told us that collaboration and teamwork were an essential part of a healthy culture. As you explore your shared expectations and behaviors, consider asking questions that bring out the ways you prefer to work together as a team.

Here are some questions you could ask:

- **Where and when are you at your best?**
- **How do you prefer to collaborate?**
- **How do you prefer to share information?**
- **What brings out the best in you in a meeting?**
- **What brings out the worst in you in a meeting?**
- **What does being a good team member look like?**

One of the top five culture killers was “negativity from leaders or team members” (49 percent). It could be worth taking the time to consider the role that optimism and positivity play in your team dynamic. Take time to clarify what negativity means to people on the team and what expectations they have about dealing with stress or setbacks.

# 2. Leaders who are visible and approachable (52 percent)

You can't follow an invisible leader. You might prefer to be a leader who is behind the scenes, but your team wants to see you. They want to know that you are available and approachable when they need you. One of the top five culture killers in our research was “an absent or disconnected leader” (48 percent). In your culture conversations, explore with your team what it means to be present. What are their expectations of you around being visible and approachable?

Here are some questions you could ask:

- **How often do you like to hear from me? In what way?**
- **What does it mean to be approachable?**
- **What do you need to hear from me?**
- **How often should we meet?**

### 3. Open communication and feedback (52 percent)

Each person on your team will have preferences around the way they like to communicate and the frequency at which they like to receive feedback. Having a conversation about the culture of communication in your team can help you set realistic expectations early. In our research, a “lack of accountability” (45 percent) in the team was seen as one of the top five culture killers. What are the ways in which the team can foster a sense of shared accountability? When team members don’t feel empowered to speak up, a team will eventually break down.

Here are some questions you could ask:

- **How often do you like to be communicated with?**
- **In what way do you like to communicate?**
- **What are your expectations around feedback?**
- **Who do you regularly need communication from or with?**
- **How do we deliver hard truths in this team?**

### 4. Trusting relationships (50 percent)

A lack of trust is the top culture killer, according to our research. Half of people leaders told us they identify a healthy culture by the trusting relationships that exist. How trust is built looks different for each person. Take time to explore some of the areas that help establish trust in your team.

Here are some questions you could ask:

- **What can I do to instill confidence in you?**
- **What helps build trusting relationships in this team?**
- **How is trust broken and restored?**
- **How do you feel trusted?**
- **What should you do when you can’t share all the information?**

## 5. Clear and realistic workload expectations (49 percent)

People want to know they are doing a good job, which means having clear and realistic workload expectations and clear measures of success. Forty-six percent of the people leaders in our research told us that unclear or unrealistic workload expectations were a key ingredient for an unhealthy culture.

Here are some questions you could ask:

- How do we measure success in this team?
- Where do you go if you are unclear on work expectations?
- How do you prioritize work?
- What do you do when you're struggling?
- What are your expectations of each other around sharing workload?



**Author:** Shane Michael Hatton, author of *Let's Talk Culture—The Conversations You Need To Create the Team You Want*, is an expert in leader communication, blending his experience in business and psychology to help leaders communicate, connect, and collaborate more effectively in order to bring out the best in those they lead. Learn more at [www.shanemhatton.com](http://www.shanemhatton.com).