

PROJECT

Cultural inquiry and complexity

PRACTITIONER

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APPROX. DATE

2017–ongoing

SITUATION AND CONTEXT

Many clients asked for ‘culture change’—but didn’t know what culture was or how it changed. Existing tools were either superficial or overly rigid.

SYSTEM OF INTEREST

Organisational culture as a dynamic, emergent system shaped by behaviours, stories, systems, and power.

APPROACH TAKEN

We developed an approach to culture inquiry that draws on complexity science, systems leadership theory, and values-based models like Barrett.

MODELS AND INSIGHTS DEVELOPED

- Culture as a complex adaptive system: not linear, not controllable
- Inquiries framed around system purpose, patterns, and feedback
- Metaphors and values used to surface hidden dynamics

KEY INTERVENTIONS UNDERTAKEN

- Ran culture inquiries using group workshops and interviews
- Supported leadership teams to understand their own contribution to culture
- Built internal capability to lead cultural learning

RESULTS

- Helped clients stop chasing ‘culture change’ and start learning about cultural dynamics
- Greater coherence between strategy, behaviour, and values

AFTERTHOUGHTS

Talking about culture as a system gives people new ways to act—and more compassion for what’s hard to shift.

CONCLUSION

Culture work grounded in systems and complexity builds deeper understanding and more sustainable change.