

# Accelerate Culture Change Using the From/ To/Because Model

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Business recovery and renewal efforts hinge on leaders' ability to resolve culture issues that stymie change. CIOs should use the From/To/Because Model as a way to describe how they want their team members to behave to accelerate business efforts.

## Overview

### Key Challenges

- The business or agency must do work in a new digital way, so employees must also work in a different way. That extends beyond digital and technology to being ready for business strategy and business model shifts, and adapting to them.
- CIOs struggle to create adequate understanding about what they want their employees to do differently as they go about their work.
- Change communication among leaders is inconsistent and creates confusion about what employees need to do to change.
- Describing the current way of working as “bad” creates animosity and disengagement with the very same employees who are needed to make change happen.
- Renewal efforts to move past the COVID-19 crisis will require employees to quickly work in new ways. Finding expeditious ways to define and encourage new behaviors can be difficult.

### Recommendations

CIOs striving to change behaviors:

- Define the mindset shift you need your team to make by using the organization's strategy as the guide.
- Decompose the mindset shift by defining supporting behaviors that use “moving from” and “moving to” statements.
- Create an action plan reinforcing the new behaviors by evaluating systems, processes and management practices.

## Introduction

CIOs frequently say that they need their team members to work in different ways – more innovatively, collaboratively or proactively, for example. CIOs assume their employees know what they mean by that. But the problem is that most team members already are thinking to themselves, “I *am* very innovative, collaborative, proactive.” So while CIOs think they are conveying this big change, nobody is hearing what is different.

Employees have struggled the past few years as their organizations have pushed digital optimization and transformation. COVID-19 has increased the amount of change that employees and organizations face. Leaders previously could back off on the rate of change and the speed of implementing change. But they will not have that luxury now, because it could mean the difference between coming out of the crisis and a painful decline.

Employees must understand what is expected of them to be able to change. The biggest challenge in behavior change is creating understanding. The From/To/Because (FTB) Model is a tool designed to create understanding about what behavior changes a CIO would like to see in the organization. Documenting the expected behavior change improves the ability of leadership to provide a consistent message about what is expected. The FTB Model has four components (see Figure 1; for a more detailed description of the elements, see [“Start Organizational Change With a From/To/Because Model”](#)):

- The top of the FTB model describes the mindset shift that is required of the organization.
- “From” is a description of the current behavioral patterns of the organization.
- “To” is the direction that the organization needs to go in the future, described as behavioral patterns.
- “Because” is why the organization needs to make the transition. Employees will be motivated to change when they understand the business value in doing so.

Figure 1. From/To/Because Model Template

**Mindset Shift: Moving From X to Y**

From	To	Because

Source: Gartner

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**Analysis**

**Define the Mindset Shift Your Team Must Make, Using Your Organization’s Strategy as the Guide**

Without a change in mindsets, enterprises cannot quickly innovate and do it at the scale necessary to succeed in the disrupted markets of digital business (see [“Use Culture Hacking to Foster a Growth Mindset and Accelerate Digital Transformation”](#)). But leadership thinking and the broader culture are notoriously hard to change, because the environment of enterprises is built on generations of fixed-mindset-oriented metrics, performance management systems and leadership practices (see [“Foster a Growth, Not a Fixed Mindset”](#)).

CIOs must instill a mindset within their organizations to enable employees to adapt and innovate. But the rationale for change has to have a valid and defined driver. This helps leaders avoid piling on unnecessary changes, which is an important consideration at a time when more change is already likely to happen.

CIOs can change an organization’s culture, but employees need to understand specifically what needs to be changed about the culture. Below are some of the most frequently mentioned mindset shifts we hear in conversations with clients:

- From working in silos to working collaboratively
- From risk aversion to smart risk taking
- From avoiding conflict to managing conflict
- From being reactive to being proactive
- From working on projects to managing products
- From technology platforms to business capability delivery
- From relying on expert advice to seeking diverse opinions
- From “security owns security” to “I own security”
- From deep expertise to versatelist knowledge
- From status quo to agile learning
- From being IT-centric to customer-centric

The mindset shift needs to make sense, given the organization’s strategy. The mindset shift should be documented at the top of the template, replacing “Mindset Shift: Moving From X to Y.” The rationale for the mindset shift belongs in the “Because” section of the template. The mindset shift should make sense, given the strategy, and could be documented in a short, four-sentence structure:

1. The customers/citizens want W.
2. Business/agency needs to do X.
3. IT needs to provide Y.
4. Thus, we need to behave like Z.

As an example, a CIO needs his team to work more collaboratively across the enterprise. So, the Because statement would be something like this:

1. Our customers’ buying habits are changing, and they demand exceptional customer experience.
2. Seamless customer experience requires that we have a one-company view of our customers.
3. We need to respond quickly and creatively to continue to win their business.
4. IT must build a workplace that enables creativity and speed for the business.

## Decompose the Mindset Shift and Define “Moving From” and “Moving To” Statements

Employees need to understand what behaviors demonstrate the new mindset that the CIO wants and the business requires. These “moving from” and “moving to” statements should clearly articulate the shifts in behavior desired. Let’s look at three examples that we hear from clients: managing conflict, managing risk and working collaboratively.

### **Mindset Shift: From Avoiding Conflict to Managing Conflict**

Conflict is inevitable in the workplace and a normal part of leading a team. Research has shown that 30% to 43% of managerial time is spent mediating conflict.<sup>1</sup> And yet, CIOs still struggle with managing and leading their teams through conflict, most commonly avoiding it (by attempting to create harmony all the time) or trying to resolve it as quickly as possible (by compromising). (See [“Turn Conflict From a Negative to a Positive on Your Team.”](#)) CIOs need to articulate what they mean by addressing conflict and take that down to a set of behaviors. Examples of shifts could be:

- From raising concerns when asked to “see something, say something”
- From raising issues in a group setting to raising issues one on one, communicating resolutions in a group setting

### **Mindset Shift: From Risk Aversion to Smart Risk Taking**

For businesses to move successfully through recovery, they must adapt to the changing environment, market, customers and citizens. This affects everything from design and delivery, to services and interactions. The IT organization must adapt similarly, and CIOs have the responsibility to make it happen. CIOs should begin by exposing, exploring and changing some of IT’s deeply embedded beliefs and corresponding behaviors that run counter to what is needed, with risk aversion at the top of the list. Examples of shifts that CIOs might need their team members to make could be:

- From running postmortems to diagnose problems to running premortems to assess potential risks and postmortems to learn and adjust
- From expecting leaders to make decisions to empowering autonomous decisions

### **Mindset Shift: From Working in Silos to Working Collaboratively**

Working in silos is not in and of itself bad for the organization. If the organization has work that gets done in silos, it is by intentional design. At different points in the organization’s history, it made sense to isolate work. There are myriad reasons why work is done in silos. The question is: Can IT effectively deliver on the information and technology (I&T) needs of the enterprise with the silos that exist? If not, then the team needs to shift from working in silos to working more collaboratively. Working collaboratively requires a commitment by individuals and groups to do

work in different ways, to make decisions in a different way, and to broaden or share specialized and single-purpose resources.

Examples of shifts could be:

- From developing and relying on deep expertise to form decisions and plans to asking others for ideas and opinions, and working together to form decisions and plans
- From evaluating success by achieving the team's objectives to evaluating success by achieving the organization's objectives

CIOs should resist the urge to describe current behaviors in a way that suggests what is happening now is bad. Employees are taught how to behave, so the current behaviors are ones that were taught. Many of the managers whom CIOs want to inspire with this change are in fact the same ones who taught the current behaviors, though generally they did so unintentionally.

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*The difference between what is happening today and what is being expected, moving forward, creates the understanding of what needs to change.*

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## Create an Action Plan That Reinforces the New Behaviors by Evaluating Systems, Processes and Management Practices

Sustainable culture change isn't likely with traditional approaches that focus solely on what leaders say and do. CIOs must take a proactive and adaptive approach to culture that is "operationalized" – or embedded in the way employees do work (see ["Using Gartner's Culture PRISM to Change Culture"](#)).

CIOs need to move employees' understanding of behavior expectations, using the "From" and the "To" statements. They can teach their employees what new behaviors are expected by changing the systems, processes and practices that reinforce the old behaviors.

### Systems

Technology and systems generate the majority of changes in an organization, including how work gets done. CIOs need to understand how the tools – like the organization's ERP and other systems – are affecting behaviors. To operationalize the culture, CIOs must make the technology choices that will support desired behaviors (see ["Predicts 2019: A Dynamic Culture Will Accelerate Digital Transformation"](#)).

### Processes

Processes – such as performance management, strategic planning and financial planning – impact culture change. Our research shows that organizations are more successful when they implement process-focused strategies to achieve the desired culture (see ["The CIO's Role in](#)

Creating a Culture That Performs”). For example, Gartner’s Workforce-Culture Alignment (WCA) Model is a process-focused approach. This model illustrates the need to simultaneously address all three workforce gaps – knowledge, mindset and behavior – that interfere with employees’ ability (or willingness) to apply an organization’s desired culture. CIOs should change the processes that shape how work gets done to encourage desired behaviors.

## Management Practices

Many of an organization’s practices are manifested through its rituals – actions that are done in accordance with social customs or normal protocol, including habits and ceremonies. They play out in the form of onboarding activities, meetings, office layouts, reward ceremonies, stories, use of symbols and language, gestures, and artifacts. <sup>2</sup> Rituals reinforce the organization’s culture. By changing the ritual, CIOs will start to change the culture.

For each of the behavior shifts in the From/To/Because Model, leaders need to identify what systems, processes and practices must change to “teach” that the “To” behaviors are the ones that are expected. Figure 2 provides examples of mapping mindset shifts, to behavior shifts, to the action plans that show the organization what needs to be done differently.

**Figure 2. Examples of Mindset Shifts, Behavior Shifts and Action Plans Using the From/To Format**

**Examples of Mindset Shifts, Behavior Shifts and Action Plans Using the From/To Format**

Mindset Shift	Move From	To	Action Plans
<b>Managing conflict effectively</b> (for more examples, see “Turn Conflict From a Negative to a Positive on Your Team”)	Raising concerns when asked	See something, say something	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a process for concerns to be raised confidentially</li> <li>• Create “see something, say something” recognition</li> </ul>
	Raising issues in a group setting	Raising issues one on one; communicating resolutions to group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adopt a conflict resolution process, and train teams</li> <li>• Add a “move conflict offline” norm to team norms</li> </ul>
<b>Smart risk taking</b> (for more examples, see “Changing Behaviors: From Risk Aversion to Smart Risk-Taking”)	Running postmortems to diagnose issues	Running premortems to assess potential risks and postmortems to learn and adjust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a premortem process</li> <li>• Run the first premortem and evaluate process; adjust as appropriate</li> </ul>
	Expecting leaders to make decisions	Making autonomous decisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Train and implement advise, veto, inform, decide, execute (AVIDE)<sup>a</sup> for decision-making roles</li> <li>• Adjust management performance expectations to push decision making down</li> <li>• Adjust individual contributor performance expectations to demonstrate effective decision making</li> </ul>
<b>Working collaboratively</b> (for more examples, see “Changing Behaviors: From Working in Silos to Working Collaboratively”)	Developing and relying on deep expertise to form decisions and plans	Asking others for ideas and opinions, and working together to form decisions and plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and implement a versatilist model for skills</li> <li>• Implement Microsoft Teams for collaboration project channels</li> </ul>
	Evaluating success by achieving the team’s objectives	Evaluating success by achieving the organization’s objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement an objectives and key results (OKR) model for effective goal management</li> <li>• Adjust recognition programs to emphasize organizational objectives over team objectives</li> </ul>

Source: Gartner

<sup>a</sup> See “Get Decisions to Stick in Your Organization”

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Change can happen only when employees understand what is expected of them and how they can meet those expectations. The From/To/Because Model describes the behavior change in a way that creates understanding, thus empowering employees to work in new ways. When employees are empowered to work in new and different ways, the historical environment has the best chance to be reimaged.

## Evidence

<sup>1</sup> “Measuring Conflict: Both the Hidden Costs and the Benefits of Conflict Management Interventions,” Mediate.com, and “The Value of Conflict Training,” Center for Dispute Resolution, Missouri State University.

<sup>2</sup> Adapted from “Studying Organizational Cultures Through Rites and Ceremonials,” Academy of Management Review. (Paid subscription required.)

## Recommended by the Authors

[Changing Behaviors: From Working in Silos to Working Collaboratively](#)

[Changing Behaviors: From Risk Aversion to Smart Risk-Taking](#)

[Turn Conflict From a Negative to a Positive on Your Team](#)

[Using Gartner's Culture PRISM to Change Culture](#)

## Recommended For You

[Using Gartner's Culture PRISM to Change Culture](#)

[Myths and Realities of Changing Culture](#)

[Shape, Shift and Share the Organization's Culture for ContinuousNext](#)

[The Culture PRISM: 5 Dimensions That Shape Your Culture](#)

[The Culture Hacking Roadmap](#)

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