



Dawson Consulting Group - Silicon Valley

Established in 1989, we have been helping our clients create value through alignment and optimization of Strategy, Culture and Leadership for over 20 years. We have expertise in healthcare, technology and financial services – in Fortune 500 multi-nationals and tiny start-ups. Our clients ask us to begin with them in a number of different places, based on how they understand their needs – we always listen closely so we can meet these needs. Even the most ‘micro’ of our initial engagements – an individual executive coaching assignment – will only be accomplished with an understanding of how the strategy and culture define the many teams of which that individual is a member. And, the most ‘macro’ initial engagement – transformation of the culture to align with a new strategy – will only be accomplished with understanding of individual leadership capability. These ‘micro’ and ‘macro’ lenses – and the territory in the middle – are pieces of the same whole. To think otherwise is to mistake the elephant’s trunk for the elephant.

Executive Experience & C-Level Expertise



With this holistic perspective as foundation, we deliver targeted services to solve problems that our clients are lacking expertise or objectivity to conduct. We are senior, executive consultants with Ph.D level professional backgrounds in business and psychology. We tailor best-practice methods to fit your unique set of circumstances.

Our Strategy Practice uses time-honored tools and methods to define company direction, so that it is clearly articulated, rationally resourced, time-framed and well-communicated. We believe good strategy is more about effective team execution in the right culture, than brilliant flashes of insight.

Our Culture Practice provides best practice culture-change methodologies to meet a variety of presenting situations – from ‘crisis’ survival mode to ‘tune-up’ and culture ‘shaping’. Our recent book Leading Culture Change: What Every CEO Needs to Know (Stanford University Press, 2010) is a complete handbook for any executive faced with the need to shape or change organizational culture. We recommend the book as a good way to learn more about the firm – it is written for working executives who want a ‘how to’ framework, methods, and tools.

Our Leadership Practice offers an integrated suite of services emphasizing the link between team and individual executive effectiveness – and the full life-cycle of the executive. We use research-based, best-practice tools and methods in all the ‘usual’ areas: On Boarding, Team Development, Executive Coaching, Talent Management and Succession Planning. But we do this with that holistic understanding that ties these explicitly to Culture and Strategy.

About the Firm Founded by Dr. Christopher Dawson, a senior consultant with 25 years of executive level experience, he is joined by five other senior level team members – psychologists and HR executives – with expertise in strategy, organizational design, large project implementation, culture change, and executive coaching. The firm is based in the heart of Silicon Valley, California, with satellite offices in New York and Honolulu.

Visit our website or call for more information

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How We Work: Two Case Examples

I - The Challenge: Healthcare Silos Block Clinical Functionality New federal regulations aimed at accelerated automation of medical records have brought the simmering culture clash between clinicians and IT staff to a full boil. To implement complex clinical and administrative functionality requires true co-creation and collaboration between physicians, IT staff, clinical staff with strong executive sponsorship. In many cases, these are ‘must-do’, high-risk projects that carry survival-level implications for patient-care outcomes and financial success.

Solutions: First, we do an objective assessment of the two subcultures in context of the enterprise culture and history. We hope in this initial snapshot also to gain a clear picture of the executive leadership and how their strengths/improvement needs impact the conflict. We unravel the ways in which suboptimal structures, processes, goals and incentives get in the way of effective collaboration. Second, we present our diagnostic conclusions and recommendations to the combined leadership team, and privately to key executives. Specific actions will always depend on specific circumstances but invariably the culprits are found in these areas:

1. Change the structure – break up the tribes to create a new tribe with a shared mission.
2. Create horizontal processes that can act as a bridge between the subcultures: conjoint meetings, ownership of single processes, and common objectives.
3. Call out the link between dysfunctional subculture dynamics and specific leadership attitudes and behaviors. Model and enforce rational team norms – deal forcefully with bad behavior.
4. Educate and coach about effective ways to collaborate, hold effective meetings, monitor shared goals, escalate decisions, and communicate effectively.

Third, we clarify ownership and responsibility for the change plan going forward, building in periodic self- and objective assessments of progress against baseline. Our consulting role shifts to one of team and individual coaching with a focus on building sustainable capability that is repeatable in future efforts, and that serve as organizational models for success.



II - The Challenge: New CEO, Team & Strategy: The arrival of a new CEO – often punctuating a period of poor performance and difficult departure of a previous leader – always creates a period of heightened uncertainty and risk. The team in place is uncertain about where they stand with the new boss, and the new CEO is asking the question (hopefully!) Do I have the right strategy, people, culture and team to create new value? How big a change is needed?

Solutions: We draw initial conclusions about clarity and alignment of strategy, required culture, and leadership capability from a ‘Rapid-Cycle Snapshot’ that creates minimal impact on executives’ time while producing a wealth of objective and actionable new information.

We connect these dots into a three-part set of recommendations: (1) Broad stroke strategy-culture-structure actions, (2) A model for how the executive team will work, and (3) Individual development plans for all members of the executive team against the template of required capabilities.

We present these findings in a cycle of private 1-1, and executive team, sessions, which end with public consensus about what action-commitments will be made going forward and how these will be communicated, resourced, and monitored. After this, our role as consultant shifts from diagnostic expert to coach and objective advocate for the team’s plan that is now owned by the team. A blend of individual and team coaching ensures continuing focus.

