Cultural Implications of Evolving the National Weather Service to Provide Impact-Based Decision Support Services

NWS VLab Forum
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The Office of Organizational Excellence

What We Do

OOE applies strategic thinking across the NWS, challenges the status quo, enables change, and creates enterprise and internal connections.

Focus Areas

Strategy
Helping NWS plot the course for a successful future

Organizational Health & Culture
Ensuring a high performing and engaged workforce

External Engagement
Cultivating and sustaining effective partnerships

Governance
Maintaining the processes that ensures NWS is a well run and effective organization

weather.gov/ooe
What is Organizational Culture?

The behaviors, habits, values, and norms which are reflected in our workplace environment and our attitude or feelings about work.

What is biggest barrier to effectiveness in the digital age?

Survey of 2,135 Global Executives
*Culture for a Digital Age, McKinsey, 2017*
Impact of NWS Culture on Core Products and Services

Stephan Smith, Presentation at 2017 Annual NWA Meeting
NWS Culture Surveys

### Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS)
- **When:** Annually
- **Responses:** 542 (2017)
- **Survey Owner:** Office of Personnel Management
  - Focuses on employee satisfaction

### Organizational Health Index (OHI)
- **When:** June 2015 & February 2017
- **Responses:** ~2000 each
- **Survey Owner:** McKinsey and Company
  - Focuses on effect of organizational health on performance

### Organizational Culture Index (OCI)
- **When:** June 2016
- **Responses:** 112 (HQ and Southern Region)
- **Survey Owner:** Human Synergistics
  - Compares current culture vs. ideal culture and levers for change

### Diagram
- Direction 47
- Accountability 49
- Coordination & Control 30
- Innovation & Learning 28
- External Orientation 68
- Leadership 50
- Capabilities 73
- Motivation 78
- Work Environment 47

### Additional Information
- Department of Commerce
  - National Weather Service
  - 2nd Level Inagency Report
  - My Work Experience (continued)

- Direction
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- Work Environment

- My Work Experience (continued)
  1. I feel my current role is well suited to my skills and abilities.
  2. I feel my current role provides me with the opportunity to fully use my skills and abilities.
  3. I feel my current role is well suited to my skills and abilities.

- My Work Experience (continued)
  4. My work role has a clear, defined purpose.

- My Work Experience (continued)
  5. My work role has a clear, defined purpose.

- My Work Experience (continued)
  6. My work role has a clear, defined purpose.
Culture Strengths Observed in Surveys

- **Motivated**
  - 66% of staff are highly motivated
  - 88% enjoy the work they do

- **Mission-oriented**
  - 86% of staff believe NWS is successful in accomplishing its mission

- **Customer-focused**
  - 72% of staff feel the organization is good at managing constituent and stakeholder networks

- **High Job Satisfaction**
  - Staff report high levels of job satisfaction (70%) and pay satisfaction (73%)

- **Strong Supervisor-Employee Relationships**
  - 68% of staff trust their immediate supervisor
Trust & Employee Engagement
- 30% of employees do not feel leadership asks for opinions regarding big decisions

Humanistic & Encouraging Environment
- A majority of respondents would like a more humanistic, encouraging, and supportive culture

Role Clarity
- 40% of staff report that job design and organizational structures muddy roles and responsibilities

Accountability and Recognition
- 40% of staff believe they are not held accountable based on results

Innovation & Learning
- Only 15% of staff say that we regularly adopt external best practices
Organizational Culture Roadmap

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I. Understand the Culture</th>
<th>II. Operationalize the Culture</th>
<th>III. Maximize Leader Impact</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Surface Actionable Culture Intelligence Through Employee-Led Diagnosis</td>
<td>Equip Employees to Apply the Culture In Their Day-to-Day Work</td>
<td>Expand Leader Role Modeling to Include Remodeling Business Processes</td>
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Creating a Culture That Performs: Moving from People to Process to Maximize Culture Outcomes, Gartner, 2017
Inaugural NRAP Culture Team (2017)

David Kochevar
Meteorologist
Anchorage, AK
Interest: gain understanding of culture & its relation to EVOLVE, move forward on a common goal

Megan Syner
Warning Coord Meteorologist
Great Falls, MT
Interest: build relationships w/ change-makers, involve wider audience in change process

Geoff Grochocinski
Meteorologist
Duluth, MN
Interest: apply Masters in Mgmt & Change Leadership (enrolled now), use dialogue as a method of change

Kevin Deitsch
Senior Meteorologist
St. Charles, MO
Interest: bridge WFOs to promote best practices, support transition to modern wx entity w/ DSS @ forefront

Kimberly McMahon
Meteorologist
Burlington, VT
Interest: practice leadership skills, focus on the positive & effective communication, ID links between culture & productivity, feedback to HQ

Lauren Nash
Meteorologist
Huntsville, AL
Interest: promote positive work environ as a way to support mission, share 'voices from the field' with HQ

Ricky Shanklin
Warning Coord Meteorologist
Paducah, KY
Interest: be at forefront of evolution of NWS, expand my horizons, practice leadership skills

Mark Burger
Meteorologist @ CWSU
Olathe, KS
Interest: gain hands on experience creating positive org culture, practice leadership skills

Julie Wagner
NRAP Culture Team Coord
Silver Spring
Interest: increase awareness, understanding & action around org culture; support the team

David Tomalak
IT/Meteorologist
Boulder, CO
Int: apply tools from Colorado Leadership Development Program, promote good communications

Lauren Nash
Meteorologist
Huntsville, AL
Interest: promote positive work environ as a way to support mission, share 'voices from the field' with HQ

Kimberly McMahon
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“We get ‘on the spot’ swag awards for attention to the mission. One forecaster in our office got an award for proactively reaching out to firefighters during a large hazardous materials fire to update them on changing wind conditions”
"Our office did an internal review of our services and our messaging at a staff meeting, and discussed ways we could improve for the next event. I think most of the staff learned ways to ramp up our messaging to the public and our partners in case an event like that occurs again."

Photo Credit: https://www.weather.gov/jkl/winterpartnerexercise
“In our office, people don’t often talk about their forecasts. I explained to my colleagues the benefit of hearing their thought process and from sharing mine. Now I found other people who feel the same way, which is satisfying and improves our forecasts”
Welcome to the NWS Organizational Culture Portal! These resources are designed to help our NWS community to better understand and use organizational culture. Understanding organizational culture is a journey.

**What is Culture:** Culture is like a fabric with thousands of threads. Each thread represents a behavior, habit or value. Individually, each behavior doesn’t amount to much, but woven together they create a very strong system. To learn more, go [here](#).

**Why Culture Matters:** NWS organizational culture determines our performance more than we think, sometimes with greater impact than strategy. To learn why the NWS must engage culture as an essential tool to aid in the protection of life and property, go [here](#).

**How to Address Organizational Culture (What Can I Do):** Once we begin to understand culture, we can use it help us protect life & property. To learn about culture initiatives & experiments used by your NWS colleagues (forecasters, MIC/HIC, and SES), go [here](#).

**How Does Organizational Culture Help us EVOLVE:** Unlocking time to increase DSS services changes how we work. To learn about how EvolveNWS will change our culture, from impacts to our identity as meteorologists to expectations about customers service, go [here](#).

**Don’t Stop Here, Keep Learning:** Check out our Culture Learning Corner & Resource Page. The Culture Coffee Break is the best way to break through the jargon and understand NWS colleagues understanding about culture. See excerpts below, or for more info go [here](#).
Culture Consulting

- Provide tailored support to interested offices
- Identify strengths and weaknesses
- Identify strategies for improvement based on peer to peer examples and other best practices

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<th>NWS OFFICE X</th>
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<td>30</td>
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<td>Capabilities</td>
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<td>68</td>
<td>73</td>
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“Evolving the National Weather Service is as much a culture change as it is a technological or operational change”

- Louis Uccellini
  NWS Director
Last Forecast Process Change: Switching from Text Forecast to Gridded Forecast

“Right now we own our product, because it’s our words. It won’t be our words with the new system.”

Cultural Impacts
- Lose literary autonomy
+ Gain greater meteorological detail by incorporating new science and technologies

Image Credit: http://rowancountyweather.com/blog/2017/01/15/sunday-weather-update
Forecast Process Change Today: Gridded Forecast + Impact Based Decision Support Services

Cultural Impacts

+ Gain literary autonomy through IDSS
+ Greater ability to “save lives and property” through IDSS

- Fear of losing autonomy over the digital forecast
- Fear of losing meteorological acumen. Just “plugging in” the blend without understanding meteorology

- Mission-oriented
- Customer-focused
- Role Clarity
- Innovation & Learning
Possible Activities to Address Cultural Barriers

- **Value and Reward What Matters:**
  - Align performance metrics, reward systems, and hiring with new strategies, including IDSS
  - Show examples of how IDSS allows NWS to realize its mission

- **Continue Innovation, Learning, & Maintaining Expertise:**
  - Ensure NWS builds and adopts state-of-the-art science and technology
  - Ensure future operational workflows maintain situational awareness, forecaster expertise, and ability to add local skill when it matters most

- **Improve Role Clarity:**
  - Define the roles/responsibilities of the components of the future forecast process
OEE will target the following organizational health areas to promote optimal NWS performance and support continuous improvement and employee satisfaction.

- **Trust**: Encourage greater communication and employee engagement on the direction of the agency and the initiatives to get there.
- **Innovation**: Develop a culture of innovation that captures and operationalizes internal and external ideas and best practices.
- **Role Clarity**: Ensure efforts to evolve the NWS clearly define future roles of NWS employees across the organization.
- **Recognition**: Support consistent recognition and awards, both for positive and negative performance.
Establish a new cross-office team of leaders with responsibility for people-related activities to align their efforts in conjunction with a new NWS Strategic Plan.

Championed by the NWS Deputy Director

“Meaningful employee engagement must be a cornerstone of organizational change”

“Evolving the NWS will require both top-down and bottom-up changes and innovations”
The Future?

• A more human-centered, customer-centered approach to forecasting

• Value is measured through accurate forecasts that ALSO result in positive societal/business outcomes

• Recognition that forecasting should become more of a team sport to maximize these positive outcomes
Thank you

- NWS Office of Organizational Excellence Colleagues
- NWS Culture Team
- NWS Evolve Program Management Office Colleagues
- Stephan Smith, NWS

References: