



Watercooler® Culture Assessment from Root

For decades, watercooler conversations have conjured up the image of employees standing around gossiping between sips from little cone-shaped cups. Cliché or not, these conversations can often provide the best view into the inner workings of an organization – the attitudes, the mood, the pulse, the energy.

Why is the energy so important? Because it impacts every layer of the organization. It is an intangible, yet palpable force that bleeds into every aspect of organizational culture and process.

The Watercooler® philosophy

A table. Markers. A list of questions. A very special sketch that in a single graphical view outlines the unspoken barriers to organizational success.

These are the ingredients that make up Root's very informal, highly effective, Watercooler® Culture Assessment sessions. Root goes beyond the philosophy of why watercooler conversations evoke certain feelings and behaviors. Our proven methodology uses Socratic dialogue to create a safe haven to authentically discuss the conflict-laden topics that people don't know how to talk about and solve together.

The sketch captures the organization's current reality, including representative comments from various stakeholders. Its light tone ensures that no one takes the self-critique too seriously, yet it creates a forum to separate issues from individuals. No one who takes the time to examine the sketch can walk away from the images without deciding to do something about it.

A method for every learning style

Strategic engagement of people and the delivery of better results require authenticity, truth-telling, and relevance. The reason? Because realism is at the heart of execution. Uncovering those realities is challenging and that type of truth-telling is typically only possible in discussions around the watercooler, in the hallways, or in the restroom. Root has a powerful technique for shifting these hidden conversations into public dialogue that creates shared vulnerability and drives clarity, alignment, and ownership of strategy execution.

In all Watercooler® Culture Assessments, Root’s proven methodologies cover three learning styles – visual, kinesthetic or tactile, and auditory. This ensures the process appeals to your entire workforce regardless, of their preferred method of learning.

The visual approach documents the challenges and obstacles that organizations face to create a candid and sometimes humorous mirror of reality and “the way we work around here.” It uses an informal way to draw out the opinions, attitudes, and beliefs that need to be put out “on the table” and challenged.

From cynicism to advocacy

Participants have the opportunity to safely express their thoughts and feelings. The safe and rigorous discussions of the marketplace, strategy, and cultural and behavioral areas where we are “creatively dissatisfied” set the stage for critical conversations that matter most to the future. Participants typically evolve from cynicism and skepticism to exploration and curiosity, to hope and confidence, to advocacy to resolve the inhibitors to our future success.

The Watercooler® Culture Assessment works because it captures reality, challenges denial, helps the team not take itself too seriously, and allows dialogue to focus on the sketch – not on each other. It gives people permission to openly “discuss the undiscussables,” enabling organizations and leaders to step into the conflict that is critical for authentic engagement and performance.

After the discussion of the Watercooler® sketch “draws out” opinions, attitudes, and beliefs, those issues can be put on the table and challenged in the open. Then, solutions can be crafted and merged into a new picture for how the team wants to behave and lead. It’s up to leaders and teams to decide what they want to do about it. Because visual engagement challenges denial, you and other senior leaders can’t look at the picture and not do something about it.

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About Root

Root is a strategy execution company that helps organizations engage people as a catalyst for change using a proven framework that consistently achieves clarity, ownership, and results.

