

## **Culture and Climate**

Much has been said and written in recent times about organisational culture. While discussing this in an on-line meeting this week, I was led to think differently.

I have been doing work for Premier League Soccer with two fine experienced soccer professionals. Huw Jennings is now the Head of Football Development at Fulham FC and Sean O'Driscoll was until recently the Head of Coach Development at Portsmouth FC.

The three of us have talked previously about ways in which a sports organisation may develop a culture that can lead to sustained success. Sean introduced a new slant on this, when he suggested that leaders should first consider climate, what he described as the 'mood' of any organisation. We went on to consider the difference between climate and culture and concluded that the former is easily changed. It can be seen at unit and even-sub-unit level. The mood of an office or changing room can build up and contribute in time to the culture of the organisation itself.

Culture is the personality of the organisation. It is hard-wired and slow to change. It takes a long time to create and can influence performance both positively and negatively, depending on whether it is a desirable or perhaps even a toxic culture.

Let us consider the recent events surrounding Yorkshire County Cricket Club. The mood in the dressing room seems not to have been as it should. Seemingly small comments, perhaps intended as a joke, if frequent enough, and addressed at the same target audience, were bound to create a climate that was not enjoyed by all the players, least of all Azeem Rafiq. Over time, this would be seen as amusing by some and vindictive by others, not the ideal setting for the optimum team behaviour that might be usually associated with high performance. Those who were on the 'amused' side may even now not believe that they were contributing to a divisive environment.

Meanwhile, many of those involved with Yorkshire CCC and outside the dressing-room, perhaps believed that all was well and that the culture of the club was perfectly acceptable. Committee members and senior administrators may have had a healthily cohesive and highly motivated group of people in their parts of the business, where the climate was compatible with efficiency and success. However, if the club was to have a culture to be proud of, the different elements of playing performance, operations, administration, ground management etc all need to operate in a climate where everyone feels comfortable, behaviour is respectful, and people feel supported.

The climate in a group or operational unit is formed by the way the members of that group relate; how they greet one another when they meet; how they show an interest in them; how they show they care. It is an inter-personal thing. I know one or two places that seem to have this right, where the mood of the whole organisation seems to embrace this behaviour.

I like this. In future, when I think about culture, I will bear in mind the climate in different sections of the organisation, how small things might encourage positive behavioural change and how the different elements might combine, indeed will need to combine, if there is to be any chance of sustained success.