



CASE STUDIES

1. Beating post-acquisition blues

After ten years in private ownership, a Californian software company decided to go public and begin a programme of expansion. One of the companies it purchased was in England, an organisation with a similar background, but significantly smaller. The similarity of the two companies led them into a false sense of security and their due diligence was limited to the financials. However, six months after the merger, there were growing concerns about there being a clash of cultures.

The UK side, taking on the role of bridgehead into Europe, demanded long hours, and steep learning curves on the part of the rapidly increased staff numbers. They observed Stateside as surfers, resting on the laurels of their past successes, who never answered requests, but always demanded answers within hours.

DOCSA explored the two cultures, both as perceived internally and as seen as a partner. We found that each “tribe” saw their home cultural profiles in the same positive way as each other, but saw the other as opposite, and negative. Our solution was to get them to hold up these profiles to each other in small groups, and help them to address the issues they had and reach for the culture that they could share. This process brought them much closer together, but cost the time, and opportunity that could have been saved by including a culture survey as part of due diligence.

2. Re-branding through corporate culture change

A previously highly successful company has to find new ways of reaching its market and re-building its brand. Its resistance to change was formidable and natural given its grounding over many years of being “right” without effort.

A full-scale diagnostic survey of its existing culture showed it to be a ponderous company, composed of people who are not encouraged to think for themselves when solutions to problems are needed. Many years being the standard of excellence that competitors could only aspire to, it lacked the capacity to accept advice from outside or self-criticism, continuing to dictate what customers wanted, revealing itself as an overly controlled and inwardly focused organisation.

Docsa helped the company to define a new, more pioneering, outwardly focused culture as a need if there was to be a way forward, and identified the behavioural barriers in the existing culture that must be declared off-limits. People key to the business learned how to change their style and motivate their staff to use their initiative. Managers were appraised, and those who could not, or would not, change were let go. The message to the organisation was clear: ‘to survive we have to be different; this is how’. What DOCSA did was make the culture for the future come alive so that the different could be seen, recognised, and achieved.



3. Integrating international teams

Following a “friendly” take-over, the two research and development teams working on a mission critical project, one based in the USA, the other in Finland (and separated in time by 11 hours), needed to hit the ground running. Technology could solve some logistical problems, but team members were hesitant in reaching out to make it work.

DOCSA developed a special Values exercise for this client and surfaced the values that were shared between the two otherwise diverse national groups. Both believed in honest, open communication, even when the message could be painful. Both believed that in novelty is opportunity.

DOCSA also found the danger points for these two groups of people. In the USA, being in a team means very different things to those in Finland. For the Americans they are a means to an end. For the Finns, the team is the spiritual home.

Understanding the behaviours that underpin both the similarities, and differences, gave team members the confidence to negotiate the way they could work with each other. Using Docsort to help them, they resolved to be guided by six key behaviours, two of which are “Be truthful, don’t judge” and “Treat all new ideas with relish, no matter whose”. They beat their competitors to market. The company subsequently began to work towards a brand identity that unified their overall corporate image externally, internally, and globally. To some extent sadly, their subsequent success has led them to be bought by a major global corporation.

4. Changing relationships with business and partners

During the course of its routine customer focused research, a major pharmaceutical company based in the UK had identified some differences between two groups of corporate customers. The “friendly” group was broadly satisfied. The “hostile” group, despite getting the same service levels, were “picky”, unable to express their dissatisfaction in ways that were meaningful to the company. A Docsa survey with the hostile group revealed the nature of their dissatisfaction: – boredom. What they saw was a lean, mean efficient machine. What they wanted was a progressive, stimulating business partner.

The Pharma company took a hard look at its image as revealed by the hostile customer: precise practitioners but not enough innovation, measured communication but no joined-up thinking, efficient controls but too inflexible. Working with the “hostile” group they used our instruments to help develop a partnership relationship with this group of previously uncommitted customers. The resulting Image profiles enabled them to pinpoint the changes required in their organisation culture. They now had a language that enabled them to talk, to negotiate a new way of working together that was anything but ‘boring’.



5. Changing relationships with communities

Over the past few years, the UK Police Services have all had to adjust the way they deal with their communities, the public and their partners in dealing with crime and security. They have had to move from a quasi-military law-enforcement Force to a local Service aimed at crime detection and reduction and the support of the victim and the community.

Docsa has so far helped five Police Services go through this often painful process by helping to identify what actual behaviours needed to change within each service if the required changes are to stick. Each Service has its own unique starting points, and individual journey to its distinctive goal.

Police Services include many staff with local connections, long service and long memories, often contrasting with the senior boards, which are made up of national career officers. We need to be sure that the word is spread from within, and owned by the institution at large.

With the Service, we engage local communities in refining the target culture, helping to increase the vital 'brand image'. By training selected officers from the various organisational units within the service in the Docsa process, we give the client the means to articulate, broadcast sustain the changes that they have identified as necessary to engage.

The public sector contains most of the organisations that have a need to change culture for its own sake, as a consequence of political will and social pressure. Police Services are in the van of such changes, and by giving them the tools to do the job themselves, we know that the desired changes will be made, and, if necessary, made again.

6. Building a team that delivers

The French national sales and service team of a multi-national high technology equipment manufacturer had been through a number of major changes involving moving location and combining two quite different sales forces. Once the management team had been resolved and business targets re-established, there was a need to bring team and strategy together. We prepared a questionnaire for each manager, aimed to surface any cultural, business and personal issues. Using Docsort, we then had them consider together and agree the culture that they needed to work toward if the new organisation was to deliver. Each manager presented to the group and subsequently published the specific actions that he or she would undertake as their contribution. From a gathering of people who had no sense of confidence, togetherness or cohesion, they became focused and successful, despite poor market conditions. The whole exercise was conducted in French.

7. Avoiding a recruiting mistake

A head of a PR agency sought to hire a man of the City. We took along Docsort to test cultural compatibility. For twenty minutes, they were each taken through our cards, and invited to state their positions, the one describing his company culture, the other his preferences for the kind of company in which he works best. Half way through, one said to the other: 'I couldn't work here', and the other: 'And I would be mad to employ you'. They parted the best of friends.