Organizational culture – the “personality” of an organization that guides how employees think and act on the job – is central to the values, beliefs, inter-personal behaviours, and attitudes to stakeholders that determine how the organization does its job. Culture is a key factor not only in achieving organizational goals, but in attracting and keeping desirable employees, creating a positive public image, and building respectful relationships with stakeholders.

This paper will explore three questions critical to the pursuit of an appropriate culture for an organization. What kind of culture is appropriate to the organization? What change methodology is most likely to be successful in introducing and reinforcing the culture? And what barriers imbedded in today’s way of doing things must be overcome?

The paper will explore the kinds of management interventions typically required to achieve this kind of corporate transformation, using practical change management examples from several Canadian federal government departments, as well as the extensive literature on this subject, to illustrate successful practices. The paper will also examine the kinds of barriers to change often built into the cultures of scientific, technical and regulatory agencies, and discuss how these might be overcome.