

# Aligning Culture and Strategy: Bringing a New Perspective to University Seniors

**Ann McNally and Pat Schaeffer have recently teamed up, with Pat bringing an organizational culture perspective to Ann's Capstone course in Strategic Planning at the Haub School of Business at St. Joseph's University in Philadelphia, PA.** Ann and Pat met during the networking time after a program that featured speaker Lars Bjork, CEO of Radnor, PA-based QlikTech. Brought together serendipitously, they struck up a conversation sparked by Bjork's comment, "Culture eats strategy for breakfast."

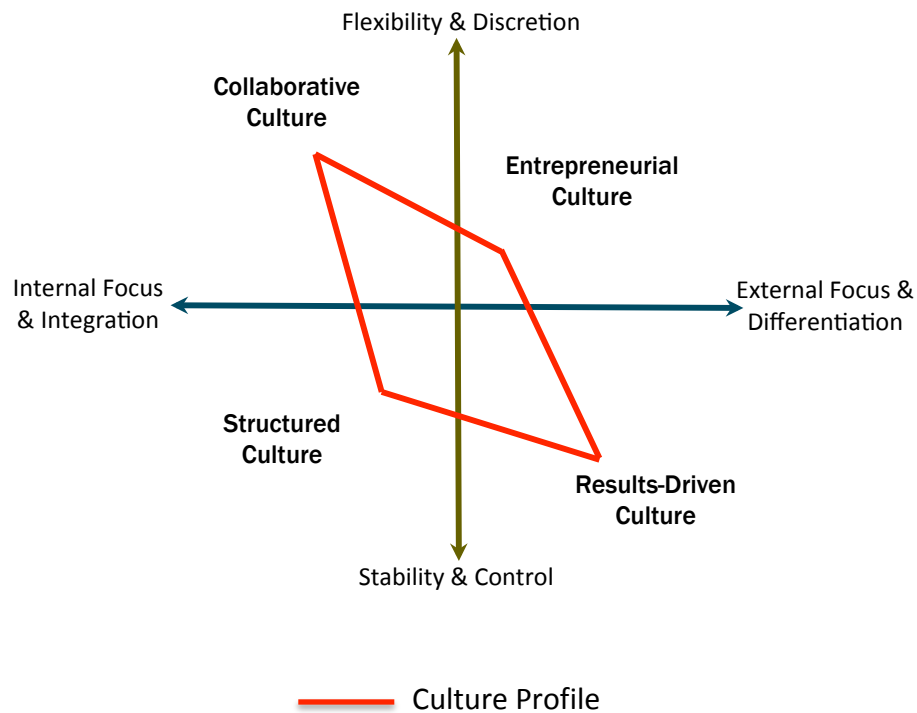
This was a new concept to Ann, a seasoned financial executive. To Pat, a veteran of human resources, it was a truism she's seen play out over and over again. Before they parted that morning, they'd decided to meet again to pursue a collaboration on behalf of Ann's Capstone course.

**An Adjunct Professor at St. Joseph's, Ann guides student teams in the research of a publicly-traded company of their choice and coaches them to develop a strategic plan for their company.** Each term, Ann teaches one of nine sections of the Strategic Planning course. Her teams compete with the teams in the other sections to develop the best strategic plan. The competition is judged by a panel of four senior executives from publicly-traded companies in various industries. Last December, Ann's class won the competition.

**As a guest speaker, Pat led an interactive session on the importance of aligning organizational culture and business strategy.** Using a validated research-based model, the *Competing Values Framework*, she helped the students understand the impact of organizational culture on the ability to execute business strategy.

The Competing Values Framework looks at a culture through the lens of organizational effectiveness. Pat provided the class with the descriptions of the four culture types defined by the Competing Values Framework, as well as an organizational culture assessment instrument, the OCAI, developed by professors at the University of Michigan's Ross School of Business.

Applying the Competing Values Framework to a company case study, Pat helped the students identify the culture profile of the company (Figure 1) and understand how the culture of the organization supports the company's business strategy. Each team also made a brief presentation on the culture of their chosen company, based on mission and vision statements and other cultural clues they had discovered in their research.



**Figure 1: The Competing Values Framework**

The concepts and tools Pat provided to the students were fresh and new to them. They gained a valuable experience by looking beyond the financial and operational aspects of their company to also explore its cultural aspects. This new perspective will help them create more robust strategic plans than they otherwise might have. Ann and Pat plan to repeat the culture module with a new class this Fall.

\* \* \* \* \*

**Ann and Pat are members of Greater Philadelphia Senior Executive Group (GPSEG).**

Ann is a GPSEG Board Member and Treasurer. She is the Managing Principal of ACM Advisors, a consulting firm in West Chester, PA that helps non-profits, small businesses, entrepreneurs and other growing organizations with strategic planning, board

governance, board development, organization design and financial development. Ann brings to her consulting practice and teaching over 20 years of experience in financial planning, financial analysis and accounting operations, as well as strong background in IT.

Pat serves on the GPSEG Governance Committee and is co-leader of the GPSEG Guide initiative. She is a Founding Principal of Talent Strategy Partners (TSP) with more than 25 years of experience in human resources. TSP is a consulting firm with offices in Media and Yardley, PA that works with mid-size and large businesses to positively impact organization culture through talent management. TSP uses its proprietary technology, Culture Engine™, to profile organizations' current and desired cultures, analyze the gaps between the two, and develop a talent management strategy aligned with the desired culture.