

SUCCESS STORY: VETERINARY SERVICES | USDA



Culture shift initiative measures collective beliefs & behaviors to move towards a more collaborative, inclusive environment, reduce burnout, and improve retention

Leaders reinvigorate vision and values as they deliver on mandate for measurable change

Organizational Results

- Validated culture profile details specific strengths & challenges
- Culture Shift Action Plan dovetailed with Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) outcome and response
- Forum to leverage diverse employee perspectives & stories
- Over 40% direct, voluntary participation in Culture Shift



Challenge

Veterinary Services (VS) is a science-based USDA program tasked with protecting the health and marketability of our nation's animals, including emergency response to disease outbreak.

Prolonged national emergencies contributed to a high-level of burnout and retention challenges. Several unsuccessful attempts at culture change created distrust, as well as a lack of ownership and engagement.

Approach

A full-scale culture audit invited input through an organizational survey, interviews, and multiple focus groups. The effort was open to every employee.

Detailed profiles of the current culture identified both strengths and shadow behaviors contributing to turnover. The desired future culture was identified.

Action Planning addressed the underlying cultural drivers with tactical and measurable steps.

Individuals across every unit are participating in the 'Become the Change' initiative, tying personal behaviors to organizational benchmarks.

Outcomes

VS leaders and teams have created productive new channels to collect feedback, invite input, and support transparency at both the individual and organizational levels. Employees have voluntarily engaged at every step, with participation rates steadily growing months into the effort.

Driven by validated survey data, the story-based framework of CultureTalk has enabled identification of nine detailed culture change themes, including evaluation of areas where the organization and staff excel, and where they struggle.

Specific strategic and operational gaps align directly with Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey data, and are being addressed through working groups and phased plans to reduce burnout, fill vacant positions, increase retention, improve communication and create collaboration.

CultureTalk Solutions Employed:

- CultureTalk for Organizations & CultureTalk for Individuals
- Baseline Culture Audit & Become the Change Program
- Culture Change Action Plan
- Culture Code and Behaviors / Rewards and Recognition Program
- Communications Plan

Archetype Patterns Identified in Organizational Culture



"CultureTalk is a holistic approach for change management. Individual employees are stepping into ownership, asking, how can I contribute to a culture I want to be a part of?" |

Todd Sazdoff, Branch Chief, Organization Development, APHIS, USDA