

The Narrative Intelligence Playbook: Aligning Teams & Driving Organizational Change



CultureTalk™

Measure. Validate. Activate.



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Culture is a story we share.

But culture isn't easy to talk about. That's because culture operates below the surface. It's not an offering; it's a shared experience that is deeply rooted in how people feel about an organization and its leadership. The driving question we need to answer is whether those feelings drive motivation, connection and meaning.

That's the work we are doing through CultureTalk. As you get to know the platform and methodology, you'll learn the red thread running through everything we talk about is **storytelling**.

At CultureTalk, we've developed a unique framework, toolset, and assessment instrument based on 12 universal Archetypes which, together, unlock deeper insights into individual, team, and organizational behavior.

This guide offers you a first look at how these timeless stories can make team cohesion and culture change tangible, actionable, and human.

It's a preview of the tools and methodologies we teach in our ***CultureTalk Certification: Storytelling & Narrative Intelligence program.***

Get ready to dig into how Archetypes work as a practical lens for navigating today's most pressing workplace challenges.

If what you read here ignites your curiosity, we invite you to explore the full certification program, where you'll gain the skills, tools, and confidence to lead with storytelling and Narrative Intelligence.

Discover how to turn culture into your most strategic asset.

[\[Learn more about CultureTalk Certification here.\]](#)



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Part 1: An Introduction to Archetypes

Archetypes are human storylines that we can all recognize and relate to. They are like fingerprints: nuanced and unique. They come to life through deep, multi-layered profiles of both individuals and organizations.

Carl Jung, the Swiss psychiatrist prominent in the early to mid-1900's, was also an expert in myth and symbology. He studied cultures across the ages, noting many **shared patterns, themes, and symbols** that were also present in the day-to-day experiences and struggles of his clients.

Jung proposed that the human mind is not exclusively the product of personal experience, but rather contains **elements which are common to all humans**. These elements he called the 'Archetypes' and he proposed that while unconscious, these 'cognitive categories' influence our thoughts, behaviors, and the way we look at the world.

"Archetypes," he wrote "are images and thoughts which have universal meanings across cultures."

Jung said **these storylines provide structure for human experiences**. He believed that becoming aware of how Archetypal patterns are playing out in our own lives is the path to expanding consciousness.

Many philosophers and teachers from Joseph Campbell to Carolyn Myss have expanded on Jung's concept, creating their own names, categories, or systems for applying Archetypes to help us answer the age-old questions of 'who am I?' and 'where do I belong?'

But it was **Carol Pearson who brought Archetypes into the modern business world**. A researcher, author and educator, she led women's and leadership studies programs at the University of Colorado, the University of Maryland, and Georgetown University among others. She later became the president of Pacifica Graduate Institute which specializes in post graduate Jungian studies.

Through her academic research and work, **Pearson uncovered 12 Archetypes** that were most common in leadership and organizational settings. She has published numerous books about **how to apply Archetypal narrative intelligence towards personal growth and organizational alignment**. It is Pearson's 12-Archetype framework that we use in our work at CultureTalk.

*Here's a quick background (but skip to **page 7** if you just want to get straight to the business applications!)*



Activating Archetypes to Develop People and Organizations

Whether we are working with individuals, leaders, teams, or even across an organization, Archetypes provide a solid foundation for personal growth and organizational change.

Here are four key concepts when working with Archetypes:



1)ARCHETYPES ARE STORIES.

Neuroscience shows that ‘story’ is the way our brains process information. Even when given a list of facts – our brains translate facts into stories in order to make them memorable and meaningful. In brain imaging studies, our neural networks light up on stories. Newer research also shows that our heartbeats align when we share a story.

2)EACH ARCHETYPE HAS STRENGTHS AND SHADOWS.

Just like human beings – Archetypes are rich and colorful, but also flawed and relatable. They each have their own motivations and strengths, but they also have shadows traits that can get in the way of success.

3)WE HAVE THE CAPACITY FOR ALL 12 ARCHETYPES.

One or more of these Archetypes may be related to an individual’s or organization’s core identity, while others may shift over time in response to phases of life or business – or in response to situations encountered.



4)LATENT ARCHETYPES CAN BE ACTIVATED.

Knowing which Archetypes are less active in an individual or organization can shed light on perspectives and skills that are missing and can be developed with intention.

With these key concepts in mind, let’s look at how we can activate Archetypes with individuals and groups to design, align, and transform culture.



The 12 Archetypes of CultureTalk

Archetype	Guiding Vision	Favorite Phrase	Inspired By	Frustrated By	Examples
 CAREGIVER	To make sure all needs are met	Lend a hand in any situation	Compassion, kindness and generosity	People who live only for themselves	Mary Poppins / Volvo
 CREATOR	To create something out of nothing	With imagination, anything is possible	Seeing the connections within the chaos	Poor design	DaVinci / Lego
 EVERYPERSON	To make sure things are fair and equal	When we stand together, we always win	Success of the common man or woman	Elitism	Malala Yousafzai / Tom's Shoes
 EXPLORER	To go where no one has gone before	Because it's there!	The horizon	Commitments	Sir Edmund Hillary / National Geographic
 HERO	To protect, to serve, to win	Damn the torpedoes, full steam ahead!	A cause or would-be obstacle	People who give up	James Bond / Nike
 INNOCENT	To trust that things always work out for the best	Don't worry be happy!	Simple pleasures	Negativity	The Dali Lama / Ivory
 JESTER	To keep it light and make it fun	Laugh and the world laughs with you	Speaking truth to power	People who take life too seriously	Robin Williams / Zappos
 LOVER	To create meaning through connection	Follow your bliss	Harmony and peace-making	Unwillingness to be vulnerable	Jennifer Lopez / Tiffany & Co
 MAGICIAN	To see the reality in what seems like fiction	Impossible is only a state of mind	Seeing ideas come into fruition	Old school thinking, non-believers	Tony Robbins / Disney
 REVOLUTIONARY	To challenge the status quo	There has to be a better way	Troubleshooting	Fear of change	Martin Luther King / Apple
 RULER	To take charge and lead	My way or the highway	Clarity and keeping things running smoothly	Aimlessness and lack of accountability	Jeff Bezos / Mercedes Benz
 SAGE	To know more tomorrow than today	You are never too old to learn something new	Intelligent people and well-researched ideas	Misinformation	Albert Einstein / Mayo Clinic



Part 2:

Activating Archetypes in Individuals

Stories Create Quick Understanding

Even just scanning the list on the previous page, can you already guess what each of these storylines is about? Heroes save the day. Magicians transform. Revolutionaries break boundaries.

And you likely relate to some of these stories more than others. Whatever Archetypes are active in you (or in others) provide the lens through which you interpret the world. This lens also determines what is noticed and what is filtered out. Archetypes provide a shortcut to understanding ourselves, our teams, and our organizations.



Here are 4 ways Individual Archetype storylines enhance the employee experience.

1 Hire and Retain

The cost of recruiting and retaining high potential employees is significant. **The cost of losing a new hire** in year one is 50% to 75% of their salary. And we've all heard the **dismal engagement stats** (upwards of 66% of employees are disengaged)!

Today, there is also a **growing demand for diversity to move beyond hiring stats** towards a focus on building teams where people feel a sense of belonging.

HOW CAN INDIVIDUAL ARCHETYPE STORYLINES HELP?

Adopting Archetypes can help companies build a better process for hiring, on-boarding, and engaging new employees on diverse teams, speeding uptime for a productive hire, reducing regrettable attrition, and saving costs on mis-hiring.

- **Strengthen Interviews**

While an Archetype assessment should not be used as a screening tool, it can help interviewers get to know a candidate more quickly by giving them insights about motivational patterns, opening up lines of inquiry and accessing culture add.

- **Onboard for Impact**

Onboarding programs should help new employees get to know the culture and other new team members. Through an Archetype assessment, new employees experience an immediate investment in their development and quickly understand how they can best contribute.

- **Deepen Diversity and Engagement**

Archetypes provide a new lens by uncovering *diversity of motivation and thought*. As teams learn the patterns, there is a growing appreciation for unique perspectives and contributions.

2 Define Purpose and Personal Brand

Simon Sinek famously said, "People don't buy what you do, they buy why you do it." And a myriad of studies support the idea that **meaning and purpose are more important to productivity than a paycheck**.

In the age of social profiles, every person has a brand and every employees' brand becomes a reflection on the organization. **Aligning personal purpose and brand with an organization's enhances motivation and engagement.**

HOW CAN INDIVIDUAL ARCHETYPE STORYLINES HELP?

Archetypes are uniquely suited for defining purpose and brand – they are stories that align strengths and values, as well as shape motivation and engagement. An individual's core Archetypes already contain the answer to who, why, and what. And certainly, the storylines themselves provide a rich blueprint that can be applied to a personal brand!



3 Grow and Lead

Today, the fluid nature of teams and the imperative of effective collaboration means soft skills and emotional intelligence are highly valued.

HOW CAN INDIVIDUAL ARCHETYPE STORYLINES HELP?

Archetypes enhance self-awareness, narrative intelligence and personal growth.

- **Uncovering Shadow Traits**

Archetypes bring our shortcomings into focus, along with the opportunity to manage them in the moment and over time.

- **Illuminating Unconscious Bias**

We see the world through our own Archetypal lens, which can also lead to ‘filtering out’ other perspectives or even rejecting them as not true.

- **Problem Solving**

Sometimes a recurring problem needs a new approach. Learning to activate Archetypes outside your core profile opens new possibilities.

- **Leveling Up Responses**

In each triggering moment, are we above the line (empowered and coming from strengths) or below the line (disempowered and coming from shadow)?

- **Growing the Team**

Leaders can leverage these patterns to align work assignments, strengthen collaborations and challenge growth. Archetypes provide a fresh take to professional development plans that are actionable and tactical.

4 Connect and Team

Studies on teamwork continue to show that **trust is fundamental to making teamwork work**. Google’s *Project Aristotle*, Daniel Coyle’s *Culture Code*, and Patrick Lencioni’s *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*, all name **psychological safety and a willingness to be vulnerable** as important ingredients to building trust.

HOW CAN INDIVIDUAL ARCHETYPE STORYLINES HELP?

As a human framework, Archetypes allow people to show up fully, safely, and uniquely. Coaches, consultants and in-house trainers can introduce Archetypes to help team members understand how they interact, where their motivations intersect, and how are they wired differently.

Specifically, Archetypes help teams:

- **Get to know each other better and faster**

Archetypes allow teams to share the stories of their lives in a way that helps others understand how experiences have shaped their perspectives.

- **Appreciate diversity and grow compassion**

Archetypes teach teams the limits of their own lens and the value of diverse points of view; they enhance patience and compassion.

- **Collaborate through strengths**

As we get to know which Archetype does what best, roles and responsibilities can be aligned with the person best suited to the task.

- **Resolve conflict**

Archetypes create an objective lens to understand conflict. We see how different patterns see the world differently.



Part 3:

Activating Archetypes in Organizations

**Carl Jung observed that Archetype patterns are also present in the collective,
“Archetypes show up as culture in groups.”**

Think about your own organization or another group that you are part of – can you guess which one or more of these 12 Archetypes might be most active? Think about the organization’s mission, leadership or reputation. What are they known for? What does it feel like to be part of that group?

We find this framework to be effective in organizations because the Archetypes provide a shortcut to understanding. Everyone gets on the same page quickly about the ‘type’ of culture that exists in their group. And once they understand their type, it gives them a language for how to talk about their culture in a meaningful way.



Following are 4 ways to activate Archetypes in a shared workplace culture.

1 Brand and Market

Social media and the internet have created a 'glass box' where everyone can see everything that happens inside a company. The public is demanding **alignment and authenticity between what a brand says about itself and how it behaves**. And when it comes to its brand reputation, a company's culture has become its most valuable asset or biggest liability.

HOW CAN ORGANIZATIONAL ARCHETYPES HELP?

When they define values, strengths and shadows through Archetypes, organizations are able to manage their brand with intention.

- Purpose-driven missions

Each Archetype has a distinct core motivational pattern that answers the question 'why' and drives behavior. For the Everyperson culture – it's justice. For the Lover – connection. For the Sage – truth.

- Authentic brands from the inside out

Brands are stories, but you can't make a meaningful story appear out of thin air. Archetypes

let the story emerge from the culture and provide a rich blueprint for concepts, colors, words and more.

- Employment and talent brands, too

When it comes to talent, culture and brand are synonymous. Archetypes can help companies frame and tell a story that showcases the authentic employee value proposition and unique culture.

- What to watch out for

If a culture demonstrates the strengths of an Archetype pattern, it is also susceptible to its shadow behavior. For example, the tireless Hero culture focused on winning can become a place of unhealthy competition or burn-out.

2 Evolve and Shift

Staying relevant in any business environment requires organizations to change; but changing behavior can be hard unless we understand the underlying cultural drivers that sustain the current way of doing things.

HOW CAN ORGANIZATIONAL ARCHETYPES HELP?

Archetypes help organizations name the existing culture and how those patterns show up as strengths or shadows. **They translate a subjective and intangible feeling into a tangible, objective cultural profile** that details what's moving us forward, what's holding us back and what's missing in order for new behaviors to emerge.

Leaders can then identify specific behaviors that need to shift to achieve the aspirational culture, as well as strategies for enabling that shift. These change strategies can be framed by which Archetypes need to be dialed up or down, or what Archetypes need to be developed.



3 Merge and Integrate

Mergers and acquisitions are a popular path to growth, but stats suggest the vast majority, up to 80%, never deliver on expected returns. ‘Misaligned cultures’ is often cited as the primary obstacle to success.

HOW CAN ORGANIZATIONAL ARCHETYPES HELP?

A Baseline Culture Audit, whether it is part of due diligence or a post-merger integration strategy, can be designed to look at two original cultures objectively. Through measuring Archetypal patterns and validating behaviors, we can draw a side-by-side comparison to the ‘unwritten rules’ that influence how each organization behaves.

Through this non-judgmental framework, leaders can identify areas of potential conflict that need to be addressed.

4 Team-to-Team

Subcultures are common in organizations, even those that have a clearly defined purpose and brand. Subcultures can be positive when they support the work of a particular team or department. But they can also seed conflict between groups.

HOW CAN ORGANIZATIONAL ARCHETYPES HELP?

We can add demographic question sets to a CultureTalk assessment to explore the **different patterns that may exist between groups**. The Archetypes provide an unbiased way of exploring tensions and enhancing collaborations. By understanding the motivations behind behavior, groups can develop strategies that support the overall goals of the organization.

For example, a sales department that scores high on Explorer may rely on innovations developed by the R&D team that scores high on Sage.

	
Prefers what's cutting edge	Prefers what's tried and true
Early adopter	Wants proof
Trusts experiences	Trusts facts
Learns as they go	Asks a lot of questions
Thinks on their feet	Mulls things over
FOMO	Takes time to make careful decisions



Part 4:

The CultureTalk Platform

An exclusive platform for CultureTalk Certified Partners

A modern platform of assessments, workshop, and coaching materials creates a common culture language for leadership coaching, team experiences and organizational change models. CultureTalk turns culture into a strategic operating tool; one that can be leveraged to align leaders and teams as they drive business strategies forward.



Individual Assessment

The CultureTalk for Individuals assessment is designed to measure Archetypal patterns that come to life through an individual's storylines and experiences. Unlike personality assessments, this tool does not seek to put people in a box or 'type' them through a narrow lens. We recognize that each person's story is multi-dimensional which is why we provide scores across all 12 Archetypes.

Through the assessment itself and guided reflection exercises, trained facilitators can help individuals uncover their core, supporting and latent Archetypes.

Each person can then create a unique profile as a way of understanding their own motivations, values, strengths, shadows, and biases.



Organizational Assessment

The CultureTalk for Organizations assessment is designed to measure the shared experiences of a group, especially 'the unwritten rules of engagement' – what we actually do, versus what we say we do.

Unlike other culture assessments, this tool does not pass judgment on a culture as good or bad, right or wrong. Rather, it recognizes that every culture is multi-dimensional with the capacity for greatness as well as challenging behaviors that need to be minimized and managed.



Part 5: CultureTalk Certification

Storytelling & Narrative Intelligence

This unique certification program provides tools to harness the power of the 12-Archetype Framework and Narrative Intelligence, transforming how you lead and develop teams. Whether you're a coaches, consultants, or in-house HR, OD or L&D professional, this program is designed for you.



Part One: Storytelling & Narrative Intelligence for Leader & Team Development | 32 CEUs

The part of the program is online and self-paced. It includes on-demand courses to take on your own and Virtual Group Coaching Sessions where you will check-in on your progress and receive feedback and support.

1. Become fluent in the 12-Archetype framework and learn to align it with individual life and work experiences.
2. Understand the key principles for applying Archetypes to human development and building Narrative Intelligence.
3. Practice applying Narrative Intelligence in leadership and team coaching, activating Archetypes for Personal Storytelling, Conflict Resolution & Collaboration, Change & Resilience, Communications & Presence, Diversity & Belonging, and Leading with Archetypes.
4. Develop skill in coaching the development of Narrative Intelligence in others.

Part Two: Storytelling & Narrative Intelligence for Coaching Organizational Change | 7 CEUs

Join a small cohort for this advanced curriculum with CultureTalk cofounders. This day-long intensive is an optional addition to Part One and mixes instruction, breakouts, an independent project, and class presentation.

1. Become fluent in the 12-Archetype framework as it aligns with group experiences.
2. Understand the key principles for applying Archetypes to organizational development.
3. Learn how to conduct a Baseline Culture Audit.
4. Practice applying Narrative Intelligence in team effectiveness and organizational change, activating Archetypes for: Team & Organizational Change, Brand & Employee Experience, and M&A Integration.

[Explore the Program](#)

