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## Culture Consequences of Mergers and Alliances



Mergers and consolidations are complicated and complex investments, and aren't truly complete without merging the organizations' cultures. At its best, merging cultures creates a new, forward-looking organizational ethos, but an unsuccessful merging of cultures can negatively impact business performance. Further complicating this is that the teams must continue operating the business while their organizations are merging.

An important side effect of mergers is that systems and processes change for the team, ultimately having an impact on the customer. One helpful way to determine processes and systems to support your business moving forward into a consolidation is to involve the staff-level employees who are performing the work.

"When the person making the decisions understands the pain points, the choice can be framed based on the best available options, and it also gives employees some sense of control and input in the process changes," says Jay Lux, FCCS' Vice President of Leadership and Organizational Development.

It's important to keep in mind throughout a merger or alliance that there may be anger or resistance from employees. They may fear for their jobs, their duties may change or they may worry about proficiency in the new role. Communicate as much as possible, being as transparent as possible, about the reasons and expected outcomes of the initiative, to help allay some of these very real concerns.

"Leaders should understand that most employees are learning about any merger plans long after those at the top, so they're starting from scratch in the acceptance process while leaders ready and eager to go," says Jay.

News of a merger naturally raises employee concerns about everything from changes in reporting structure to new technology to learn, but it offers opportunities as well, as Jeannie Clinkenbeard, Director and Senior Consultant with FCCS, is quick to point out. Among other things, there may be better or less expensive benefits, better or broader learning and development opportunities or more opportunities for career advancement in a larger organization. The integration process itself offers opportunities on committees or cross-functional project teams supporting the transition period.

"A merger or new partnership structure is a prime opportunity to create new relationships and put your best foot forward," Jeannie says. "Employees can reach out and build relationships with to their counterparts in the partner organization to smooth the transition."

Within the team, she says, share your ideas about improving customer service, processes or communication. Team leaders can be proactive in connecting with new

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DEVELOPMENT, FCCS

team members, creating space for everyone to get to know each other on a personal level and being intentional about treating all team members equitably.

**DiSC for Intact Teams** is a powerful tool offering team members insight into their own and each other's communication styles to facilitate ongoing collaboration. Employee engagement surveys offer organizational and team-level insight into critical parameters that determine engagement, which impacts customer service and ultimately the bottom line. Acting on the results can help build alignment as well as define and build the new, combined corporate culture.

"Merging two teams that have disparate ways of working and communicating is an essential responsibility of every leader and manager in the organization," says Jay. "It's also a very emotional and stressful situation for many people, so extra care should be taken to ease the process for individuals while building strong, effective teams focused on your customers."

- For more information about building and sustaining a healthy corporate culture, contact Jay Lux at 651.982.4568 or [via email](#).
- For more information on DiSC for Intact Teams, meeting facilitation and conflict resolution, contact Jeannie Clinkenbeard at 404.617.6917 or [via email](#).
- For more information on employee engagement surveys contact Angie Coleman at 303.887.3791 or [via email](#).