

# Climate and Structure

Denne værktøjskasse indeholder følgende værktøjer:

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- Plan: Running a Climate & Structure Review
- Checklist: 10 Key Points on Dealing with Climate and Structure

# Introduction:

## How Do Goals, Organisational Values and Structure Match?

This package helps you assess the internal climate, whether it fits with the goals set for the organization and whether the organizational structure goes well together with both. It also helps you decide, when you know the situation, what kind of action to take to influence the climate. You can do it alone, but it will have more impact, if you involve other key people.

### Article

#### Recommended Reading

Quinn, R.E. & Spreitzer, G.M.: The Road to Empowerment: Seven Questions Every Leader Should Consider, *Organizational Dynamics*, Vol. 26, No. 2 (Fall 1997).

### Author

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If you need advice never hesitate to contact [hw@henrikwbendix.dk](mailto:hw@henrikwbendix.dk)

Otherwise these toolkits might inspire you:

- **Valuebased Management - Are our values clear, strong, and supportive to the business**  
Value based management aims at getting everybody to understand and feel the meaning of their work. Personal commitment and initiative are much better motives than the feeling of duty. This material provides you with tools on how to support and manage a process, which clarifies the values and the practical implementation of these.  
Find it at [www.henrikwbendix.dk](http://www.henrikwbendix.dk) Check "Resources".
- **Structure Review Quick Version - How do Goals, Values and Structure Match?**  
This package is about "who does what, when and how" in your business. It will help you get an overview of the way you are currently organized and , it will help you focus on the inefficiencies, and on the challenges that maybe should trigger the need for some reorganization. You can do it alone, but the effort will have a greater impact, if you involve other key people.  
Find it at [www.henrikwbendix.dk](http://www.henrikwbendix.dk) Check "Resources".

# User Guide: Climate & Structure

When you walk into a room, it is often easy to sense the “climate” immediately. Perhaps there is a “humming”, working tone, or maybe a tense mood like at a newspaper just before deadline, or maybe a depressed silence.

Your own mood will influence the way you interpret the climate and you will act accordingly; your behavior will add to and often influence the overall climate.

All this just happens, but sometimes you need to stop, “measure” the climate and talk about it. If everyone senses the same things that you do, then possibly something could be done to alter the climate. If the climate is depressed, try to find out why and what could be done about it.

Sometimes you have a clear feeling that the climate does not fit with the business goals. The atmosphere may be too loose to support some very ambitious goals in a tough environment. Alternatively, the tone may be too formal and hierarchical for the young people you want to attract and retain in the organization.

## **Purpose**

- To identify some key traits in relationships among people in the organization
- To match those traits with the goals for the organization
- To make it easier to choose between different ways of adjusting behavior to the situation

## **Outcome**

- A better basis for influencing behavior and possibly values in the organization
- A set of concepts making it easier to talk and decide about these things
- Some alternative action that would indicate a more visible leadership

## **Requirements**

- Insight into the ways the organization is working
- A good knowledge of the key people in the staff
- One to two hours at the PC and two to three days for analyzing the work climate and preparing some actions to influence it.

## **Note**

- Your benefits from the analysis will be greater if you consistently think about your business under a certain set of conditions, like “today” or “for the home market”
- Choose the specific purpose of the analysis: do you want to analyze the past, the current situation, or some scenarios (simulation)? A scenario is a future you imagine, where specific trends you believe in, or want to check out, are typical
- When you want to check the organization, you should think about all the aspects telling something about how people get along, not only how the work is done
- This is a process that works, but you may develop endless variations of it or even other processes that work better for you. It is just important to start thinking

## The process

Below, there are references to phases that you should go through with the enterprise or with the people you want to involve in this process. You will also find references related to [henrikwbendix.dk](http://henrikwbendix.dk), in order to get the feedback you expect.

### **Phase 1: Describe the General Background:**

Use the enclosed form and answer the questions about the organization and about yourself. The adviser can use your information to better imagine your situation.

### **Phase 2: Describe the Current Situation:**

By answering the questions in Form 1: Situation Description, you give a short description about the work climate in the enterprise and what you would want to do about it.

### **Phase 3: Describe the Organization and the Work Climate As They Are Now:**

Use the “OrgCon” input format to describe the way the organization is operating now. Part of this description deals with work climate. This is an important factor in determining whether you are well organized, or whether the changes you consider making in climate or in the structure will be advisable.

Please beware that we primarily look for the basic things relevant at all times and less at the hypes, the various things being modern right now, whether they fit the situation or not.

### **Phase 4: Conduct the Dialogue with the Adviser:**

Within a full day you will receive a response from your adviser. If you are done now, you can go on to Phase 5.

Maybe you would like to respond to the adviser (we think it would be highly beneficial). This must be done within a full week from the moment you received the adviser’s feedback. This gives you time to think about the response to check some information. Again, no later than a full day after you send your response, the adviser will get back to you with a final response in this session.

### **Phase 5: Involve People in the Process:**

By giving the input in phase 3 and by having the feedback from the adviser in phase 4, your own mental preparations are done. Next, find out how others in the organization see it; then incorporate all the information gathered to see which changes may be necessary.

Involving other relevant people means you will get enough information about the situation to truly have an accurate picture of the work climate, and they get a chance to influence what is going to happen. Even if their input does not give you an new insight into the work climate, those people will feel responsible for helping planned activities to succeed and care more about the changes that will be made.

We suggest you involve others in two stages. First, ask a few people, whose opinion you value highly, to evaluate the climate together with you. Put together the pictures you see, and use this as basis for deciding what to do next. Secondly, if you think there is anything that should be improved, start by making a simple analysis involving the rest of the people. This way everybody’s opinion has been asked for and it will be possible to receive structured responses; this will be a good basis for taking action.

The process does not have to turn the whole enterprise upside down (unless this is your purpose!) Look at the documents, Plan: Running a Work Climate Review and Form 2: A Dozen Questions on the Work Climate to see how to evaluate and change a work climate without disturbing the whole work environment. Checklist: 10 Key Points on Dealing with Work Climate helps you prepare for the review.

**Phase 6: Repeat the Process Regularly:**

Spending time and effort on reviewing the work climate, gives the impression that the work climate is very important to you. In order to maintain the positive effects of the review and the new developing climate, you must repeat the process from time to time.

If the climate was in serious need of attention and change, the review must be repeated relatively soon. Three to six months is a good amount of time to let pass; the process should be repeated yet again three to six months later.

Hopefully then the organization is in a better state, and the improvements from the survey/focus become smaller. The intervals between reviews can be prolonged, for instance, to once a year or even once every year and a half.

# Form 1: Problem Description

	Question	Your Answer
1	What raised this issue in your mind?	
2	Why is it important to deal with it now?	
3	What do you expect to gain by focusing on the work climate?	
4	From where do you get your input about the internal climate?	
5	Does the climate vary in different parts of the organization? If so, how?	
6	From your experience, which are the primary factors/persons influencing the work climate in the organization?	
7	Which are the primary values that should guide the work in your enterprise?	
8	Which specific questions do you have for the adviser?	

# Form 2: A Dozen Questions on the Climate and Structure

## Instructions:

Mark with one x for every question. Do not think for too long before answering a question, but do not hesitate to write comments in the column “suggestions for improvements.” Also, use the backside of the form, if necessary. Fill in date and name. Draw a graph from x to x to x (all your marks). The results from the test will be presented and discussed in the near future.

#	Issue	Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree			Suggestions for Improvements
		1	2	3	4	5	6	
1	<b>Mission:</b> Everybody knows why we are here as a unit							
2	<b>Task:</b> Everybody knows what their primary tasks are							
3	<b>Performance:</b> The criteria for good performance are clear to everybody							
4	<b>Rewards:</b> The rewards for good performance are given in a just way							
5	<b>Information:</b> We receive timely and relevant information about things necessary for doing the work							
6	<b>Openness:</b> Among co-workers we exchange information and views in an open and respectful way							
7	<b>Trust:</b> The management trusts us. We see this in the way tasks are distributed, and work is monitored							
8	<b>Loyalty:</b> In our unit, we work together as a team.							

#	Issue	Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree			Suggestions for Improvements
	We back each other up in the effort to meet the goals set							

#	Issue	Strongly Disagree			Completely Agree			Suggestions for Improvements
		1	2	3	4	5	6	
9	<b>Leadership:</b> We have confidence in the management. It is competent and fair							
10	<b>Flexibility:</b> As a unit, we are open to changes and adjust to them easily							
11	<b>Development:</b> As an individual, you have good opportunities to grow and to develop new competencies							
12	<b>Learning:</b> As a unit, we regularly reflect on the way we do things and learn from our experiences with that							

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_



# Plan: Running A Climate & Structure Review

## Introduction

The process starts with your personal reflections when you begin working with the problem on [henrikwbendix.dk](http://henrikwbendix.dk). It may continue for years because some of the things you may want to influence lie deep in peoples' minds or personalities and thus requires ample time to do anything about. Examples are strengthening a commercial attitude among design engineers or making sales people share more leads.

So, the process described here helps you get started, but most probably it will require ongoing attention from your side for quite a while.

## Stage 1: Focus on "work climate"

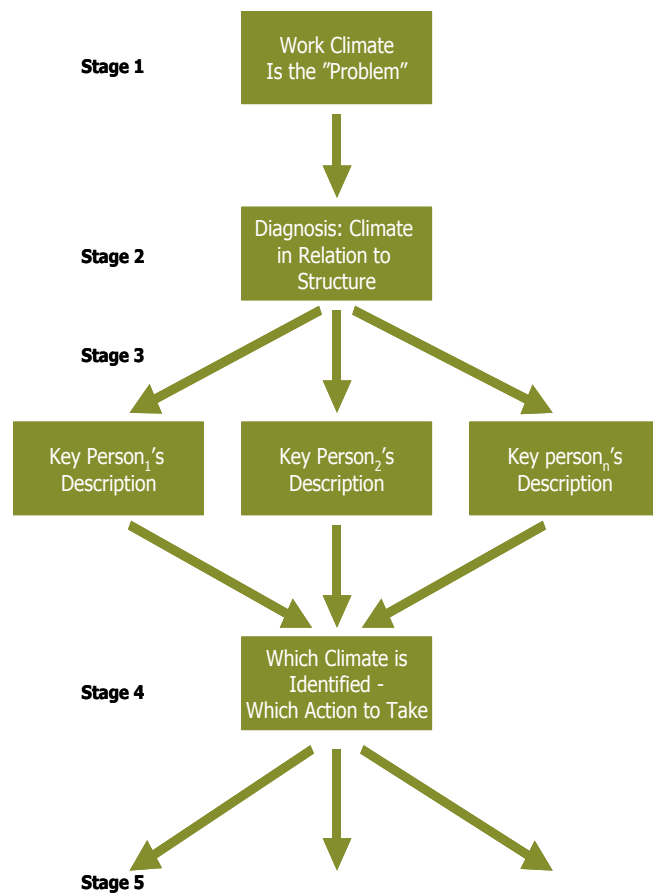
This is when you realize that "work climate" is your focus or your problem. It may be the result of your thinking for some time, a person you trust may have suggested it to you, or a sudden event may have made it clear to you. Maybe the [henrikwbendix.dk](http://henrikwbendix.dk)'s Problem Guide made it clear to you.

## Stage 2: Clarify the issue

Next you need to clarify the issue somewhat.

You can do this by going through steps 1-4 according to the User Guide of this Tool Kit. The steps make you describe the actual situation as you see it, and you have spend some time actually thinking about the climate before you can answer the questions. Surely, this opens your eyes for some details that may be have been overlooked but really are quite important, including some things you may want to do to change the climate.

The dialogue with the adviser should improve your overview of the situation even more and make it clear to you what is required, and whether you need to start some action.



### **Stage 3: Other persons' pictures**

Is your understanding of the situation similar to the picture the other key persons see, or is it very different? This is important to know before making serious decisions about what or what not to do. If you want maximum impact on the work climate and the structure, you need their involvement.

A good way to get the other key people involved is to ask for their opinion, and you can do that with Form 2. Ask them to individually fill in the form to the best of their ability.

“Key people” in this respect may be people reporting directly to you, or it may be other people in the organization whose judgment you value highly.

### **Stage 4: Analyze the information**

When you have collected the responses from the key people, you should analyze the information. The more you are personally involved in the matter, the more difficult it is to maintain an open mind about the issue. You should try anyway to see the input from several angles.

Try to extract from the responses and from your own views five words that together make a good description of the climate in the organization. Which values do you think lie beneath this description?

Example: You analyze the collected information and get the impression of a unit where the joint goals are somewhat unclear, where people prefer to mind their own business, where producing superior quality is the most important criteria, where changes create unrest and take much time to be accepted (if ever) and where the technically competent leaders are respected the most. From this image you might identify values like “stability,” “authority” and “rationality”. The dialogue you had with henrikwbendix.dk beforehand could help in identifying the climate and some of the values lying beneath it.

Next issue is to compare these values with the goals for the unit. Do they fit well together? Do the values held by the staff support the efforts to reach the goals?

If they do, fine. If they do not, or if you are in doubt, you should think about actions that could influence the situation in a positive way.

Let us say that the goal for the enterprise is to do better than the rest of the market, to grow faster and to take the lead in supplying new products. Probably, you will find that internal values in this unit could support enterprise goals better than they do.

What should you do about it then? Maybe you expected something like this and discussed it with henrikwbendix.dk. You might decide to take two major actions. One is to appoint a new manager of the unit, who holds values that support the enterprise goals and has a personality that could help him move other people in the right direction. The second action could be to talk to the staff about climate, values, and goals.

## **Stage 5: Take action**

It is now time to take action. When appointing the new manager, you should clarify your expectations, the qualities you expect this person to have, and ask her or him to join you in planning the process with the rest of the staff.

To make it legitimate, you must explain your motives openly to the staff and you must clarify the enterprise goals, if they are not already very clear.

Next, it is important to give the staff a chance to see the same picture as you saw before. If they do not, it will be very hard to influence them to change their behavior, let alone their attitudes. Again, together with the new manager, you could survey the climate as the staff members comprehend it with Form B, which you used before.

When you have collected the data, it is time to prepare a session with the staff. First you must give feed- back to the participants about the picture that the survey in Form B created. Do they understand the results? Do they see the same things?

In the light of the results, the new manager should take a dialogue about ways to behave and actions to take in order to better to support the enterprise goals.

Be prepared to hear interpretations contrary to your own and do not be afraid to confirm the feedback they give. The staff experiences things from other angles than you do, and some of what they see may be equally true.

What to expect from such a session? If you end up understanding the different interpretations of the climate survey, if it is possible to settle on a joint set of values, and if it is possible to identify some actions to be taken in the next period (three to nine months) to strengthen these values, you are in a good position.

As with any other change process, this one also requires that everybody's attention is directed regularly towards the decided actions and the chosen values, that you monitor the effects, and that you follow up on what you see.

# Checklist: 10 Key Points on Dealing with Climate and Structure

## **1. Like the real weather, the internal climate is always there, however difficult to detect and to describe**

You probably recognize the feeling coming in from the outside. Somebody asks you, “how is the weather?” You find it difficult to answer, because this time you did not recognize anything characteristic in the temperature, the wind, or the humidity. You just sense it as neutral or gray, maybe mirroring the mood you are in.

The organizational climate may be like this. Not all members of the organization will be able to describe it. If they are French, they will say “normal,” which really tells you nothing at all. If they are Danish, they could say “stille og roligt” (nice and easy), and you haven’t learned anything new.

Other more sensitive people or people used to measuring work climate might find such a climate calm, rational and business- like, because most activity is related to work issues, and there is very little emotional person-to-person activity. Some would feel comfortable here, because they feel at ease, while others would freeze and feel left on their own. It very much depends on their expectations and their own personality.

## **2. Climate is shifting all the time, like a mood; culture is deeper and contributes to the climate**

Not everything is subjective. When we measure climate, we often find some very general trends. Many seem to agree in their judgment of the situation.

We also know how a single event can impact very strongly on the organizational climate. Sometimes a spectacular success in the market may make everybody proud of the enterprise, and this creates a positive, cooperative mood. At another time, rumors about serious cuts in costs may create fear, anxiety and petty fights over borders between units, because everybody is afraid of losing ground.

Similar to when we talk about “the roman culture,” it is practical to consider organizational culture as something more permanent. The roman culture represented a language, art, architecture, religion, political world order, etc. Similarly, in an enterprise, a “service culture” or an “engineering culture” may rule for a long time, even as the climate varies frequently. When we see it like this, culture represents the underlying principles, values and symbols.

## **3. The work climate is formed by winds from all directions**

In some parts of the world, the climate is constantly shifting due to frequent shifts in winds. In other areas, the physical conditions are so stabile that the climate becomes stabile too.

It may be in the same in organizations. Think of a finance department and an R&D department. The climates may differ widely. Finance people are technical people like the development engineers, but they traditionally stay longer in the same position and unit, their work is cyclical and there is a “correct result” to go for. Here precision, regularity and calmness are virtues.

R&D people are often younger, on their way from one challenge to another. They do not know what the end result should be. They often set their own goals, “create” results, their work is structured in projects with constant bursts of efforts and they work at strange hours. Here creativity, enthusiasm and peak performances are virtues.

The interesting thing is the values that dominate in the enterprise. For years we have been talking about technology- driven or customer- driven organizations. It is basically about the same idea. So, we could see climate as the outcome of the ongoing competition in the enterprise between different sets of values, the values of groups, of functions and of influential individuals.

#### **4. Individuals and events influence climate a lot, so no leader can afford to ignore it**

For a moment, let us go back to the idea stated directly above that single events influence the climate a great deal. Strong personalities can influence climate as well. It may be a manager, a union representative or just a strong individual. Many others look towards these people for guidance and for stimulation.

Whether one likes it or not, this is a fact that we must deal with. You may yourself be the calm, engineer-like type who finds the greatest pleasure in professional work, in doing only what you are good at. You may also find that everything would be smooth, if the others felt the same way.

But if some well-respected person in the staff constantly raises arguments among colleagues about how wise (or unwise) management’s decisions are, you have a problem and you must deal with it somehow. Perhaps people in the ranks are very well aware of the high quality of your decisions, and perhaps they find the person irritating. You can then avoid doing anything and let group discipline deal with it.

If, on the other hand, staff members rarely see or hear you, or just hear little about your contributions to the well- being of the enterprise, they can be influenced by such a person’s behavior. Your authority will be eroded and perhaps there will be conflicts in the staff between those believing in you and those starting to believe in the other person. This you will only be able to ignore for a short period without severe consequences for the efficiency of the organization.

#### **5. Unlike the weather, you can do something about the work climate**

Fortunately, you do not have to suffer as a victim of such circumstances. You can do something about it. You can behave like a leader. Part of this is showing respect to the people in the organization; it is not only the professional content in the job that matters. It is also moods, feelings, and relations: who are the others, how do they behave, how does it affect me?

Perhaps you think that the subjects brought up are trivial, the conflict raised by the difficult person is out of proportion, and the matter will faster be forgotten if you do not take on the contender. Still give the situation attention or else employees will think you are walking away.

If you confront the person who tries to create a conflict, you may very soon be able to swing the mood in the organization. If, for instance, you meet the provocation, in no time a conflict may break out. If, on the other hand, you do it in a more balanced way, the proportions may be restored and the respect you enjoyed before might be back again.

## **6. Day-to-day efforts or events - it all depends**

Some will agree that the behavior of the leader is important to the climate. Thus, the leader should really concentrate on daily operations. The leader should be around, available and highly visible on the shop floor.

Others would agree to the basic principles, but disagree on how to influence the work climate in a positive way. They could say that daily operations are a lot of routines, and they cannot be changed a lot. The leader should then make sure, there are significant breaks from the routines. Spectator events are a good idea, for example, internal sporting events where everybody gets together and gets to know the other people.

The question will arise about which method is better. The answer is it depends. If the enterprise is aggressively going for growth and must recruit many young people, it must try to influence the work climate accordingly. The success of this enterprise, among other things, depends on the ability to detect what kind of a work climate is most attractive to the kind of people it wants to employ. Thus, the task is to identify the primary values of these people and to go for a climate that makes those values flourish. If the structure of the enterprise does not support this, it should be modified.

Example: the young people want to be able to work at strange hours, they want less pension savings and more “salary money” spent on social activities, or they want to test their own talents in shifting combinations. So, the traditional time control system should be revised or dropped, the salary costs should be restructured or made more flexible, and project teams should play a more important role in operations.

## **7. When you start measuring, you better not stop**

Measuring work climate, like all kinds of measurement in an organization, is a potentially powerful way of influencing the life. It clearly focuses attention on the measurements and generates some information, which makes most people in the enterprise curious. If somebody measures your blood pressure, you probably would like to know what it is, and what that means – is it normal, are you ill or well? Potentially, you can all learn something from the process and from the results of the measurements.

The flip side of this coin is that the attention created with the measurement does not last for long. A month later, most things are back to normal. So, if you want to establish or re-establish a new focus in the enterprise, you need to assess the work climate again.

To most people, measuring the work climate is a signal from management that they think it is important to have a positive work climate, but this almost creates an obligation to repeat the measurement later. If you do not, it can very easily be interpreted that management has lost interest in the work climate.

So, when starting to measure, you should seriously think whether there are enough resources to repeat the measurement regularly. If there is not, be very careful about making the first one, and careful about how you make it. If you stick to very simple means like the ones we suggest, most organizations will be able to repeat such analyses.

## **8. Be careful interpreting data**

There are 1,000 or more ways to get lost in the woods while measuring internal climate. Check for yourself: make a relative simple statement in writing (example: “When we are really busy, we

sometimes do not eat lunch.”) Ask five people independently to write a two line interpretation of this statement. We guarantee there will be variations in the explanations.

This explains to us why people in the organization will not understand the same form with questions in the same way. When looking at the results, sometimes it could almost be as if they were actually answering different questions. Again, this illustrates why interpretation of the result is difficult.

Let us not forget that you are not doing research, you are trying to work in a practical manner with an important element in the organization. To deal with the interpretation problem, have all the participants explain their interpretations together. If you gather most of the participants, you can feed- back the results from the survey to them. They can then have the opportunity to discuss among themselves and with you what they thought the question meant. Afterwards, you should have applicable and meaningful data.

Concentrate on the extreme results and the relative changes from time to time in order to identify the most important information from the measurement.

#### **9. Be sure to involve and mobilize**

Involve and mobilize people by gathering them to inform them of the results, to ask them what the results mean and to suggest actions that will lead the organization in the right direction. It is a way of telling them that they are important participants, you consider them to be responsible because you listen to their opinions and you need their opinions and suggestions to move on in the right direction.

Only if employees are not career- minded, or they feel very offended, does such an approach from management not mobilize their resources and talents.

#### **10. Beware of the aspects of work climate you focus on**

Earlier on, we said you should be careful to repeat measurements so you do not disappoint people by signaling that your interest is reduced. This quick effect of shifting focus is extremely important and could easily be used in a positive way.

Similar to having a powerful spotlight, you can designate where everyone should look by pointing in different directions. Everybody’s attention will be where the spotlight is and most work will be made where the light shines.

You can utilize this effect by moving the spotlight towards the aspects of the work climate that you think are most important to deal with. It is important that you do not shift focus until something has been done about the previous focus and improvements are beginning to appear.