



# FOSTERING CULTURE

A leader's guide to purposefully shaping culture

SHANE  
JACKSON

## PREFACE

As I think back a decade to my first days on the job leading Jackson Healthcare, I vividly remember feeling the weight of the responsibility I had inherited, as the challenges that come with growing a company became apparent.

Many of our associates had long been a part of our amazing entrepreneurial story. They had worked directly with our beloved founder (who also happens to be my father) in building the business. They were relentless protectors of the “way we do things.” After all, these were the ways that had made us successful.

But many more who joined the organization more recently in our growth journey were never around my father. Attracted to our success and the opportunities it created for their own careers, they came in with their own opinions as to how things should be done. As an organization, we were feeling the inevitable conflicts that occur when people are not aligned on fundamental beliefs.

I knew I had to build a bridge not just between these groups, but from our past to our future. We needed to come to a clear understanding of the foundational principles that were going to guide our organization—principles that would be expansive enough to both anticipate and respond to a rapidly changing world.

We could not dogmatically stick to tactics and methods that had worked in the past and ignore that there were new problems needing to be solved and new opportunities worth pursuing.

This book is the culmination of three years of work as I struggled to pull myself out of the day-to-day work “in” the business to spend the time I needed to work “on” the business and write. (There’s more on this idea in Chapter 10.) I persisted because I knew we needed a common playbook and a shared vocabulary. Most importantly, I wrote this book because all of our leaders needed—and wanted—to understand what I had distilled from years of learning as I watched the company unfold from its founding—and that is this: It isn’t understanding how we do things, but understanding the principles behind why we do things that will enable us to succeed sustainably over time.

Seven years later, with the gifts of time and distance from those early days, it occurs to me that Chapter 36—Principles are Sacrosanct; Methods are Not—is the most important one in this book. It comes at the end for a reason. After learning all of the lessons about why we do what we do, we need fairly constant reminders to look for how those principles should be applied today. And just like it did in the beginning, it means being open to letting go of the methods of the past.

As I look ahead to the next decade at Jackson Healthcare amidst tremendous societal, technological, and political change, it is clear that our ability to apply timeless principles to new environments has never been more important.

Since its publishing in 2018, *Fostering Culture: A Leader’s Guide to Purposefully Shaping Culture* has served as a playbook for our companies. Leaders at Jackson Healthcare read it, learn it, and reference it often. This book has indeed helped us create a much stronger, more aligned and consistent culture across all our companies. The book itself is an important part of our culture.

In fact, that was originally the book’s title: *Our Culture*. However, one of our associates received an early copy and suggested changing it to *Fostering Culture*, and I liked how the word “fostering” communicated the need to constantly nurture culture, so I changed it.

It so happened that the new title made the book more appealing to readers outside of Jackson Healthcare. A friend thought the book would be interesting to those outside the company and suggested I make it available on Amazon, so I did.

Since its publication, thousands of people outside of Jackson Healthcare have purchased and read *Fostering Culture*. It still amazes me when people I've never met ask me to sign their copies.

I think and hope that it is the timeless nature of the lessons shared in this book that makes them applicable to many workplace cultures beyond our own. It never gets old to hear from readers about how it has inspired them in their own journeys. One business leader showed me her dog-eared copy filled with Post-it notes and said that she had adopted it as her own company's playbook. Many of our current leaders have said they decided to apply to work at our company after reading it.

This new edition includes a few updates, including a brief discussion in Chapter 33 about virtual workplaces due to the increasing prevalence of virtual work since the pandemic in 2020. Beyond that, though, very little is changed. Indeed, so many of the principles in this simple little book are timeless. As Jackson Healthcare celebrates its 25th anniversary in 2025, the way we apply the beliefs articulated in this book have changed, but the truth and power behind them have not.

I begin the Introduction with a story about being stumped by a question about our culture that followed a speech I gave in 2014. I think I have a much better answer now than I did back then.

*“Imagine how it would feel to be a part of a group of people who were passionate about continually getting better at serving others in ways that are good for them over the long term. That’s what it feels like to be a part of our culture.”*

If we continue to foster that culture, there is no limit to what we can do.

Shane, August 2024



## About the Author

Shane Jackson is a writer, speaker, and business leader – and the author of two books: *Fostering Culture: A Leader's Guide to Purposefully Shaping Culture* (2018; second edition 2024) and *This Is the Thing: About Life, Joy, and Owning Your Purpose* (Greenleaf Book Group, 2025). As president of Jackson Healthcare®, the trusted authority in healthcare talent and workforce solutions, Shane puts into practice the same principles he writes and speaks about. He has served as a contributor for *Fast Company* and *Forbes*, shares insights on [ShaneJackson.com](http://ShaneJackson.com), and is a keynote and motivational speaker at conferences and events across the country.



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