I MIGHT never have become interested in organizational culture if it hadn’t been for an early experience teaching a case at the Harvard Business School on the expert response by Johnson & Johnson’s management to the potassium cyanide poisoning—leading to seven deaths—of the Company’s Tylenol product on the shelves of Chicago drug stores while its CEO, James Burke, was out of the country in the fall of 1982. Burke attributed the response to a management guided by the J&J organizational culture and Credo. I’m indebted to the late Frank Aguilar and his co-author, Arvind Bhambri, who wrote the case in 1983.

Any author who accumulates experiences, material, and insights over 30 years incurs many debts to those from whom he or she has learned—academic colleagues, practitioners, and sensible and insightful friends and family. For this particular book, it started with HBS colleague John Kotter and a study of the relationship between corporate culture and performance.
John’s ideas and his ways of expressing them have provided inspiration since our first work together.

As we are reminded in the book, the “team” is an important contributor to employee engagement. The “team” in my case was a group of academic colleagues who more than kept me engaged at HBS under the brand of SMIG, “the service management group.” We enjoyed unusual success together in the classroom, a kind of bonding on our “field trips” to various outstanding service organizations, and a substantial published output of research and teaching materials. Earl Sasser, Len Schlesinger, Gary Loveman, Jeffrey Rayport, Tom DeLong, Tom Jones, and Roger Hallowell provided the core of a group that also included James Cash, Regina Herzlinger, Stephen Greyser, and on one memorable trip on which we had to make our own hotel room beds, Luis Huete of the IESE faculty. Two colleagues, Dan O’Brien and Dan Maher, who contributed the Critical Mass “case” to this book deserve a special shout out. The years spent working with them in executive education have passed all too quickly.

Without practitioners to both contribute and test ideas, to both “teach and learn,” I would be lost. I’ve been fortunate to know and work with some of the best, including but certainly not limited to leaders like Ken Ackerman, Colleen Barrett, Bill Bratton, Scott Cook, Bill George, Ginger Hardage, Frances Hesselbein, Fred Hubbell, Arkadi Kuhlmann, John Morgridge, Steve Odland, Bill Pollard, Bill Strickland, Bob Walter, and Tom Watson in addition to some of the others mentioned in the book, especially the late Herb Kelleher and Jack Bogle. William Horner, Mike Tian, and Mike Trigg of WCM Investment
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This is not my first book. As a result, I’ve had a range of experiences, some pretty bizarre, with various publishers. In this case, editorial and production work went smoothly, thanks to Brian Smith and his team at Columbia University Press, including Michael Haskell and Robyn Massey as well as Ben Kolstad of KGL.

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Tradition dictates that it’s the author’s sole responsibility for all misinformation and errors of fact. Please direct all such complaints to me.
WIN FROM WITHIN