
Grow Your Clinic Ep. 204 - What is a Clinic ‘Culture Day’ and How to Organize One

Managing a business is hard work and the pandemic has made it even more challenging for us. Because of this, you may find yourself constantly going after the next task on the list to keep up with the current health protocols and also, with the new opportunities that are popping up.

However, this can lead to an unhealthy cycle of overworking and overthinking, and if we are not mindful of our thought patterns and the habits that we practice during this time, we might end up getting burnt out.

In this episode, Ben talks about the IFTTT mindset and shares his top four tips on how clinic owners can manage their stress, deal with business anxiety, and prevent burnout.

TRANSCRIPT

Introduction

Ben: Welcome to the Grow Your Clinic Podcast. My name is Ben Lynch. Today, I'm joined by a good friend, business partner, and colleague, Peter Flynn. Pete is a physiotherapist by trade. He and Andrew, his business partner, operate [Physio Fit](#) in Adelaide. They also lead [iMoveU](#) helping young practitioners develop their skills and communication abilities so that they can infuse more experience in the years and better take care of their clients.

Today, Pete and I talk about Culture Days. You might have another word for it in your clinic, but essentially, a half day or a full day where you and the team get together to connect, to share stories, to brainstorm, to think big, and plan for what you're about to embark on as a team. We share some of the practical insights around running these days. We address some of the concerns you might have

about investing in wages and shutting down the clinic for a period of time. And we also capture what are some of the key elements you need to have in your culture day for it to be a success now and into the future. Let's dive in!

[INTRO MUSIC]

This is the Grow Your Clinic podcast from Clinic Mastery. We help progressive health professionals to lead inspired teams, transform client experiences, and build clinics for good. Now, it's time to grow your clinic.

What is a 'Culture Day'?

Ben: Let's talk Culture Days, Pete! This is something that you love doing, you love presenting, you love facilitating and hosting, you've just come off the back of a couple very recently. For those that aren't aware of a Culture Day or at least our terminology for what a culture day is — what is a Culture Day?

Peter: I think it's a little bit different to everyone, I think culture day is such an all-encompassing term that I guess Clinic Mastery has coined. I believe so. Anyway, actually, that's the first time I...

Ben: We'll take it!

Peter: We'll definitely take that one, we invented the word water, too. But to us, it's about getting the team together, to focus on the culture of the team — as the name would suggest. But also, the goals in getting the team on board and aligned towards a common goal. And to us, that's what a Culture Day is. It's a learning experience, it's a team bonding experience, and most of all it's fun. We're getting the team together, we're having fun, we're rewarding and celebrating for the achievements we've had, and we're looking forward to the future for where we're going.

Ben: That's a really great way to put it quite simply. I find connection is one of the more important things that's a little intangible but certainly a highly valuable outcome of the day. To that point around having an outcome, I often get asked from clinic owners, I'm sure you do, is: from an owner, how much they need to have a specific outcome before they go into the day versus allowing things to perhaps unfold on the day and kind of see where it goes? You know, they don't want to feel like they're just dictating the whole day, and there's no magic of collaboration or masterminding or all those sorts of things. So how do you best prepare someone, in particular, a leader, a clinic owner, to have an objective and outcome? What does some of those things look like?

Peter: It's a little bit of a mix, really. And I think it really comes down to 'what area we're working on' with the business owner or the leader that we're working with there. And also, their comfort with the predictability or the unpredictability — the outcome — and how they may like to think on their feet to a certain degree. We've got some people who love being spontaneous, and they're like, "I do not want an outcome going there, I want to see how people are going, I want to see what happens," and they're able to think on their feet and roll with it, and they're happy with whatever outcome comes. And that's amazing, that's completely up to them. And then there's other business owners who they've got a general idea, a general direction where they want it to go. And with that, we're able to lead discussion towards that point, you know, that's going to be the foundations, but we have a lot of extra input from the whole team. And occasionally, look, we as business owners can get way too stuck on one idea and that's where we come in and we're able to help pull people back and go, "that's one way of doing it." However, if we just tell people this is what we're doing, we're most likely not going to get the kind of buy-in. So, is it okay if we get it to 90-95 of this, but your team's able to come, and they're the ones that pick this up, so they're the ones that pick this outcome in conjunction with you and your goals? So that's probably the three distinctions I'd make there but anything you'd add to that one?

Ben: Yeah, I love that, in particular, because we do host these with/on behalf of clinic owners who actually want to be active within it rather than worrying about the

logistics, you know, behind the scenes and running the day, they can actually be part of the experience. I love the point there around, I guess, relevance in that what the clinic is working on right now/over the next couple of months, kind of really tied into the Culture Day, a central theme that almost catalyzes or galvanizes the team or or the ideas moving forward.

Peter: Absolutely! I think that's a good way to look at it, and probably the biggest thing that we help with is zooming out and going, you know, "what's the bigger picture here?" Because as the business owners, we all know we're way too close most of the time, and having that external person to help you zoom out and you can be more involved rather than running it, you know, day to day being the practitioner that day — it's kind of nice.

Ben: Pete, we've done a lot of these over time internally ourselves and our own businesses, but also facilitated them. In all the years that we've kind of had Culture Days and CM was almost founded off the back of it when it was done with Pro Feet and Dan and I facilitated that for Shane and the team. I've never heard anyone say that it was a waste of time or money or resources. And I mean that because in preparation for a Culture Day, I often get a lot of Cliniko saying "Oh! like I'm going to close down the clinic for a half a day or a full day. I'm going to pay wages for a half day or full day. And it feels like a big commitment, you know, 'sure, it's worth it!'" But on the other side, I've never heard anyone say that it has not been worth it. In fact, many clinics seen kind of record growth afterwards because of the connection of their team, the kind of call-to-action, if you would, following it.

But just on a practical perspective for those clinics that think "maybe I'll do this myself.", two things often come up. Number One: How much time do I need at a minimum to do a quality Culture Day? Is it a half day a full day? Could I do it over a lunch break? And then the extension of that, for those that are maybe got team members that are part-time, or casual, or even contractors, and going, "well, how do we get people to commit to come in a day they don't normally work, etc.?"

So, two parts there; the first part: how much time would you say they need to do it to give it justice?

Peter: To me, I think and maybe I talk really slowly but four hours, I would say, is the minimum time because we want to get people out of the mind instead of being day-to-day within the, you know, seeing clients. We don't want them to rush from seeing clients, spend two hours, and go see clients again. I feel like you almost... There's so much distraction there. For me, it's being able to get there — have clarity, being a slow-down, relax, have fun with people, do some team building, maybe have a bit of food, maybe have a few drinks. I couldn't do that in less than four hours. To us, ideally, it's six to seven hours. And how we structure ours at Physio Fit is different maybe to how other people do theirs. I'll share with you very quickly, we typically do three hours.. three to four hours in the morning where we're working on things together, we're working on appreciating where we've come and been grateful, looking at where we want to be going and who wants to have what responsibilities within that. We do breakfast there, then, we take people out for a nice lunch. We pay for all of this and then in the afternoon, it's an activity and an experience.

Ben: Nice!

Peter: We do ours on a Sunday and that makes people hate it less, even though they come into work on a Sunday and do that because there is a little bit where we are, I guess, doing work stuff. But it's not seeing clients, it's that strategy, it's that high level stuff, and then moving into great lunch and then going.. We did project break last time which is where you just go smash it. It was awesome.

Ben: Oh right! like a room where you actually physically go hit things.. because I was going to ask when you said, you know, we'll do an experience of some sort. That's the type of thing you're talking about or that someone might do laser tag or tent or bowling. You know, a roof climb or doing something as a team that is experiential.

Peter: Yeah, exactly!

Ben: Okay, cool! And then, to the second part of that question — never asked two questions at the same time, Ben — but the second part of that is, when you've got team members that work in different capacities, getting them to come along and see value in coming in on a day they don't work as an example. Or even paying people to come when you've got to close the clinic down, or on a weekend possibly. How do you go about, you know, getting those people on board and especially helping a clinic owner then get those people on board to come?

Peter: I find it interesting and almost paradoxical here because when I look at those clinics and I say “When you have, like, a team drinks, does everyone come?” and they're like “Shit, yeah!” and I ask “Is that within work time?” they're like “No, of course not!” And then, we do a similar sort of team bonding here and I say “Does everyone want to come?” and they're like “Absolutely not!” How can I expect them to come, they're not getting paid for it. And, is there those two discrepancies there and what I like to encourage them right to try and talk to their team is we're trying to take this experience of going out with the team, spending time with the team. We're distilling into a slightly different form, but we're going to cater everything. You know, normally when you go for drinks, you're paying for drinks, we're paying for all the drinks, all the food, and I encourage clinic owners to spoil them, to show them gratitude, to say ‘thank you’ so that they look forward to these. In the famous words of Shane Davis, just don't be a tight ass with that one, really, look at spoiling your team because if you can do that, they'll look forward to it. And like we were talking about before, if they're on board with the vision, if they're involved in that planning, you're much more likely to be successful. We might talk a couple thousand dollars for a reasonably, such large team for a Culture Day, but if you're a one two three mill riff business, what is that?

Ben: Understandable. I think that everyone that comes into CM, we say, 'within the first three to six months, you really need to make sure you've got a Culture Day planned.' It is such an important event for connecting the team and catalyzing a lot

of the changes that you're rolling out in terms of the culture, and the alignment, and engagement.

To that, Pete! — and I know you're a specialist in a couple of areas in terms of themes of the day, but maybe before we go into your area of expertise, what are some of the underlying themes of Culture Days that you've seen or been part of delivering and that listeners could contemplate doing?

Peter: Good question! I'm just going to jump back one second just to say one more thing on that that just popped to my mind. How I explain to clinic owners when I first work with them and they're thinking about doing a Culture Day is the importance is, you're the captain of the ship, and if you don't have all the other people in the ship working together, you're not going to get anywhere even if you're doing all this work on your business yourself. And the Culture Day brings those people and aligns them in that common direction so you can sail that boat. You can't do it by yourself, and you can't do without a Culture Day

Ben: It's a great parallel.

Peter: So, just back to your other question — which was the different themes of the day. Now, we can be looking at planning, and this can be planning for the team members, it can be planning for the clinic and I think these go and mesh very well together. We can look at values, so we can look at our painted picture, our whole purpose, and our values. And I think that's a really nice tie-in, especially (a) if you don't have core values that your current team has made, or if they're quite outdated and they're not in your language. They're kind of respect, trust, honesty, kind of thing. It's not really your language, it's not actions that you can uphold to really live out how you want people to shop each day in the clinic.

One of my favorites, obviously, is communication and I love deep diving into that because how we communicate the relationships we build, it's the foundation for everything we do in business, everything we do in healthcare, I believe. So that's a really good one.

Ben: We've done ones where the purpose is just solely connection, I know after 2020 and COVID, and such a fractured team, you know, working from home, etc., that connection is perhaps one of the themes that you can have where really just the intention is to deepen personal relationships, getting to know one another a little bit more perhaps going through some vulnerability and then I think in those more advanced teams, they're looking at vulnerability, radical candor, those sort of tougher conversations to really elevate them as a collective and accelerate their progress.

So when you talk about communication — something you're passionate about, you know, you do a lot of work behind the scenes and upskilling on it, as a clinic owner, what does that look like? Because I can understand and appreciate it, but am I going to run an entire day on it? There must be some real tangible value behind what those clinic owners have then seen in the communication framework that you use on those Culture Days. So give us an insight like what specifically do you go through?

Peter: I start the day with six quotes, six of my favorite quotes in communication, and I finish the day with these same six quotes and we reflect on how we can integrate each of these six into clinical practice. I'll share with you the quotes.

The first one is: 'good speakers sound intelligent, great speakers make everyone around them feel more intelligent', and relate that back to what we do in the clinic. Our job is not to sound intelligent, our job is to help the person who comes in the patient feel like they're in the driver's seat and they can really understand, and when we're using language that makes them feel a little silly or stupid or condescending, and we can do that very easily by using words they don't understand. The smarter we make that person feel and the more we acknowledge what they're bringing in their understanding of their own body and their story, the more that person is going to feel heard, and the more they're going to want to come back. Because, we've all talked to someone before who's talked down on us, and it doesn't feel good and then you talk to that person who's an expert in their

field, and every time they talk to you, you walk out there feeling smarter, like you were really smart.

Ben: Yes yes, I've had that experience actually when our son, Tommy. He had to have some surgery as a youngster and, you know, we got recommended to the "the best of the best". I walked in, he was like arrogant, blunt, like I felt stupid asking questions and then we actually went to the person down the hallway, in the same building, someone else — who also came highly regarded, and you just felt so included. So that makes a lot of sense.

Peter: The second one is, and it's from a brilliant book, 'Become wildly interested in other people.' And this is from '[How to Win Friends and Influence People](#)'. And again, the more interested we can become that person with that person in front of us, and the more we can understand about them, and the more we can get them talking about the things that they're passionate about, the things that they love, the more likely we're going to build rapport and we know that building rapport is one of the most important things in healthcare, not just for that person to come back but actually for the results they receive and there's incredible research and data behind this.

Ben: That really speaks to, also, the meaningful goals that we're trying to, perhaps, elicit when a patient comes in and understanding their interests and hobbies and that, cool, love it! The other ones?

Peter: Number three is 'Be kind first, be right later.' And this is from a Japanese philosopher and essentially, what he says is 'be kind first, be right later.' and often, we get in the conversation, and we see that the other person, we know more than them and I'll use the example in Healthcare — maybe someone's coming in, and they've got these poor beliefs around degeneration, etc. in their back or whatever. So, rather than us going, "Hey! actually, that's wrong, you're wrong, your worldview, your perspective, you're 45 years on this earth and everything you know and your doctor and your other health professional that told you all of this stuff that you like and trust, you're all wrong!" Okay, but that's good because you're not going to be in

pain. But the problem is, we've put up their barriers because we've told them they're wrong, it's coming from a great place, and we told them they're wrong, instead, 'Can we flip that? Can we be kind first? Can we start to understand this person's worldview? Can we be curious?' Understand why they see the world the way they do, that's really powerful. Now, there may be very negative beliefs. We may need to change that, but changing that in the first session before we build rapport. When you disagree with someone, you tear down that world view, it's painful. So be kind first, be right later. Does that make sense?

Ben: Yeah, that's beautiful! And I love how sort of short these are, they're quite memorable as well, and easy then to action.

Peter: There's three more, 'the patient will never care how much you know until they know how much you care', and I think this just speaks volumes to everything we said before and exactly your story, you didn't care how good this guy was because he doesn't seem to care about you.

Ben: Yeah, totally.

Peter: And when you're going to see someone, you want to know that this person cares about you and has your best interest at heart, so that one.

The next one is "..become a world-class listener" — Robin Sharma. Again, listening is a skill, and it's probably one of the hardest skills on earth to truly do well. And, listening is not just the words, it's how they say it, it's their body language, it's all those little things together, and when you nail all those things together, and you're a really great active listener, the information you get from someone is incredible, and how I see that in what we do as healthcare practitioners, and in anything we do right is if we're not a great listener, and we don't ask great questions, we're trying to put a puzzle together with only half the pieces. If we can ask better questions and we can become great listeners, and people feel, I guess, comfortable to open up with us, then from that, we get more pieces of that puzzle, and we can put that

together more simply. And I'm sure you've seen this working with so many people in business over time, just being a really great listener.

Ben: Yeah! One of the skills that, you know, I'm constantly challenged to develop. I feel like it is so important and I'd say I'm still very much on the learning journey of doing that, but, I love that quote as well, — these are all so relatable as health professionals as well. So, I can see how you're delivering this Culture Day that people are starting to run it through their filter and go, "I could really apply some of these things and we could also explore them as a team in one of the systems, the procedures we need to have behind the scenes to facilitate these things from happening."

So, you've got another one?

Peter: The last one is 'Communication is less about what you say and more about what the other person hears.' and that's from Vin Jang and what that means is that it's not what I say, it's how that person interprets what I say. And it's an incredibly large part of what we do as Healthcare practitioners because we know that most people misinterpret what we say, there's data around this. And so, how can we communicate in a way that we might think that we've done a great job but does the other person? And how can we improve that? How can we make sure that rather than just verbalizing things, verbalizing in a way that they can understand but also writing it down in what we might call a 'management plan'? Because again, it's less about what you say more about what that person hears and understands.

And these are the first six quotes. We go into lots of detail around each of these, the research behind it, world examples, case studies. And then at the end, we reflect back on these quotes. And we go, "All right, well what's one or two things, as a team, we're going to commit to improving on under each of these?" Like, what are one or two tangibles we can take away?

Ben: That's a great way to do it, yeah. So you're nailing it down, you're making sure there's practicality when people walk away.

Peter: Yeah! And we also have a bit of fun. We do some of the ton of exercises that you might do as a speaker in order to maybe improve your fluency dictation. Would you like to try one?

Ben: I can try.

Peter: Okay, you can try. So, it's "Which wristwatches are Swiss wristwatches?" And you have to say as fast as you can six times through.

Ben: If I can remember it.

Peter: I'll bring it up for you so you can see it.

Ben: That is great! I was doing a podcast a while back with Roger Love, a communications expert. And he also put me on the spot and said "All right, Ben! We're going to do some exercises." So, I've got to look out for who I'm interviewing.

Peter: Oh! you do!

Ben: Here goes, Pete! "Which wristwatches are Swiss wristwatches?" That was hard enough, "Which wristwatches are Swish which.. which wish." I'm done! No one.. do that..

Peter: They say this is one of the hardest ones in the english language and we had a lot of fun with that on the day with the team. We get everyone up, we get outside our comfort zone. And then, we talk through "What this teaches you and how to get better at this? And what to focus on in order to get that pronunciation out better so. And then, you can be like "Which wristwatches are Swiss wristwatches?" and go through really fast, practicing it because a lot of people fear, especially if they're gonna talk in front of, you know, a large group of people.. tripping over their words. And that usually comes when we're being lazy with our mouth and this helps us to not b so lazy.

Ben: Terrific! Well, I won't be so lazy next time. I'll have to practice. That's awesome! I really love how you're making it practical so that people, you know, amongst that strategic higher level thinking as you mentioned earlier is almost an intention for a Culture Day, you know, it's to get out of the day-to-day grind. But there's also an element of pragmatism as well that we're going "Hey, what are the actions off the back of the things that we've spoken about over the last few hours in our Culture Day?" I love that, that's awesome and so relatable, the communication style of theme. I've traditionally found that if people are looking for their first one to do, that so that core values, core purpose, a painted picture style of theme has been a really great place to start, it almost sets then the tone for the future ones that the communication one sounds perfect for people who are looking to really advance their client experience and also, I see this being integral to the clinic owner facilitating change, you know, rolling out change with their communication styles. So it makes a lot of sense.

Peter: Definitely, absolutely!

Ben: Well, thank you for sharing the insights there about, you know, Culture Days and some of the key things you need to consider to do them, and do them well but also the themes, and in particular, the communications theme as well. For those that are listening, for our wonderful members, if you'd love to have Pete do a Culture Day for you or any of the CM team, please reach out. And also, we do offer them in limited amounts for the broader [community](#), we like to prioritize members first. But please, do reach out to ben@clinicmastery.com and we can organize that for you.

Pete, thank you for dropping some wonderful wisdom pearls.

Peter: My pleasure, mate! Thank you for having me.

Ben: You can catch all the notes over at clinicmastery.com/podcast and we look forward to seeing you on another episode of the Grow Your Clinic Podcast.

Thanks for tuning in to the Grow Your Clinic podcast. To find out more about past episodes or how we can help you, head to www.clinicmastery.com/podcast and please remember to rate and review us on your podcast player of choice. See you in the next episode!

[OUTRO MUSIC]

Subscribe at [Youtube](#), [iTunes](#), [Spotify](#), [Stitcher](#)