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The Toughest Fix in Urban America: Transforming Civic Culture

From public health to race relations to infrastructure, city leaders' best-laid policies won't amount to much if they haven't tackled their organizations' culture.

When it comes to big urban challenges — coordinating a public health response to the pandemic, combating racism in the police department or rebuilding crumbling infrastructure — the greatest barrier may be the least understood: organizational culture.

Ask any business CEO and they will tell you that culture is everything — it defines the unwritten rules that determine how work gets done. Amazon is cost-conscious, customer-centric innovation; Disney is about storytelling. Each city has its own distinct culture as well, and the culture is what allows certain innovations to flourish while shutting down most other reform efforts.

Unfortunately, in most government agencies, the culture was set long ago, before the internet, let alone the metaverse.

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Bloomberg CityLab

by Neil Kleiman and Alexander Shermanson

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