Ideal Customer Profile #2
The Culture-Focused CEO

CEOs and Founders of growth-stage companies (50-500 employees) experiencing culture dilution as they scale

Origin Story: Written from Their Perspective

Brandon started his company seven years ago with a clear vision: build something meaningful, treat people well, grow sustainably. For the first few years, it worked beautifully. The team was small (12 people), everyone knew each other, communication was easy, and the culture felt alive. Then they hit product-market fit. Revenue doubled, then doubled again. Suddenly they were 85 people across three offices. The intimacy was gone. Brandon found himself in back-to-back meetings with people he barely knew, making decisions about departments he didn't fully understand. Don't get me wrong - the growth is thrilling. But something shifted. The energy that made the early days special started to fade. New hires didn't quite "get" the culture. Long-tenured employees felt disconnected from leadership. The annual all-hands that used to feel electric now felt... corporate. Brandon knows culture isn't about ping-pong tables or catered lunches. It's about how people feel when they walk into (virtual or physical) work. Do they bring their best selves? Do they trust each other? Can they handle hard conversations? Are they energized or just going through motions? He's read all the books - Lencioni, Sinek, Kim Scott. He's tried the frameworks - OKRs, radical candor, core values workshops. Some helped. But there's still something missing. The company has the right systems, but it's lost some of its soul. What frustrates Brandon most is that he can't solve this with more resources. Throwing money at culture doesn't work - he's learned that the hard way. He needs something that actually reconnects people to why they're here and to each other. When someone mentions breath and performance work - techniques used by elite performers to stay grounded under pressure - Brandon's immediately intrigued. Not because it's trendy, but because it's real. His team doesn't need another "culture initiative." They need to rediscover their center, individually and collectively. This isn't about productivity metrics or engagement scores (though he cares about those). It's about whether people leave work feeling more alive or more depleted. Whether they can bring calm and focus to chaotic moments. Whether they can sustain excellence without burning out. Brandon wants his company to be a place where people do the best work of their lives - not despite the pressure, but because they've learned to channel it. He's looking for something that makes that possible.

Demographics

Title: CEO, Founder, President, Managing Director

Company Stage: Growth stage (50-500 employees) - Beyond startup chaos but not yet corporate bureaucracy. Founder still intimately involved in culture decisions.

Company Age: 5-15 years old - Past initial survival mode, experiencing second or third growth wave, culture dilution becoming visible

Industry: Technology (SaaS, software, tech services), Professional Services (consulting, agencies, creative studios), Healthcare/Wellness (mission-driven healthcare companies), Emerging industries (climate tech, ed tech, social impact)

Company Revenue: $10M - $150M (profitable or well-funded, can afford investment in culture, still small enough for CEO to influence day-to-day)

Age Range: 35-55 (old enough to have perspective, young enough to be open to new approaches)

Location: Major tech/startup hubs (SF, Seattle, Austin, Boston, NYC, Denver) or remote-first companies with distributed teams

Leadership Style: Founder-CEO or first-time CEO promoted from within

Psychographics

Values: People over profits (but knows profits enable mission), authenticity and transparency, sustainable growth not growth at all costs, company as vehicle for positive impact

Personal Identity: Sees themselves as culture guardian, takes pride in "different" company culture, wants to be known for developing people, feels personal responsibility for team wellbeing

Leadership Philosophy: Servant leadership orientation, believes great culture drives great results, willing to invest in long-term over short-term gains, values experimentation and learning

Work Environment: Likely hybrid or fully remote, emphasis on flexibility and trust, high autonomy low bureaucracy, "bring your whole self to work" ethos

Personal Practices: Probably has own mindfulness/wellness practice, reads broadly (business, psychology, philosophy), attends leadership retreats or peer groups (YPO, EO, Vistage), values personal growth and development

Pain Points

Cultural Pain

• Culture dilution: "It doesn't feel like it used to"
• Disconnection at scale: People don't know each other anymore
• Lost sense of purpose: Work feels transactional, not meaningful
• Values-behavior gap: Say one thing, do another under pressure
• New hires don't "get it": Onboarding doesn't transmit culture
• Leadership team fragmentation: Executives don't feel unified

Operational Pain

• Meeting overload: Constant communication but low connection
• Decision fatigue: Too many decisions, not enough alignment
• Innovation slowdown: Playing it safe, lost creative edge
• Siloed teams: Departments operating independently
• Burnout creeping in: High performers showing strain

Personal Pain

• Loneliness at the top: Hard to share real concerns
• Imposter syndrome: "Am I the right person to scale this?"
• Own stress levels: Feeling pressure to model calm but struggling
• Guilt about company direction: Questioning growth choices
• Fear of becoming "just another company": Losing what made them special

Strategic Pain

• Talent retention: Losing key people to competitors or startups
• Recruiting challenges: "Culture fit" harder to assess at scale
• Board/investor pressure: Metrics-driven expectations
• Competition: Smaller, nimbler companies feel more alive
• Sustainability questions: Can they keep this pace?

Goals

Immediate Goals (Next 3-6 months)

• Reconnect leadership team around shared purpose
• Create memorable culture moment (retreat, offsite, gathering)
• Address visible morale/energy issues
• Model new approach to stress and performance

Medium-term Goals (6-12 months)

• Rebuild sense of cohesion and connection across company
• Develop leaders who embody company values under pressure
• Create competitive advantage through culture
• Improve retention of high performers

Long-term Goals (1-2+ years)

• Build organization that scales without losing soul
• Be known as 'best place to work' in their space
• Develop industry-leading approach to sustainable performance
• Prove that values-driven companies can win

Purchasing Triggers: 'I Need This NOW' Moments

1. Major company transition: Significant funding round, post-acquisition integration, new office/major expansion, leadership team changes

2. Crisis moments: Key executive departure, team conflict escalation, public company challenge (PR crisis, product failure), personal health scare or burnout

3. Planning moments: Annual retreat or offsite coming up, strategic planning season, new year/new quarter energy, anniversary or milestone

4. Competitive pressure: Losing talent to competitors, struggling to attract A-players, market shifts requiring adaptation, need to differentiate beyond product

5. Personal realization: Own stress becoming unsustainable, recognition they can't lead others to calm they don't have, feedback from coach/board/spouse, peer sharing transformative experience

6. External validation: Employee survey reveals culture concerns, exit interviews cite culture issues, Glassdoor reviews flag problems, trusted advisor suggests intervention

Most Receptive Timing:
• January-February: New year planning, fresh energy
• Before annual company retreat: Proactive investment
• After funding round: Fresh resources, renewed focus
• Q2 or Q3: Not in year-end chaos

Ideal First Engagement: Company Retreat Workshop

Why Retreats Work for This ICP:
• Already planning/budgeting for offsite
• Looking for meaningful content, not typical "team building"
• Captive audience = high participation
• Creates shared experience that builds culture
• Builds momentum for ongoing work

Retreat Workshop Value Prop:
• "The session everyone talks about after"
• "What actually sticks when you get back to work"
• "Not another trust fall - actual skills for pressure moments"
• 45-90 minutes of transformative, memorable content
• Sets tone for entire retreat

Natural Upsell Path:
• Retreat workshop ($10K-25K depending on company size)
• CEO says: "Can we do this quarterly?" → Quarterly sessions
• Or: "Can I work with you privately?" → Executive coaching
• Or: "Can you do this with my leadership team?" → Smaller group ongoing

Key Messaging That Resonates

What Works

• "Culture that scales without losing soul"
• "Performance techniques for mission-driven leaders"
• "What I learned performing at Carnegie Hall, applied to your leadership team"
• "Sustainable excellence, not burnout culture"
• "The retreat experience that actually sticks"
• "How [similar company] transformed their culture in 90 days"

What Doesn't Work

• "Corporate wellness program"
• "Team building exercises"
• "Stress management training"
• "HR compliance initiative"
• Anything that sounds like checkbox activity

Magic Words & Phrases

Authentic, grounded, sustainable, elite, transformative, culture, purpose, connection, presence, performance

Words to Avoid

Wellness, mindfulness, self-care, work-life balance, team building (use 'team development' or 'culture work')

Best Outreach Approach with CEOs

1. Lead with story, not pitch: "I work with CEOs at your stage who are navigating [specific challenge]" - Share Brandon's experience (with permission), make it about them not you

2. Acknowledge their sophistication: "You've probably tried a lot of approaches to culture" - Show you understand their journey and frustrations

3. Offer retreat opportunity: "Planning an offsite soon?" "What if your retreat had one session everyone actually remembers?" "45 minutes that shifts how your team handles pressure"

4. Build relationship first: Offer value before asking (insight, introduction, resource). Show up as peer/advisor, not vendor. Play long game.

5. Listen 80%, talk 20%: Understand their challenges first. Let them talk about what's working and what isn't. Demonstrate you understand their world.

Email Framework:
Subject: "Question about [Company Name]'s next offsite"

Body: "Hi [Name], I've been following [Company]'s growth - really impressive how you've scaled while maintaining [specific culture attribute you've noticed]. I work with CEOs at similar-stage companies (most recently [Brandon's company] and [other example]) on something that doesn't quite fit into typical 'team building' - more like performance techniques from my background training elite performers, applied to leadership teams under pressure. Given [Company]'s upcoming [retreat/milestone/challenge you've noticed], curious if you'd be open to a quick conversation. Not a pitch - genuinely just want to understand what you're navigating and share what I've learned. 15 minutes? Thomas"

First Call Objectives

• Listen more than talk (80/20 rule) - understand their culture journey and current challenges
• Share Brandon story only if relevant and resonant - don't force it
• Gauge retreat timing (Q2 2026 ideal for pilots, but any timing works)
• Offer to stay in touch regardless of immediate opportunity
• Build relationship for long-term, not just immediate sale

Questions to Ask:
• "What made the early culture special?"
• "What's shifted as you've grown?"
• "What have you tried that's worked? What hasn't?"
• "Planning any offsites or retreats this year?"
• "What would success look like for your culture 12 months from now?"

Don't: Launch into full pitch, share all pricing options, promise specific outcomes, make it transactional, push for immediate decision

Success Metrics They Care About

Quantitative

• Retention rates (especially high performers)
• Employee Net Promoter Score (eNPS)
• Glassdoor ratings and reviews
• Offer acceptance rates
• Referral hires (people wanting to work there)

Qualitative

• Energy in all-hands meetings (observable shift week to week)
• Quality of strategic conversations at leadership level
• Leadership team cohesion and trust
• Stories people tell about the company (internal and external)
• How people show up under pressure
• Own stress levels and sense of presence

Cultural Indicators

• Vulnerable conversations happening more frequently
• Cross-functional collaboration increasing naturally
• People bringing up culture work unprompted
• Language spreading ('remember the breathing exercise')
• Requests for more sessions or ongoing work

Personas Within This ICP

Persona A: 'The Conscious Scaler' - Maya, 39

CEO of 120-person climate tech company. Former startup founder (exited previous company). Determined not to repeat culture mistakes from first company. Has personal meditation practice. Planning annual retreat and wants something transformative, not typical team building.

Trigger: Planning annual retreat in 8 weeks, looking for meaningful content

Persona B: 'The Reluctant CEO' - Brandon, 45

CEO of 85-person tech services company. Promoted from technical role, never planned to be CEO. Cares deeply about people but lacks formal leadership training. Feeling weight of cultural responsibility as company grows. Reads leadership books constantly.

Trigger: Trusted employee shares concerns about team energy and disconnection

Persona C: 'The Mission-Driven Founder' - Alex, 42

CEO of 200-person healthcare company. Started company to solve personal problem (parent's experience with healthcare system). Team attracted by mission, not just salary. Worried about becoming "just another company" as they professionalize. Values are everything.

Trigger: Exit interviews reveal culture concerns - people leaving for "more mission-driven" opportunities

Key Differences: CEO vs. EVP Buyer

Decision-Making: CEO makes decision alone (faster) vs. EVP coordinates with HR/L&D; (slower, more stakeholders)

Focus: CEO cares about whole company culture vs. EVP focused on team performance and results

Timeframe: CEO thinks in years vs. EVP thinks in quarters

Language: CEO values mission/purpose language vs. EVP wants results/performance language

Entry Point: CEO = company retreat (30-200 people) vs. EVP = team workshop (15-25 people)

Conversation Style: CEO more receptive to personal/vulnerable framing vs. EVP more practical/metrics-driven

Budget Authority: CEO can say yes immediately vs. EVP needs to coordinate approvals

Adjust Your Approach Accordingly: With CEOs, lean into philosophical, purpose-driven conversation about culture and values. With EVPs, stay practical and results-oriented about team performance. Both value authenticity, but they express it differently and make decisions differently.

This ICP is a living document. Update based on actual conversations and client feedback.