

HOW TO BUILD A CULTURE OF COMMITTED EMPLOYEES

So much of our success is about people. In spite of our amazing technological advances, people do the work of the organization and are ultimately responsible for its success.

Unfortunately, most organizations, large and small, fail to provide leadership that engages the hearts of their people or encourages them to work at their potential. A study by Towers Perrin/Gang and Gang found that 75% of people feel negatively towards their work. And a Gallup Poll, completed by more than 1.5 million employees, shows that only 28% of employees are engaged in their work; 55% are disengaged; and 17% are actively disengaged. In other words, 72% of employees in the US are either emotionally disconnected from their work or actively undermining their organizations.

One of the defining characteristics of a high performing company is a positive culture. People accept responsibility, think and act like partners in the business and contribute to the company in significant ways. Shaping culture is one of the most important leadership tasks. Doing this is not haphazard but requires a well-coordinated, integrated approach.

Culture Shaping Initiatives:

Create a clear ideology. Why does the organization exist? This is more than making money. It is the contribution the organization makes to its customers, employees and stakeholders as well as the values by which people live that transform a normal workplace to one that inspires people to be their best.

Define your culture. Although this flows from your core ideology, it's critical to think through the attitudes and habits you desire to see manifested daily. What can you do to instill and reinforce these?

Set the example. The organization mirrors the attitudes, beliefs and habits of those at the top. It's not what we say but what we do. Senior managers need systems in place to give them feedback and insight about how well they are doing in modeling their espoused values.

Create forums where people can talk. You gain buy-in by talking to people about values. This is more than announcing them. It's two way dialogue that "unfreezes" old habits and begins to move people towards new ones.

Look at your design. The processes, structure and systems of the company need to reinforce the culture you want to create. You can't claim to value collaboration and set people up to compete. Or, care about the customer and organize around functional silos. Does your design support the culture you want to create?

Tell stories. People love good stories. You should regularly share examples and the positive consequences of people living the company's values. Not only do they remind us of what is important. They inspire us to be better.

Reinforce It. Build your recognition system around your values. Include them as part of your performance appraisal process. Coach those who don't match the desired culture.

Culture can be a powerful basis of competitive advantage. But it needs to be managed. We offer a number of surveys and questionnaires for those companies that want to assess the current state of their culture. We then help you put a plan in place to create the culture you desire, one that results in committed rather than alienated employees.



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