Building a Strong Culture

by Brian Hazelgren

I believe the evolution of a company's culture is a long-term game. You cannot change the way a workforce operates overnight, but you can get to work on it right away to start to affect positive change. To effect any meaningful change to the culture, you need to take a series of actions, over several months or even years, to alter the mechanics of how your team communicates and works to achieve goals.

Start with building a positive culture in your company. Provide opportunities for your employees to wake up, come alive, and see how they can be the catalyst for positive change. Help them to create their own lifestyle of being positive. Once you take care of the individuals, they will take care of your business. You can begin by mentoring your employees to stop fixating on the negative, and that happiness is a choice. Help your team establish positive patterns individually and as a team and make this part of their everyday routine. Positive, optimistic people are happier and healthier - and life is more abundant.

How do you influence cultural change? - Leaders have to take ownership of the culture they help create to understand how they can change them for the better. This is why self-awareness is a key trait shared among the very best leaders. If you can pinpoint where things have gone wrong in the past, this will enable you to craft solutions to meet these challenges. To help employees feel appreciated, you need to celebrate their achievements regularly and let everyone know about their achievements.

Do our values need to change to affect culture? - Deeply ingrained beliefs and attitudes don't change overnight. It could take a while to reap the full benefits once you set cultural change in emotion. Values in the corporate setting are the motive behind purposeful action. Values are usually fairly stable, yet don't have strict limits or boundaries.

Values sometimes change in a company as the circumstances change. As leadership's definition of success may change, so do the company values. Leadership roles change, the market takes a different turn in direction than what was planned for, or something else happens that may alter a company's values. This is why it is important to stay in touch with your values - since it is a lifelong process for your employees - and for the company.

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The personality of your company plays a role in employee satisfaction. If you take steps in the right direction, team morale will pick up - eventually translating into increased workforce productivity.

You should try to identify when your business was thriving the most and people felt fulfilled and satisfied. Next, determine your top values and where you can possibly begin to blend them together. For example philanthropy, community, and generosity may simply be blended into service. Identify what those values are.

Next, you will want to prioritize your values. And, if you find that there is a negative environment, then start there first. Or, if you feel the organization can use a boost of positivity - then invest in your people and help them find more joy in their work. Negativity in any environment has to be identified, cleaned up and cleaned out before it infects other important areas of the company like employees, vendor partners, and customers. You must make this a priority and heal any negative influences before you can create a solid set of corporate values. With the world we live in today there is bound to be plenty of negativity.

Look at a common list of personal values that will help you get started on building the values that matter most to you and your employees. Come up with about 10-12 values, then see what you can do to combine a couple of them. The final step is to announce your top values to your team and confirm with them that they buy into what you are advocating. The following list will help you identify the top 10.

Accountability	Curiosity	Fluency	Loyalty	Shrewdness
Accuracy	Decisiveness	Focus	Making a difference	Simplicity
Achievement	Democraticness	Freedom	Mastery	Soundness
Adventurousness	Dependability	Fun	Merit	Speed
Altruism	Determination	Generosity	Obedience	Spontaneity
Ambition	Devoutness	Goodness	Openness	Stability
Assertiveness	Diligence	Grace	Order	Strategic
Balance	Discipline	Growth	Originality	Strength
Being the best	Discretion	Happiness	Patriotism	Structure
Belonging	Diversity	Hard Work	Piety	Success
Boldness	Dynamism	Health	Positivity	Support
Calmness	Economy	Helping Society	Practicality	Teamwork
Carefulness	Effectiveness	Holiness	Preparedness	Temperance
Challenge	Efficiency	Honesty	Professionalism	Thankfulness
Cheerfulness	Elegance	Honor	Prudence	Thoroughness
Clear-mindedness	Empathy	Humility	Quality-orientation	Thoughtfulness
Commitment	Enjoyment	Independence	Reliability	Timeliness
Community	Enthusiasm	Ingenuity	Resourcefulness	Tolerance
Compassion	Equality	Inner Harmony	Restraint	Traditionalism
Competitiveness	Excellence	Inquisitiveness	Results-oriented	Trustworthiness
Consistency	Excitement	Insightfulness	Rigor	Truth-seeking
Contentment	Expertise	Intelligence	Security	Understanding
Continuous Improvement	Exploration	Intellectual Status	Self-actualization	Uniqueness
Contribution	Expressiveness	Intuition	Self-control	Unity
Control	Fairness	Joy	Selflessness	Usefulness
Cooperation	Faith	Justice	Self-reliance	Vision
Correctness	Family-orientedness	Leadership	Sensitivity	Vitality
Courtesy	Fidelity	Legacy	Serenity	
Creativity	Fitness	Love	Service	

What are the signs of a toxic workplace? - When you are a spectator watching the game, it's easy to point out the mistakes and missed opportunities. The same applies when an outsider looking in can spot the areas that are toxic in a company. We could create a long list of toxic areas of a company, but you can boil them down to some obvious signs:

- Negative feelings and comments about others
- Persistent lack of clarity around tasks and projects
- Mixed messaging across the workforce
- Employees feel the need to whisper and keep secrets
- Passive-aggressive communication (what a person says vs what they do)
- Lack of recognition for a job well done

Make sure that everyone in the organization has plenty of opportunities to make an impact, and is contributing to the positive development of the company.

Is your culture aligned with your strategy? - *I*n my book Healthy Habits of Highly Productive Employees, I outlined the importance of aligning "wellness" into the overall corporate strategy, and if employees are unhealthy, they are unhappy. Once a company can tie their health and wellness message under the mission of prevention, putting health in an "upbeat, positive feeling," the program can take hold within the organization. It basically means that leaders need to work hard to tie all wellness activities back to a broader company strategy. This should be a part of the company culture.

Culture is such a broad stroke and encompasses many areas of life's experiences. There are so many ways to measure the effectiveness of workplace culture. Developing a strong culture should be designed to be less clinical and more lifestyle-oriented - ***in other words how do we make it fun, rewarding, and something that generates a feeling of accomplishment.*** Most health-oriented culture building programs don't do that. I believe they should. And I strongly believe these programs should start with allowing people to excel at clearing out negative feelings, emotions, actions, or ideas - and provide opportunities for individual, as well as group accomplishment.

Are you actively investing in changing company culture? - There's no point waiting around for your company culture to change. Without clear direction and some action on your part, these things won't change. It can take months or even years for investments in company culture to materialize into results. The longer you wait, the longer it will be before these results start to appear. Take action now to secure the future of your organization.

Help your team to challenge negative thinking and understand how to measure the team's positive quotient (PQ). Show them how to make an amazing transformation to be a positive thinker. By doing so, you will be helping them achieve personal and business goals to unleash your team's true potential!

Brian Hazelgren is a Best-Selling Author, Motivational Speaker, Podcast Host, and CEO. Learn more about Brian's latest book and training system **Mastering Positive Thinking - 8 Lifestyles of Positive People™** at www.positific.com.