

Embracing Excellence

Become an employer of choice to attract and keep the best talent.

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Qualities and characteristics of a great corporate culture.

The days are gone when workers spent their career with one company and it becomes hard to keep good people. Companies increased salaries and bonuses but it's not enough. All depends on the organizational culture. If you built bon participation, cooperation and communication you will be able to keep the good people.

Focusing on the best talents of your employees rather than on productivity will give you a much lower turnover.

The question is now how to shift from a productivity obsessed organization to a more creative, problem-solving, dynamic and exciting company? It requires more than full commitment of the top management. You need a climate that stimulates people to challenge current practices and to develop and implement new ideas.

The organizational culture dictates employees how they think about their jobs, how they perform their functions and how they plan for the future.

A great company culture will include following ten features :

1. An almost missionary zeal. Enthusiasm and excitement permeate the culture.
2. A sense of pride, sincerity and cooperation.
3. An attitude of constructive discontent.
4. A value-based mind-set and management style.
5. An emphasis on creativity and innovation.
6. A focus an building role models, not just leaders.
7. A sense of high expectations and professional standards.
8. A fair, commensurate compensation and incentive program.
9. A habit of celebrating successes.
10. Adhering to the golden rule.

Diagnosing your corporate culture.

You have to assess first your organizational culture. Sales volume, market share, payroll and other tangible statistics are wellknown. But what about employee attitude and morale, the skill level of the people, the willingness of employees to cooperate and to extend themselves and the commitment of your staff?

So the first step is to identify what employee perceptions are and how they developed.

Use an Organizational Magnetic Resonance Imaging tool (O-MRI) to look deep inside your organization. The O-MRI looks for the reason a problem exists by peeling layer after layer. It is based on an in-depth confidential employee survey.

Six terrific techniques to obtain reliable information :

1. Get employees away from the company environment.
2. Organize focus groups.
3. Conduct confidential employee surveys.
4. Conduct individual employee interviews.
5. Conduct 360-degree assessments of key-managers.
6. Schedule a multi-level retreat.

The four worst techniques to obtain reliable information :

1. The town meeting.
2. Meetings lead by managers.
3. Poorly designed problem-solving teams.
4. Employees interviewed by company managers.

How one company conducted an O-MRI.

Excelsior Paper Box company initiated their O-MRI by sending a letter to each employee describing briefly the why of the program and why everyone should participate. The consultant was introduced in departmental meetings and everyone was assured that the process would be confidential.

Articles in the company newsletter described the purpose and methods to be used. The actual survey was distributed

together with a letter from a senior executive.

67% returned the survey before deadline, others followed with some delay.

The consultants prepared a report that revealed four major problems :

- o A sense of insecurity, distrust, fear and resentment.
- o Existence of poor internal communication.
- o Existence of inequities in compensation.
- o Too much internal politics.

Peer-based focus groups were created and their comments on the survey were tabulated and categorized.

Seven informal leaders were identified and interviewed to discuss the great deal of distrust of upper management.

Next came a 360° assessment of middle and senior management people as there was distrust between these managers.

At the end multi-level retreats were held to discuss changes needed to the corporate culture.

Conclusion: the authoritarian style of management and the lack of effective communication needed to be addressed.

How to find great people.

Recruitment and retention are crucial processes in keeping the employees who will thrive in your organization.

You should start in determining the characteristics of a perfect A-player. A job description should really describe what the job really is and a job specification what the characteristics the person the job holds needs to be successfully perform the job.

A job specification should include:

- o Education and skills
- o Work experience
- o Physical stamina
- o Intelligence

- o Communication skill and personality

When screening résumés look out for :

- o Education fraud
- o Progress
- o Stability

In the interview, use a many open-ended questions as possible. Ask about weaknesses and to describe a negative aspect of his last evaluation and his career plans.

Another important part of the interview is selling your organization in a positive and enthusiastic manner.

Common interview mistakes are :

- o The interview was haphazard. The interviewer had no clear plan and jumps around.
- o The interview was for the wrong job.
- o The applicant dominated the job.
- o You played God.
- o You telegraphed the 'right' answer.
- o You talked too much.
- o You played district attorney.
- o Don't play psychologist.
- o Don't fall in love.
- o You didn't probe for details.

After the interviews you have to avoid the pitfalls in judging people. We all tend to subconsciously favor people whose background are like our own. Compare good candidates systematically.

Once you've made your selection, it is time to make the offer. Be ready to face the objections and overcome them. Be aware that the actual employer can make a counter-offer.

Balance compensation and intangible benefits.

Determining compensation plans is becoming more difficult as new kinds of compensation plans are showing up. The trend is away from seniority or rank toward performance as the basic determinant of pay. In a tight market there is a temptation to offer good candidates more than ever before. Be aware of the impact of higher salaries on those already working for your company.

Money is important but people value more intangible benefits. The top ten reasons for staying in a current job by Bottom Line Business are :

- o Career growth and learning
- o Exciting and challenging work
- o Meaningful work and the opportunity to make a difference
- o Great co-workers
- o Being part of a team
- o A good boss
- o Being recognized for a job well done.
- o Having fun at the job.
- o Autonomy and a sense of control over their own work.
- o Flexibility in work hours and dress code.

The best candidates may be found inside your company.

An active program of internal transfers and promotions is one way to attract A-players. Filling vacancies from within has many advantages: knowing the company culture and rules. You know more about current employees than you know about an outside hire.

Offering opportunities internally boosts morale.

But there will be times when you have to go outside: when skills are not available inside, when you need a fresh new view.

Finding internal candidates isn't always easy. Start by looking in personnel files, identify people holding positions below their education, look into your internal job bank that lists all skills and talents held by current workers.

Getting new employees off on the right foot.

Orientation is a start but not enough.. There is a need for a new approach called 'onboarding'. Onboarding is a comprehensive plan to shepherd the new employees through the first several months. Onboarding plans should include :

- o A clear sense of purpose describing why orienting the new employee is important for the company and the worker.
- o An assessment of the environment (including any negative aspects of the job)
- o Identification of the 'critical few objectives' that the new employee must master quickly if he or she is to succeed.
- o Identification and assignment of a mentor.

A good training part is essential. Respect following four steps:

1. The attitude conditioning of the learners.
2. Presentation and demonstration of content.
3. Practice
4. Follow-up and reinforcement.

Seven successful onboarding practices :

- o Assign a coach or mentor
- o Arrange for some early successes
- o Identify and concentrate on a handful of key strategic objectives
- o Develop a job description with performance standards
- o Allow new employees ample time to learn, study and plan before assuming major responsibilities.
- o Overcome resentment of bypassed employees.
- o Provide unwavering support.

Why good people leave.

People leave jobs for a reason, including:

- o Loss of faith in management
- o Feeling unappreciated, bored or unchallenged
- o Frustration with excessive politics
- o More money
- o Feeling used or exploited
- o Concern about the future of the firm
- o The departure of a close friend
- o A more flexible benefits package.

Today workers leave for reasons best referred to as work-life issues. Here telecommuting and job-sharing can offer solutions.

Employee loyalty is at an all-time low. The nine keys to loyalty are:

1. Behavior and reputation of management
2. A clear, well-conceived mission and vision to keep people focused and connected
3. Recognizing and rewarding exceptional performance
4. Reputation of the company

5. Focus on building pride
6. Sense of long-term viability
7. Opportunity for growth and training
8. Opportunity for promotion
9. commitment to drive out fear and minimize politics

Leadership is a key factor in retention. Today, a leader leads by persuasion and motivation. Great leaders have enthusiastic followers and focus on getting things done. They rely on a fixed, unwavering set of convictions as their guiding light and act on those convictions. Since they demonstrate trust, conviction and loyalty, they also inspire it.