



## Developing a Values-Driven Culture

BY NANCY STAMPAHAR

**DO EMPLOYEES IN YOUR COMPANY** get their work completed in ways that are in keeping with the organization's desired values? Do the actions of managers match their words? If your answer to either of these questions is "no," your organization is most likely experiencing performance issues and workers are not reaching their optimal potential.

Your culture is your organization's personality. It answers the question, "What's it like to work around here?" and shapes how people perform within your organization. A culture strategy is formed by shared belief systems and values that are intended to support both business strategies and personal development.

For example, if your organization values customer service, does it really know what your customers think of your service? Or, if your organization values self-directed employees, are you hiring people who take the initiative? A values-driven culture supports the human behaviors that bring about enthusiasm, passion and commitment—behaviors that are critical for success.

### Envisioning the Future

The components of a culture strategy include:

1. A vision of the future
2. Shared values aligned with systems and processes
3. Critical success measures
4. Walk the talk
5. Accountability.

What is your vision of your future? It has been proven over and over again that people who are proactive and future-oriented are much happier and more fulfilled in both their personal and professional lives than those who are complacent, reactive and oriented

toward the past. Those who remain stuck in the same old routine are just watching life and careers pass them by instead of living and embracing the world's vast opportunities.

If you want your organizational culture to focus on employee retention, you will have to align your human resources systems with your culture and business strategies so as to support that focus. If you want your personal culture to be balanced with human relationships and fun, you will have to align your personal activities with your core needs and values. In other words, you must do something different for something different to occur.

To help you discover values, think about how you want your organization and yourself to be perceived by others. Jot down the adjectives that you want your community, customers, employees, stakeholders and vendors to use to describe your enterprise's ways of operating and doing business. These adjectives will help you shape your company's future by mirroring them with the appropriate actions and goals, thereby helping you begin to understand corporate values.

To further determine your desired values, ask yourself, "What competencies and traits do I want my employees or myself to demonstrate?" Next, list the specific behaviors to be observed and measured that reflect your desired competencies and traits. Once you determine what you value—both personally and organizationally—it will be extremely critical to walk the talk and make your actions match your words.

If not, cynicism, pessimism and failure will prevail.

Values shape your business decisions and actions and help bring your vision to fruition with the most effective and efficient approaches. They answer the questions, "How do we get our work done around here?" "How do I build a relationship with someone?" "How do we function as a team?"

Examples of values include the following:

- Accountability and Empowerment
- Collaboration and Teamwork
- Communication and Conflict Resolution
- Customer Service
- Flexibility and Open-Mindedness
- Fun and Laughter
- Growth and Innovation
- Kindness and Respect
- Self-Awareness and Self-Direction
- Personal and Professional Development
- Quality of Outcomes.

When you decide to live and work according to your desired values, your responses and activities will be more effective and efficient, which will bring you greater fulfillment and productivity and less stress. You will begin making daily decisions that mirror your values. You will achieve your organizational goals and carry out your vision. ◀

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