

Creating a Positive, Productive Workplace Culture

Organisational culture is generally considered to be the behaviour patterns, values and underlying assumptions which are characteristic of the way in which an organisation operates. More colloquially it is described as “the way we do things around here”. Culture is the organisation’s underlying social architecture. The culture of an organisation has been shown repeatedly to be associated with its performance/ success.

Building a values-based culture is an evolving, long-term process. The workplace culture is the sum total of everything people say and do, and particularly what the leaders and managers of the organisation say and do. When organisations commit to their values and standards (i.e. both management teams and employees) they get the kind of results people want in terms of financial performance, productivity, morale and employee retention.

An organisation will have functioning values and standards only to the extent that it has an effective management system (and skilful managers) that will not TOLERATE deviations from those values. Intolerance is about responding quickly to any and every instance of non-compliance with set standards. This takes a lot of courage (and skill).

It is worth noting that a weak or non-existent value system requires a lot more management time than an effective value system. A value system that is a living part of the culture takes very little effort to sustain.

In a study done by David Maister (2001 *Practice What You Preach*) the most productive and profitable firms had established not just positive workplace cultures but true communities, where people felt a mutual sense of responsibility and obligation to support each other, each accepting his or her fair share of the responsibilities and challenges the organisation faces.

These communities were created by:

- Firstly, hiring the right people
- Then, managing them well (Great managers using great skills)
- Creating the right environment so people stay and are engaged, because from this comes
- Satisfied customers, and from this comes
- Growth and financial success.

Succeeding in business requires:

Caring about clients	AND	Caring about employees
Task focus	AND	People focus
Business development	AND	People development
Tough	AND	Tender
Being demanding	AND	Being supportive
Making money	AND	Having fun
Work hard	AND	Play hard
Financial rewards	AND	Psychological rewards
Being a manager	AND	Being a human being
Treating people as employees	AND	Treating people as human beings
Deciding with the head	AND	Deciding with the heart
Informing	AND	Listening
Taking care of today	AND	Building for the future
Autonomy	AND	Teamwork
Passion	AND	Compassion
Having good ideas	AND	Having the guts to stick with them

This is not about balance, which implies doing 50-50 of each of these things. You've got to be skillful, superb even at both sides to achieve a positive, productive, superior workplace culture.