

Creating Corporate Culture

The failure and evident fall of giants like Enron and Satyam in the recent past, to name a few, emphasizes the need for an organization to cultivate and maintain a good corporate culture. You might be asking, "What is the connection between Enron, Satyam and corporate culture?" A valid question that I will answer systematically below.

What is Corporate Culture?

Culture is a natural phenomenon that is created when a group of individuals, who share a common purpose or goal, work together to collaborate. It is created out of common thoughts, goals and attitude that commonly exist within the group. This culture creates dynamism and energy, propelling the group forward with their shared sense of purpose.



When such culture presents itself in organizations, it is known as organizational viz. corporate culture. Now there are as many corporate cultures as there are organizations. Some are good, therein creating accelerated employee performance environments; while some are not so good, simply stifling their employees' and companies' ability to achieve their true potential.

A good corporate culture that encourages growth is powerful and its manifestations are far reaching. It is the underlying soul and guiding force within an organization that creates attitude alliance, or employee loyalty.

What Are The Signs Of A Good Corporate Culture?

Some of the constituents of culture are easily visible, like the dress code, titles, incentives, bonuses and the working environment, to name a few. However, in my opinion, the manifestations of culture are, in reality, much more than what is visible. It goes far beyond that. The proper corporate culture lies in the higher realms of values and beliefs. This is the most vital aspect of corporate culture. It is invisible and intangible, in the sense that it cannot be seen, but its incorporation can only be felt. It is this element that can lead an organization to its success or downfall.

This is the foundation for all actions and decisions within a team, department, or organization. It needs to be sustained and the energy harnessed for driving the organization forward.

If Kenneth Lay, ex-CEO of Enron, and Ramalinga Raju, ex-Chairperson of Satyam, had conducted the transactions of their companies with honesty and integrity and focused on the well-being of their employees

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and shareholders, would the companies have ended up in these disastrous and tragic situations?

What does an Optimized Corporate Culture Look and Feel Like?

- ❖ People like to come to work
- ❖ Employee attrition is lower
- ❖ Employees are aligned with the company vision and purpose
- ❖ The organizational mood is optimistic and joyful
- ❖ The company vision and purpose are clear and inspiring



A group's culture is very dynamic. Culture is created and constantly reinforced on a daily basis through various means like interactions with customers, handling of commitments, the tone of [emails](#), and [resolving conflict](#). It is the small and seemingly unimportant indications that contribute towards the creation and sustenance of good corporate culture.

How Can Good Corporate Culture Be Created And Sustained?

Creating and sustaining a healthy, vibrant culture requires daily and proactive communications. The top-down approach has to be used to instill the mission, vision and values to all rungs of the organization. When leaders fail to use these values in their decision making or employee-handling processes, the culture that is created within the group is often confused and unclear.

A winning corporate culture is the keystone for maintaining the highest levels of employee satisfaction, customer loyalty and profitability. For this purpose, the culture needs to be instilled in the hearts and minds of the entire workforce. An organization needs to encourage such good values and principles for the common good of all.

As much as I insist that the leaders need to model the desired values and principles, I also emphasize that the responsibility of sustaining the culture needs to be vested upon every employee. A firm sense of purpose needs to be instilled within every employee - and this means going beyond fixing those elements of culture that are clearly visible. This includes surpassing the team lunches and parties and looking beyond. I compare this with an ailment. Treating the symptoms of an ailment without understanding the root cause will not heal the ailment completely - it is most definitely going to re-appear in full force. In a similar manner, none of the actions that aim at diagnosing the surface and clearly apparent problem would permanently make a positive and lasting impact on an organization's culture.

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The most powerful method to bring about a good corporate culture is through conversation. Conversations have the power to make the invisible visible. It acts as the force that drives and sustains the culture that is intended and created by the founder and management of the organization. It extends beyond the normal business conversations that generally take place in a board room meeting. All business leaders have to be educated on how to have powerful conversations that generate the desired culture with all staff. This is definitely not rocket science - all it takes is an honest commitment from the [leadership team](#) of an organization.

Corporate culture is an unwritten value-set that management communicates directly to employees. Below is a check list that needs to be followed to create a good corporate culture:

- ❖ The leaders of an organization need to establish their personal value-set and live their life accordingly.
- ❖ The vision and mission should be clearly defined and communicated to all employees.
- ❖ The leaders should be both a coach as well as a mentor to employees in order to ensure that these values are driven deep into each employee. Coaching is a method of directing, instructing and training a person or group of people, with the aim to achieve some goal or develop specific skills. A mentor is a trusted friend, counselor or teacher, usually a more experienced person. (source:Wikipedia.com)
- ❖ Hire only those people who demonstrate the right attitude toward other people, good work ethics and quality customer service.
- ❖ Commit to an unbiased work environment.
- ❖ Respect and treat your employees equally, but reward those best who do what you want. Ensure that the appraisal system evaluates the values of the organization. Reward good acts of work or character.

Always remember that working towards a common vision requires effort and energy that is harnessed in the right direction. The case of the ants is a simple example. They work together with immaculate precision, propelled by a deeply instilled culture that helps them to successfully do the job that is assigned to them.

Drive yourself forward with the right values and beliefs. Associate yourself with good corporate culture. Every drop makes up the ocean; it is possible to make a difference - one step at a time.

<http://www.culturebuilders.com>

<http://www.bizjournals.com/birmingham/stories/2000/08/14/focus6.html>

<http://www.allbusiness.com/north-america/united-states-california-metro-areas/4107557-1.html>

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