



## BUILDING YOUR WORKPLACE CULTURE: PICK & MIX

Because your culture will be unique to your organisation, not all of the following ideas will apply to all workplaces. Take a look through (they're in no particular order) and choose the ones that will work best for you and your people, then use them to help build your plan.

- ☐ **set team goals**  
Outline the objectives of each team so everyone has tangible results to work towards. Not only will this help guide individual performance, but it will encourage collaboration between team members.
- ☐ **promote the organisation's goals**  
Make sure everyone is clear on the organisation's short- and long-term objectives. Help individuals to see how they fit into the bigger picture. Include this from the recruitment stage.
- ☐ **make respect a rule**  
Every individual should feel valued and heard, regardless of their status within the company, e.g., longstanding employees have institutional knowledge to call upon, new employees bring a fresh perspective, and volunteers have a unique view and motivation. You never know where the next big idea will come from, so let everyone have a seat at the table and feel empowered to share their thoughts and you'll reap the rewards.
- ☐ **recognise your culture champions**  
Acknowledgement done the right way reinforces your values and builds loyalty in your people. Always be looking out for who is 'walking the walk' and recognise team members who demonstrate your company values. For example, share an employee's wins in a team email, give them a shout out in a team meeting, jot them a personal note, keep senior management up to date with who's doing a great job, celebrate great team performance.
- ☐ **create a rewards and recognition programme**  
Recognise and reward employees for achieving outstanding results. Doing so will encourage employees to continue striving for excellence and will help them feel valued within the company. It will also motivate their peers to up their game, fostering a work culture of friendly competition that leads to high performance. Make sure you reward individuals in a way that is valuable to them – find out what they love and reward them accordingly; it shows you care and that you have taken the time to get to know them.



☐ be flexible

Life happens and things will get in the way. Employees shouldn't fear repercussions for taking time to manage other emergencies or responsibilities outside of work. For example, if an employee is struggling to balance work with their family life, work on creating a compromise that allows them to be productive at work without sacrificing their personal life. You'll earn the respect of your employees rather than the reputation of being unaccommodating and unapproachable.

☐ be transparent

Promote transparency and open communication between management and team members. Doing this will support a positive work culture where employees feel heard and valued. Share critical information with the team and hold meetings for company-wide announcements that require more context and the opportunity to ask questions.

☐ allow for humour

Work has its stressful times, so being able to let off steam and to make a difficult situation more lighthearted is an invaluable skill. *"People rarely succeed unless they are having fun in what they are doing."* – Dale Carnegie.

☐ be up-front about what behaviours will not be tolerated

Just as important as creating a welcoming environment is ensuring that employees know their rights and that they are protected within the workplace from inappropriate behaviours or harassment. A crucial part of a positive work culture is providing employees with safe opportunities to speak openly about issues they are facing – in and outside of the office – and to have access to the support and resources they need.

☐ accept and use employee feedback

Rather than considering feedback to be indicative of something you're doing wrong, think of it as the opposite – your team care so much about the organisation and its success that they are trying to help make it better. Choosing to bring their pain points to your attention gives you the opportunity to fix them before they turn into much bigger issues.

☐ plan social get togethers

Humans are social beings that crave interaction. Create an opportunity to get to know each other at work and outside of work to foster meaningful relationships between employees. You can keep it simple by having an end-of-week happy hour (in the office and/or online for remote team members). Think about the types of events your team would most enjoy when coming up with new work culture ideas, and ask for their suggestions.



☐ **avoid encouraging your people to work through their breaks**

While not all breaks are legally required, allow employees opportunities to step away from their workstation during their shift. Your team is not composed of robots, so expecting employees to continuously churn out quality work over the course of their shift without breaks is unrealistic, and unhealthy. More than that, it suggests that employees are only valued for their work output, not as individuals. Regular breaks are shown to improve productivity, allowing individuals to refresh and re-set.

☐ **don't reschedule catchups**

If you've set aside time to meet with an employee individually, do your best to honor that meeting, especially if something else comes up. Doing so will show you value and respect their time, and care about what they have to say.

☐ **don't ignore disengaged employees**

Having an engaged workforce will help propel your company forward on its path to success, while disengaged employees will slow it down. If you notice individuals are counterproductive to your team's success, talk to them. There may be issues that you're unaware of and are able to help them address, or maybe they're not happy in or suited to your line of work and it would be more productive to help them find another position more suited for their needs and goals.

☐ **avoid limiting learning opportunities to job descriptions**

Skill building is an important part of a positive work experience. Allow employees to pursue their passions, both in and outside of the office, and encourage information sharing between colleagues. This exchange of knowledge will lead to improved employee relationships, collaboration and camaraderie.

☐ **never tolerate poor managers**

There's some truth to the old saying that employees don't leave companies, they leave managers. Managers directly impact employee engagement and performance, so it's vital to make sure those individuals who are leading a team are doing so with conviction and in line with the company's values.

☐ **don't expect HR to do all of the work**

As hard as HR teams may try, work culture isn't created by a handful of people. It's a team effort and HR teams can't be tasked with doing it alone. Positive cultures are created when everyone works together.



#### avoid forcing it

Positive and fulfilling work cultures don't just appear overnight. Keep to your values, listen to your employees, have some fun, and it will take shape organically. Work cultures that keep people happy and businesses thriving take time – it's worth it.



#### involve your people

Creating a positive work culture where everyone feels valued, welcomed and respected is vital to an organisation's success and needs to be a team effort. Involve everyone in the process and take their input seriously – your team members are vital to ensuring your culture is a successful one.



#### have a culture vision

Have a clear culture vision when you are hiring people and ask them the ways they would contribute. Think of creative ways to display the vision where everyone can see it, and make reference to it regularly. Remember, someone is always watching, so be true to your own vision.



#### celebrate success

'Catch people out' doing a great job! Celebrate the actions that contribute to smashing targets, but also appreciate the small, but equally awesome things your employees do that add to the success of the company. Being recognised for their contribution to the organisation is a key driver of employee engagement and satisfaction.



#### communication

This is often overlooked but can be the difference between success and failure. Try creating an open workplace where communication flows freely. Not all meetings can be about positive topics, but the meeting itself can be a positive experience. Some companies like to start a meeting by having each person contribute a positive experience – either a work related achievement or a personal story. Storytelling is a great way for people to learn, grow and feel connected as a team.



#### group activities

If you want to create a cohesive and effective team, taking people out of the office environment to take part in shared activities is a great way to get people talking and building relationships. Employees are more likely to work well together if they know a little about each other. Activities don't all have to be in work time – you could include opportunities such as a lunchtime yoga class or a group walk before work.



### create an awesome space

Your workspace is a reflection of your vision so find ways to make it an inspiring space as well as fit for purpose – have a chill out area, cover the walls in inspiring imagery, allow people to personalise their space in some way.



### measure the impact

Making any kind of change can have a direct impact on the quality and quantity of work happening in your organisation. If you aren't measuring it you might never know how successful (or detrimental) the changes have been.