Stirring Up the Perfect Culture ~

A Note from Banning Engineering's Human Resources Director, Tammy Dickison –



Like most people, at the beginning of a new year, I love to reorganize and declutter. While cleaning out one of my bookshelves, I came across the book SOUP, written by Jon Gordon. It's been a minute since I read this positive and encouraging parable, but as I flipped through the pages, it made me think about our company, our people, and what we continue to strive for as a company.

In times when it is difficult to find and retain employees, the concepts that Jon wrote about nearly 15 years ago are still incredibly important in the success of companies today. The book is a business fable that relates the necessary steps it takes to make a good soup to what it takes to build a good team and culture. The story revolves around a CEO of a struggling company who is tasked with turning her organization around. In her quest to revitalize the company, the character learns valuable lessons from a chef who makes the most wonderful soup and, over time, teaches the CEO valuable lessons. Each short chapter builds on the importance of continuing to nourish the team and the culture with key ingredients like trust, transparency, engaged relationships, inspiration, appreciation, and passion.

Maintaining and growing our culture is a big focus for the Banning Team, but as the book demonstrates, one ingredient doesn't make the soup; it takes a multitude of ingredients to make the soup flavorful.

One ingredient that we try to achieve and work on is trust at many different levels of the organization. In 2022, Jeff Banning made a pinnacle decision by selling the company to the employees. When the announcement was made, employees understood that Jeff was trusting them to continue the Banning Way. As an Employee-Owned company, our employees continuously work to build trust among themselves, our clients, and the communities we work in. Building and maintaining trust is core to the Banning Way.

Inspiration is another key ingredient needed to maintain a good company culture. Our clients' projects help provide our inspiration. Whether we are developing roads to improve traffic flow, building trailways for families to ride or take walks on, or designing housing communities that provide the extra spices of life, our employees find great inspiration in making those ideas come to life. We proudly post our clients' projects on our electronic boards throughout our office to share what each team is working on.

Our engineers, project managers, and managers play an important part in our relationship success. They work on a doer/seller model, which means that they must sell the work and do the work. As many of you know, this is a challenge with today's fast-paced demands. Even with these demands, it is part of the Banning Way to develop caring working relationships, whether with our clients or our employees. It's a priority for us to promote a humancentric culture where individuals are heard, seen, and valued. Leaders engage people by not only asking simple questions about the individual's family or weekend plans but also taking a moment to be present when that person speaks.

These are just a few thoughts from my perspective that demonstrate how employees at all levels can "stir the pot" to make a delicious soup. All it takes for a good soup recipe to become excellent is a few tweaks of the ingredients. Give it a stir, and you may be surprised by how wonderful it will become.

We appreciate the partnerships we share with you and believe that your testimony of our company helps us grow our client and employee base. That being said, if you have a friend or family member or know of someone looking for a new job opportunity, we would greatly appreciate your help spreading the word about our current open positions on our Careers Page. Whether or not you or someone you know is looking for a career change, we hope this soup metaphor can inspire you to lead in a way that achieves excellent culture within your organization and your own life.

~ Tammy Dickison