Build a More Engaged Workforce These 4 Ways

Companies are becoming increasingly concerned with the internal culture of their company these days – and for good reason. Gallup has famously studied and reported on the American workplace reporting that the level of engagement among employees has a huge impact on the business itself. Companies with highly engaged workers have 147% higher earnings and had higher profitability and productivity ratings than businesses without.

Now that leaders are beginning to understand the importance of a healthy, engaged work environment, 80% of companies have included strategies to improve culture as a part of their business plan this year. But with 85% of workers globally disengaged, it begs the question as to whether or not their strategies are actually working.

You can't just wish a better culture into existence. It requires action, planning, and a deep desire within the entire organization to make the necessary changes.

Here are four actionable steps your business can take to create measurable, positive changes within your culture.

1. Create a team devoted to culture

Your business culture was formed by the people who make up the organization with their personalities, actions, and interactions. Therefore, a person cannot change the culture by themselves. It's a team effort, and every good team needs a leader to take charge.

This is why creating a culture committee is a great way to move your team in a positive direction. This should be a group of leaders who have the ability to influence the rest of the organization, and not just because of their positions as managers or executives. The point of this committee is not just to put new rules in place and make sure that everyone is behaving accordingly; they should be able to influence their coworkers to change their attitudes and actions to help the company reach its goals.

So, what should you do to create this culture committee?

Pick the right people — In order to put this dream team of culture influencers together, they first must have a clear understanding of where the culture is and a unified vision of where it should be. They should be people that employees look up to, not necessarily just because of their rank, but because of their leadership capabilities and influence they have over others.

Prioritize the right values — Honesty and commitment are essential for any real change to occur, so this committee must be willing to have open conversations about mistakes and weaknesses within the organization. But more than just talk needs to happen; they must also be willing and able to come up with a game plan to actually make it happen.

Provide them with the proper tools – A company is only as good as its processes. Investing in an organizational tool or project management software to keep people on track towards common goals should be done VERY early on in your company's existence.

2. Hire based on culture fit

Remember, each person that is added to the team will have an influence on the culture in either a positive or negative way. In your hiring, you want people who will be a fit with the culture you want to build. Here's what can help:

Know what you're looking for — As you look for additional members for the team, be on the lookout for both the necessary technical skills for the position and also the soft skills that signal potential culture fit. For example, if you want your culture to be collaborative and emphasize teamwork, then the employees must be able to work well with others, have strong communication skills, and be willing to take charge as a leader if needed. Define these qualities first and then search for candidates who fit the bill.

Try smart recruiting software — Simply browsing resumes and conducting traditional interviews may not provide enough information to really get a feel for whether or not a candidate will be a positive addition to the organization. This is where pre-employment assessments can be especially handy. These questionnaires are designed to measure each applicant's aptitude and attitude before they are hired. The goal is to give recruiters a better look at their skillsets. Some programs even use AI and machine learning technology to predict the likelihood of success in the desired position and how well a personality will fit with the business culture.

Read between the lines — An applicant's resume may not blatantly state that they have the right personality or soft skills to fit into your culture (and any good recruiter knows you can't always trust a person's self-description). Look for experiences, talents, and even hobbies that correlate with the skillsets you are looking for. For instance, if creativity is important, a person who likes to paint or was involved with community theatre is probably pretty creative as well.

A positive culture will bring in better talent. The way a business treats their employees is more important these days than ever before. 57% of U.S. respondents to a Manpower survey said a company's brand/reputation is a more important factor in job selection than it was five years ago.; giving your HR department yet another reason to make improvements and actively sell your company's culture during the recruiting process.

3. Find a feedback system that actually works

When you start looking for solutions for fixing a negative company culture, one common piece of advice is to gather employee feedback and monitor their behavior. This is often used for performance review purposes, a word which stirs up dread in most employee's hearts. However, the right feedback system can positively influence your culture by opening up a channel for clear, honest communication, especially between employees and upper level management.

Frequent and positive feedback has a direct link to engagement. Those who received feedback regularly are more engaged. More than half of all highly engaged organizations conduct feedback sessions at least monthly or quarterly. Meanwhile, 40% of workers ignored by their managers are disengaged.

There are plenty of tools and tactics out there designed to support a feedback system, but not every strategy will work for every person or business. Some people may prefer in-person assessments with managers, while others may feel intimidated or unable to share their honest opinions, and would prefer an online tool. There are tech solutions that provide a platform for everyone within a company to share their ideas, concerns, and progress on a regular basis.

Systems like CultureAmp and 15five are great for feedback collection and analysis. These programs provide a platform for everyone within a company to share their ideas, concerns, and progress on a regular basis. Some systems like Blind even allow for anonymous discussions regarding internal issues

Implementing these systems into the workplace is pretty simple. The programs use automated assessments to be sent out periodically (managers can decide if they want to use them weekly, monthly, or quarterly) and the responses are transformed into data reports that show exactly what your employees are thinking and feeling. Managers can also use specific feedback during one-on-one meetings to support honest discussions about performance and leadership.

Chicago-based Retrofit is switching its performance evaluation process over from traditional forms to an online system. The program is configured to ask employees simple questions about their goals and performance. It transforms the insights into clear graphs and datasets for managers to track. A company executive predicted the new system will be a time saver and that the more frequent feedback sessions will encourage a stronger level of trust between workers and their supervisors.

The point here is to find a system that works for your company. You may not even need an online tool; but what you do need is a strategy that makes your employees feel like their opinions and actions matter.

4. Be patient, but measure results constantly

Unfortunately, one of the leading causes as to why employees are not actively engaged in their job is because they do not feel recognized. A little bit of recognition can go a long way in terms of engagement, the way to get employees more engaged is to communicate expectations clearly, listen to their opinions, and give due credit and encouragement.

Culture change takes time. Don't expect to see changes even after a few months of commitment. Additionally, changes may not be incredibly obvious, but if your organization is truly committed and your culture committee is doing their job right, things will happen. This is why it is important that you track and take notice of even the smallest movement in the right direction.

Try out some tools to monitor employee performance and employee sentiment, such as Officevibe or Glint – which rate your employee's engagement score based on surveys and data collection to provide sentiment analysis and monitor any changes.

Again, be sure to congratulate teams when things do change, but don't be afraid to reprimand employees for falling back into old habits, either.

Conclusion

Your internal culture has a significant effect on your business outcome, so inspiring positive change must be a job that is taken very seriously. Start off by getting everyone onboard and appointing leaders who are fit to take charge. From there, ensure that every new hire adds to a positive culture and implement the proper tools to make the necessary changes happen.

Remember, no big changes will occur right away. A company's culture is certainly not set in stone, either. By following a plan and tracking progress along the way, your team can make consistent strides in the right direction.