



Five Non-Negotiable Elements of A Culture

From mom-and-pop, single location businesses to Fortune 50 firms, and from national sports teams to local non-profits, every organization requires dedicated people to carry out the leadership vision. To recruit and retain top talent, leaders must cultivate the organization every day – and this isn't something you can delegate.

“The most powerful recruitment tool you have is your company’s culture, over which you have a substantial amount of control. Every day you have opportunities to shape that culture, and it’s important to not let them slip by.” ~”The Knack” by Norm Brodsky & Bo Burlingham (INC. Magazine columnists)

In my experience, and in reading dozens of books on how to build an extraordinary culture that keeps people loyal and engaged, I've discovered five non-negotiable elements:

1 Mutual Trust – Which is a Pre-requisite and NOT a Value.

So many companies list Trust as a core value. For Information Experts, we make Trust a pre-requisite. It's something that needs to be present before a new hire joins the team. Trust is non-negotiable. For me, it means I can rest easily knowing that everyone commits to doing their best, and that they aren't trying to take advantage of me or hurt the company. For them, it means that they know that I have their best interests at heart, that I'm going to provide a non-toxic environment, that I'm setting them up for success, and that I care about them as people.

2 Employee Appreciation and An Attitude of Gratitude.

This element brings us back to one of the very first lessons we all learned from our parents and teachers. Say “Please” and “Thank You” – a lot. I've always approached life from a place of gratitude. Businesses are only as strong as the people inside of them, and smart leaders know that they would be no where without a dedicated team of people behind them. There are so many ways to show appreciation. We do lots of company outings; I do frequent shout-outs on our social media outlets; we make sure we have everyone's favorite candy at the front of the office; we do a lot of all-office lunch deliveries; and we never skimp on the holiday party. It's both the little and grand gestures that communicate again and again how much we appreciate the employees.

We are an equal-opportunity-appreciation-and-gratitude organization.

Community.

3 There is no room for self-focused agendas at Information Experts. At the risk of sounding like a cliché, “there is no “I” in TEAM. I've come across a lot of businesses that literally pit one division against another for revenue generation – and I've watched them fight over opportunities and lose them. We have literally been the



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target of a tug-of-war between competing divisions who want us on their team (we walked away due to their in-fighting). It's amazing to me how a leadership team could intentionally choose divisiveness as a cultural business driver. When we win a contract, it is a win BY the entire organization FOR the entire organization. No one person or one practice area is responsible for a win. It's the collective efforts of the entire organization, as well as the history, track record, and lifelong brand, that wins us the work.

We use technology to build a sense of community, not so easy when we have people dispersed around the country. We also have an intranet for collaboration, we have multiple blogs, and we've developed a mobile visual employee directory – a lot of fun and very innovative. *A company that works together wins together.*

4 Fun.

As an organization that is based in one of our country's most stressful, high-pressure regions, I've learned that a little bit of fun can go a long way in easing the stress. Information Experts has a Good Times Committee (GTC). The GTC started out with one person, and now has 3 or 4. They field ideas from the entire company on how to inject fun on both a daily and event-driven basis. I'll pretty much approve any party idea and support just about anything that brings joy to our employees during the workday.

Learning-Centric Culture.

5

Investing in the development of your employees creates a win-win-win for the employee, the company, and the customer. As a leading education & training consulting firm, Information Experts stays current with the learning trends, and how companies can invest in their employees without breaking their budgets. Employees must keep learning and growing in their areas of expertise or they and the company will grow stale. If employees are constrained by an organization that won't invest in them, they risk falling behind in their knowledge, skill sets, and expertise. Employees will leave a company that fails to commit to their growth, and customers will stop working with companies who bring outdated solutions to the table. *Commitment to education & learning is a must-have element for companies looking to attract and retain top talent and top customers.*

These five non-negotiable elements are all required tools for any company that wants to maximize the potential of its most valued asset, which is its people. How well does your company do with each one? What are some of the non-negotiable elements of your organization? Please post a comment, or write us and let us know at www.successfulculture.com!