

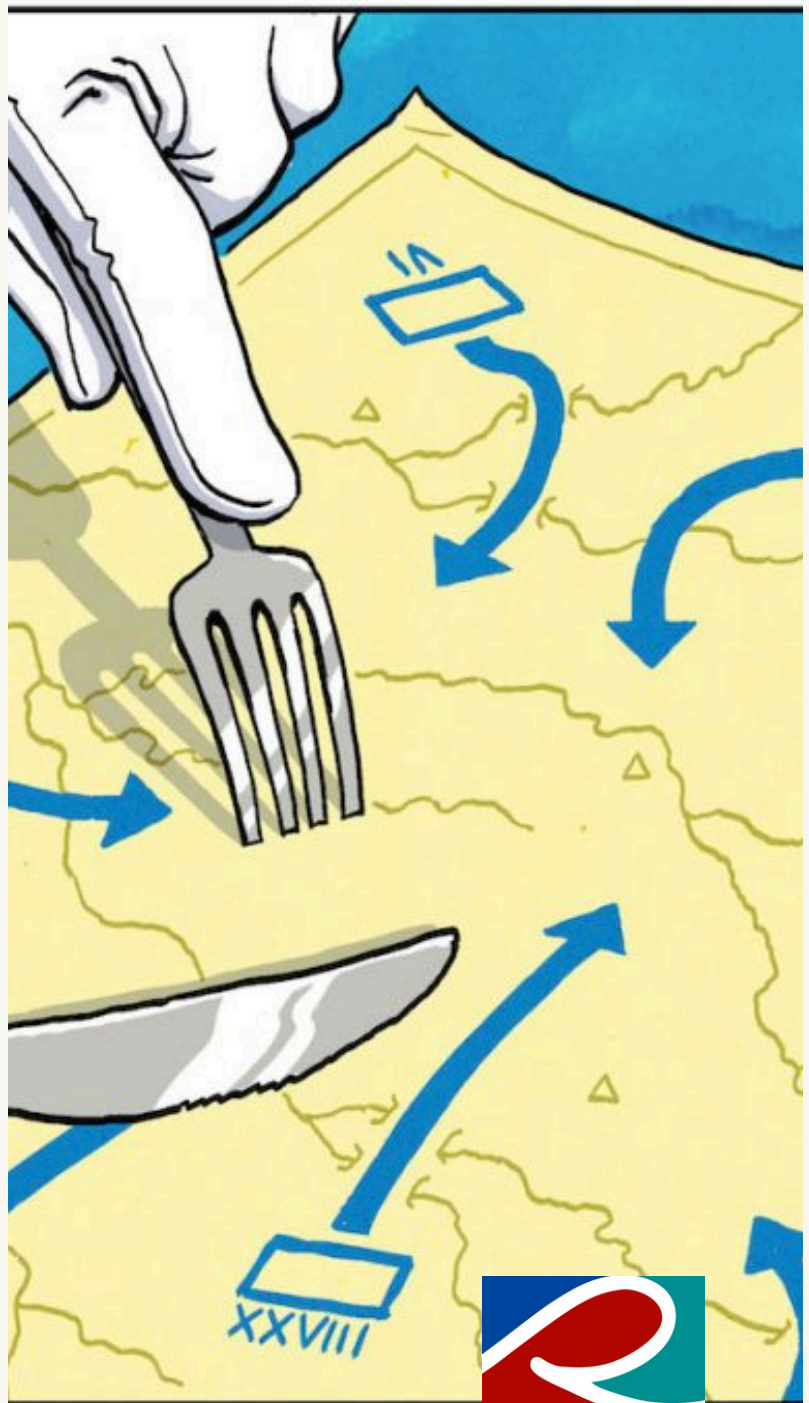
The Common Thread

CULTURE EATS STRATEGY FOR BREAKFAST

We have all heard this expression coined by Peter Drucker. And in many instances it has been proven true. The best thought out strategies and plans often are completely overwhelmed by organisational culture, norms and traditions.

Peter Drucker didn't mean that strategy was unimportant, but rather that a powerful and empowering culture is a surer route to organisational success.

So in this issue of The Common Thread we look at some ways leaders can define organizational values and behaviours to build an intentional culture, which leads to both improved financial performance and enhanced employee engagement.



IT STARTS WITH A VISION

Yogi Berra once said, "If you don't know where you're going, you might end up someplace else."

This nugget of wisdom is a good starting point in a conversation about company culture because it spotlights what makes it so valuable: Culture tells your team where you're going.

A cohesive company culture provides a clear vision and direction, making it easier for everyone to work together toward a common goal and to weather hardship and change when it happens. It also tends to make work a more fun place to be.

So here are four steps to help get your company off on the right foot.

1. Start With A Vision

It's hard to know where you're going if you can't visualize or describe it. A clearly articulated vision provides you with the target you need to aim for when building your company culture.

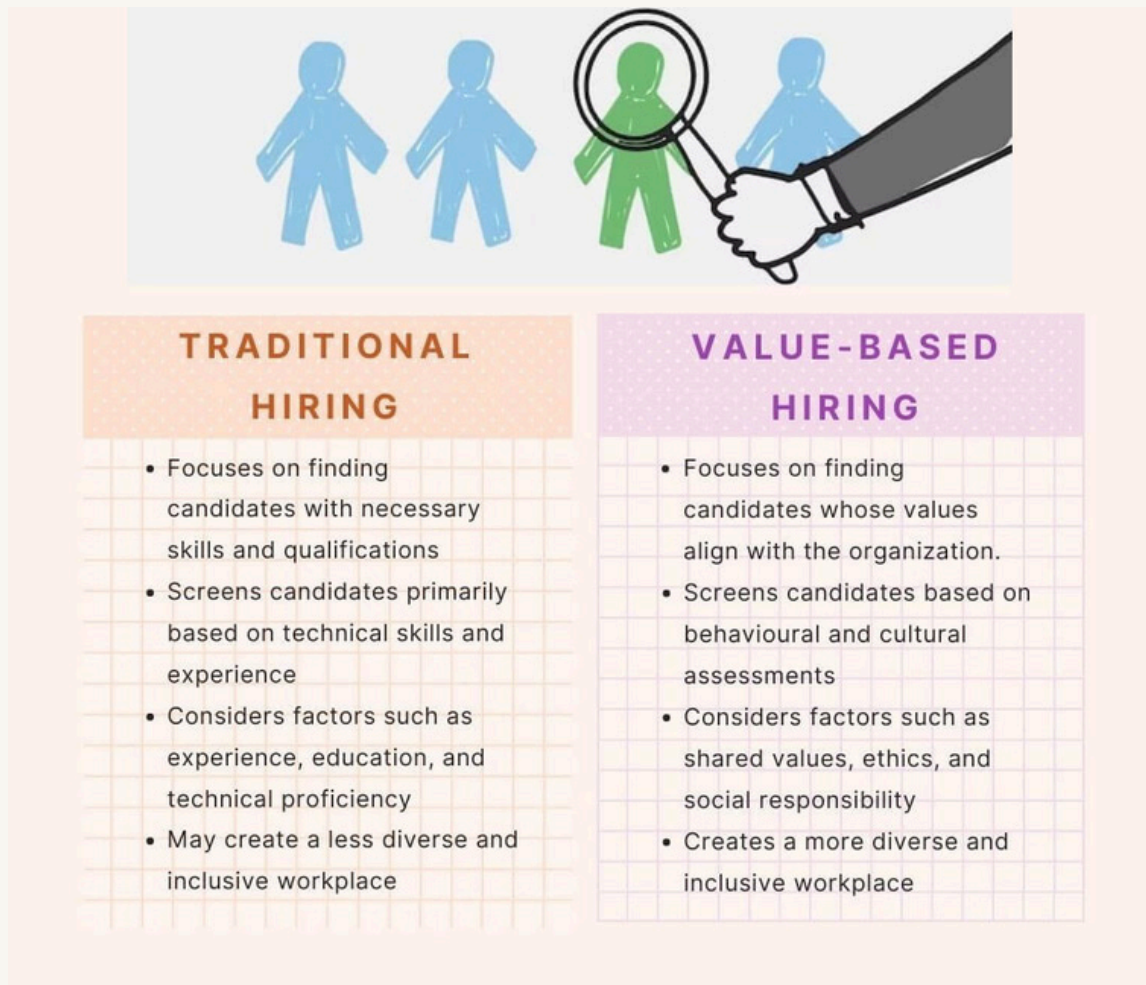
What do you want your company's values and practices to look like? How might people feel and act in your ideal workplace culture? Without a coherent vision, your ship will always be rudderless.

2. Establish A Handful Of Core Values

Come up with a small set of core values (somewhere between three and seven) that can act as pillars of your intentional culture. It should be possible for every single person in your organization to memorize these values and recite them.

Keep in mind, these shouldn't be overly basic, vague or aspirational values. They need to be authentic, practical beliefs that drive your company. In other words, if it sounds like a motivational cat poster, you might need to keep digging.





3. Define Your Hiring Process

In order to attract people who fit the culture you want to create, your hiring process needs to be well-defined. Make sure you're advertising positions to the right demographics and that your interviewing process takes into account your core values. Favour referrals that come from within the company, and don't be afraid to ask for as many references as you need.

While you should market and interview based on your core values, don't plaster those values all over your website. Otherwise, you may end up with candidates who are just paying lip service to them without really possessing the qualities needed to uphold them.

4. Avoid Hiring Leaders Who Don't Love Leading

Managers need to actually love leading and working with people. If they don't, they'll never be able to instill a positive outlook in their team. Instead, they'll leave a negative impression that will last long after they're gone.

SOURCE: Forbes.com



ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE MODELS

1. Command And Control

This is a culture that favors and rewards blindly following orders from the top. Command and control is the type of culture you might find in a Charles Dickens novel, where workers are treated as cogs in a machine rather than as valuable team members. It's undoubtedly an intentional choice, but far from a healthy one.

2. The Happy Accident

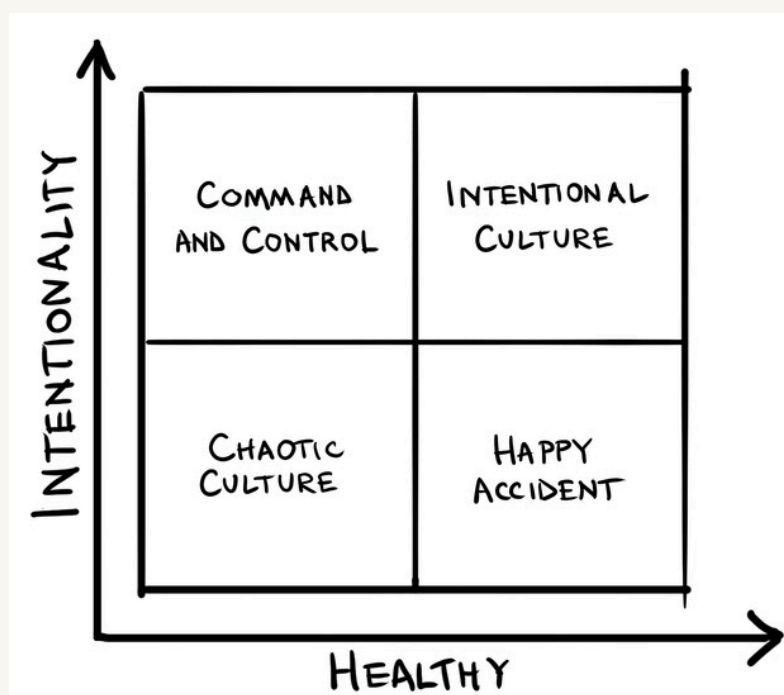
Basically, this is the opposite of command and control; it's what can happen when a business is built with no organizing principle beyond hiring people the founders like. On a small scale, this can end up working great and bring a personal touch to work. However, if you plan to grow your business over time, then you need something more structured and intentional.

3. Chaotic

If you fail to have any type of intentional cultural vision by the time you move past the point of hiring only family and friends, you're going to end up with dysfunction. Factions will form and office politics will become more important than productivity. In other words, it will be past time to move on to a better way of doing things.

4. Intentional

This is a culture that is built from the bottom up around core values that act as a strong foundation for everything else. That includes hiring, firing and everything in between. With this organic approach, you can create a workplace built around love and a shared vision rather than one based on scarcity or fear.



CULTURE AND TALENT



Organizations use their culture to attract, engage, and retain the best talent. Dave Almeda at Ultimate Software and Kronos in the UK shared 10 key areas that drive their culture:

1. Leadership: Every employee deserves a great manager.
2. Hiring and onboarding: Hire unique and smart people then set them up for success.
3. Performance and development: Holding themselves accountable for delivering results.
4. Rewarding, protecting and thanking: Seek employee feedback to continuously improve.
5. Diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging: Foster an environment where everyone feels safe and welcome to bring their whole selves to work.
6. Communications: Communicate respectfully, transparently, inclusively, and with ease.
7. Celebration and community: Celebrate personal and professional achievements.
8. Policies: Prioritize the care and safety of employees.
9. Workspace and tools: Trust employees to deliver no matter when or where they work.
10. Corporate Social Responsibility: Give back to the community and encourage employees to do the same.

THE ROLE OF LEADERS

Leaders create culture. Culture drives behaviour. Behaviour produces results. So organizations need to:

Identify the leadership competencies that support organizational culture.

Creating a world-class organizational culture doesn't happen overnight. But it can be destroyed quickly with poor leadership. The company is going to want to have specifics on what it takes to keep their organization vibrant and desired by candidates and employees. These competencies should be included in the company's hiring and learning activities.

Design recruiting processes to achieve the cultural results you are looking for.

We don't want to say that companies need to hire leaders that are a cultural fit because it's possible that the culture stinks and the organization wants new leaders to come in and create change. On the other hand, if the organization isn't looking for a cultural change, then they need to make sure the leaders they hire and promote are aligned.

Invest in leadership at every level. We're talking about leadership here. We know that leadership and management are two different things. Leaders exist at every level of the organization. And if the company wants to maintain their culture, then they have to maintain their leadership. The only way to do that is with regular training, development, coaching, and mentoring.

Hold leaders accountable. When leaders do something that doesn't align with the company culture, the organization needs to be prepared to hold that leader accountable for their actions. Even if that leader makes a lot of money for the company. If the company doesn't do that, that's tacit approval. And it begins the slippery slope of allowing leaders to chip away at the organizational culture.



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