

Engender Enthusiasm

Engender Enthusiasm: Build it and they will come

Never underestimate the importance that culture has on the success of your business. Most people understand culture is important to attracting employees and for overall morale; however few realize that there is a strong correlation between culture and financial growth. The fact is, employees who are actively and passionately engaged in the business on a daily basis will be more productive. Your team is vital to the company's success. When people operate from a position of committed engagement, instead of just doing their day to day job, they will perform at a higher level. High performance results in greater team effort and better delivery of the end product.

Culture has to be built over time and nurtured by all team members. Live it, breathe it. It must come from the top, be embraced, and followed by everyone. The behavior of the leader must be genuine, not just giving lip service with an empty message. Remember, it is easy for people to know when you are not being authentic, and that persona can only last for so long.

Culture is deeply rooted in values, a company's biggest driver of brand image. Culture and values are the key reasons as to why people will want to work for your company and buy what you are selling. Your team can and should become the brand ambassador, and through their actions and words, deliver the message unique to your company culture. A culture of encouragement and empowerment shapes the brand and the messaging around it.

Keep in mind that it is easier to change a leader than to change a culture. Changing a toxic culture is hard; it takes a lot of time, energy, and money to change. Invest extra effort

in this process in order to get it right from the beginning. Stand strong with you, your message, and mission. To measure your culture, try sitting in on meetings at all levels. Join your team during breaks and at lunch. Take the time you need to quietly observe and listen. Model and mold the behavior based on what you see and what you desire to create.

By setting the right example in all of your interactions, your culture will be contagious. Spreading enthusiasm and attracting and keeping people who fit and support the culture will create momentum and sustain what you have built.

I have always been a believer in an open door policy. Leaving the door open is symbolic, but it alone is not enough. Everyone in the organization (no matter who they are and what is their role) must believe they are welcome, will be heard, and are supported. Even if you cannot execute on what they are asking; their requests need to be heard and considered. Create a level playing field by respecting everyone and having compassion for their needs.

Keys to a healthy culture include: core values that have been embraced by all, hiring and promoting those who share the core values (eliminate any bad apples), and measuring and assessing your culture constantly.

Think about the vibe you get when you walk into someplace new, whether it be subtle or overwhelming. If you set the tone with the look, the feel, and your people, and it is welcoming, they will stay and bring others along. Strive to make your company THE place where you and everyone else wants to be, stay, and work.