4 Ways to Build Culture and a Stronger Business in the New Year

Written by Jonathan Sacks

Today's workforce is more dynamic than ever before and "cool" companies are now a dime a dozen. It's a competitive market, and whether a Gen-Xer, millennial or baby boomer, employees want to feel connected to something deeper beyond a paycheck and benefits. They want purpose in their work, to be driving towards a united vision, and most importantly to be part of a unique culture.

Culture is something that has been around since the beginning of humankind as a way of sharing and upholding a set of values, attitudes, goals, and practices. And it exists whether you're aware of it or not, and whether created by design or by accident. When culture is purposefully developed upon core values and vision, it motivates, inspires collaboration, develops loyalty, and ignites passion among your team. It also impacts a business's bottom line. Research has shown companies to outperform their competitors when they have a strong culture that engages employees and customers, aligns with the company's vision, and adapts to change.

Yet, despite culture being vitally important to the success of a business, many are still missing the mark. But it's never too late to turn company culture around or realign it, and the New Year is a prime time to hit the reset button and resolve to build a stronger culture. Here are four ways to build culture in 2017:

- **Develop a set of core values** —core values will become the foundation of your culture. They are a set of fundamental beliefs that serve as a behavioral compass for your team. These should align with who you are and why you exist as a company. At PUSH Agency, we have seven straightforward core values ranging from "Be Zen" to "Be a Family" to "Be Responsible."
- **Exercise your core values** – find opportunities to reinforce your core values daily. This could be in the form of public recognition of employees who actively demonstrate core values in some way, or putting your core values on posters around the office. For instance, the eyeglass company Warby Parker has their 10 ideals posted in their office kitchen and Zappos is so tied to their values, the CEO even wrote a book about them. Both of these companies hire and fire by these core values.
- **Enroll your people** – at The PUSH Agency, we have a committee in charge of organizing quarterly team building events, which supports our "Be a family" and "Be responsible" core values. This committee is responsible to one another and they support each other by recognizing a job well done and keeping each other aligned with the core values.
- **Make culture a team-building activity** – you might consider creating an internal committee in charge of organizing team fun events and company traditions. This could come in the form of something as simple as lunch roulette like Warby Parker does, or something on a grander scale like planning an annual charitable or community fundraiser event. We've actually made this part of our fourth quarter team building —the team plans an annual fundraiser event from top to bottom. Doing this underpins several of our core values — the organizing committee has to "Be responsible" to the project and to one another, "Be a family" by working together, and "Be zen" and "Be adaptable" when they encounter roadblocks. They also have to "Be innovative" to make things work.

Keep in mind, it takes time to truly transform your culture —it has to be reinforced consistently and over time. Enrolling your employees to create traditions, which are important rites of culture, will connect them to a deeper purpose, instill your core values, and help develop a strong company culture. And when you have a strong culture, that permeates well beyond the office walls —customers, partners, vendors, and investors can feel it and will be more likely to business with a company they can get behind.

Here's to a stronger culture and better business in 2017.

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