

Toward a More Positive and Inclusive Culture

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Effects of Positive Work Cultures

Workplace culture is intangible yet affects our work every day. Collectively, workplace culture is made up of colleagues' shared beliefs, values, attitudes, and assumptions (Agarwal, 2018). Individually, these are influenced by co-workers' disparate upbringing and social/cultural background (Agarwal, 2018). Fortunately, company management is able to influence the corporate culture, though it may take quite some time for large management changes to take effect (Agarwal, 2018). In a cohesive company culture, where employees are highly compatible in a supportive corporate culture, teamwork abounds, employee morale is high, employees experience high productivity, the workplace is efficient, and there is low employee turnover (Agarwal, 2018). There are also fringe benefits such as employees actually enjoying work and feeling comfortable around colleagues and feeling supported by others. Employee collaborative work product is also improved. Sadly, in a work environment with a negative work culture, not only do you have the impact of the loss of these, but a certain dread of coming into work begins to set in (White, 2018). Over time, if left unchecked, employees begin to feel stressed, lose all interest in socializing, collaborating, and in working together. When work culture degrades, it can eventually turn into a toxic culture. In this instance, employees begin to lose clarity regarding their responsibilities and the roles of others in the chain of command (Valamis, 2022). In the worst cases, drama between employees can breakout as some begin to gossip about others, and some exhibit a passive-aggressive behavior toward others (Valamis, 2022). Finally, with the loss of interdependency and mutual trust, employees' work performance degrades, employees quit taking initiative, and the organization loses the profitability that it once enjoyed (Valamis, 2022).

Actions Toward Greater Positivity

In a previous class discussion I expressed growing concerns that I had in a previous work environment, in an educational setting, where a few colleagues were engaging in workplace gossip that was detrimental to the organizational culture. Gossip can really harm the workplace culture, causing a gradual decline in trust and morale, decreasing work productivity, increasing anxiety and tension, and dividing the employees as factions breakout (Schwantes, 2017). Fortunately, management has the capability to turn this around and in general to influence the employees to successfully remediate the work culture. Management can take three immediate steps to move toward greater positivity in the workplace. First, management can establish and formally promote a strong and positive vision for the organization (Valamis, 2022). Doing so will help current employees get on-board and get behind the vision, while also serving as a beacon to attract the right talent (Valamis, 2022). Second, managers can provide training and opportunities for personal development to promote continuous improvement and education which will hone employees' skills, talents, and abilities (Valamis, 2022). Third, management can promote fluid communication through frequent team meetings or one-on-one meetings where the direction of the employee is discussed and issues can be discovered and resolved more readily (Valamis, 2022).

Inclusive Organizational Cultures

An inclusive organizational culture is one in which every member feels included, that they are respected, being treated fairly, and that they are valued in an organization which is greater than themselves (Bourke & Espedido, 2020). A major goal of management is to extract

the most productivity out of their employees while maintaining low turnover. The key to accomplishing this begins with a desire to treat employees well. Management does this by setting the tone for the organization, leading by example, and helping with employees' needs. As employees begin to feel that management really cares about their future and as they feel welcomed to a supportive team, then they can begin to do their best work (Bourke & Espedido, 2020). Inclusive cultures thrive when each member has a willingness to help and to be a part of the team. Each team member can contribute to the inclusive culture by staying humble, having empathy, care, and concern for others, and possessing a willingness to teach others as well as to learn from them.

Comparing Diversity and Inclusion

Diversity and inclusion may be discussed together, but they are not the same thing. Diversity is largely about representation, while inclusion is about respect, fairness, and each member being welcomed to the group (Sherbin & Rashid, 2017). Diversity can be achieved by ensuring that people of different race, creed, color, religion, and national origin are equally represented among the staff. It can be furthered by ensuring that each has equal opportunities to be recruited as well as promoted within the organization. Management can then ensure inclusion by making it safe to propose new ideas, enabling team members to make decisions, and welcoming each member's voice to be heard (Sherbin & Rashid, 2017). Inclusion, in general, has a lot to do with how the disparate staff members feel at work and specifically whether members feel accepted and engaged (Brown, 2021).

The Importance of Diversity and Inclusion

It is important to assert that diversity and inclusion go hand in hand, and maximizing the benefits of them requires both. When the staff is made up of diverse members of varying races, creeds, colors, religions, and national origins, the firm will begin to achieve diversity. When the staff is open and accepting of each other and staff individually feel included and a part of the whole, then inclusion will be attained. Once the organization has both diversity and inclusion, then management will begin to see many benefits start to come about, to wit; a broader range of perspectives, more talent than ever before, a corporate ability to understand customers better, improved innovation, and faster problem solving (Jobson, 2022). In time, firms that have mastered diversity and inclusion see huge increases in overall business performance and in the reputation of their firm (Jobson, 2022). Incorporation of diversity and inclusion does not come about without its challenges though. Integration can be difficult if some employees are given to prejudice, professional communication can be a struggle due to cultural barriers as can differences in professional etiquette, and there can be conflicting working styles (Reynolds, 2021). Each of these challenges can be overcome with good management and diversity training, and as aforesaid the benefits of an inclusive culture outweigh its challenges to implementation.

Actions to Incorporate Diversity and Inclusion

Any organization actively involved in education stands to obtain a huge benefit through successfully incorporating diversity and inclusion as they will gain a tremendous benefit in terms of the ability to communicate with students and they will greatly extend their ability to reach them and teach them (Jobson, 2022). While there are certainly many ways an organization can

implement diversity, there are three immediately actionable steps that organizations can take to make great strides of progress toward successful implementation of diversity and inclusion. First, the organization can evaluate their managerial and executive teams to ensure that the team is comprised of the diversity that they desire to achieve among the staff (Firstup, 2021). Second, the firm can ensure that every voice is heard in the organization (Firstup, 2021). Managers can begin to implement this easily in meetings by asking the opinions of staff members that they rarely see speak up. Third, involve an objective third party to survey staff, gather opinions, and collect feedback (Firstup, 2021). Often times staff may have a hard time addressing sensitive issues with management, but an outside company that is independent may draw out lesser heard comments which can really help the organization. While there are many steps to take to completely incorporate diversity and inclusion in the organization, I assert that these are immediately actionable steps toward a more positive and inclusive culture.

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