culture? This concept is the topic of many a workplace report, but what does it mean?

Paul McDonald • Aug. 23, 2018

If someone asked, would you be able to describe your accounting firm's corporate culture? This concept is the topic of many a workplace report, but what does it mean?

Corporate culture, or organizational culture or workplace culture as it is also called, is perhaps best described as the "character traits" of a business. Once thought of as a human resources issue or a nice-to-have, organizations recognize the vital role it plays. "Corporate culture can no longer be considered as a soft issue by management and boards," according to the National Association of Corporate Directors (NACD). "Its strength or weakness has a lasting impact on organizational performance and reputation."

Corporate culture influences nearly every aspect of a firm's success, including its ability to attract and retain employees and clients, and has captured the attention of everyone from job seekers to senior leaders. Wrote Protiviti, a global consulting firm and Robert Half subsidiary, "Culture is a potent source of strength or weakness for an organization and, good or bad, is almost always at the root of reputation and financial performance outcomes."

As a manager, take an active role in monitoring and nurturing your firm's work environment. Your efforts could distinguish your firm from other businesses; few senior executives appear to invest their time and resources in this area. In a Robert Half Management Resources survey, only 17 percent CFOs said they're very involved in shaping their company's culture.

You don't have to be a CFO or partner to be a standard-bearer in your organization.

Let's start with four basics:

1. **Communication:** Supervisors need to regularly check in with staff, listen to their ideas and feedback, and be transparent about the firm's financial health. Any changes that affect workers must be thoroughly explained and managed with care and sensitivity.
2. **Recognition:** In a healthy corporate culture, management applauds and rewards people who excel and exemplify its values. Employees feel appreciated and respected, leading to higher morale and greater innovation. The most meaningful recognition of all? Sincere thanks and praise — and a promotion and raise.
3. **Interpersonal relationships:** It's easier for people to give their all when they know teammates have their back. A major sign of a positive workplace environment is employees feel connected to one another.
4. **Professional development:** Top performers never stop learning. Firms should give workers training and resources to acquire new skills, add to their knowledge and grow their career.

How to measure and monitor corporate culture

You might ask: Why would I want or need to quantify something as subjective as firm culture? The answer: What gets measured gets done.

There are several metrics you can use to track the health of your workplace:

- Employee satisfaction survey scores
- Client satisfaction survey scores
- Turnover rates
- Absenteeism
- Participation rates in peer recognition programs
- Aggregate scores on annual performance evaluations
- Percentage of new hires that come from employee referrals

Monitor whether your firm's culture has improved or deteriorated over time. If it's

Following are ways to put corporate culture at the heart of hiring.

- **Ask for referrals. The people who currently live and breathe your corporate culture can recommend future employees with similar values.**
- **Expand the job description.** The more you highlight your workplace environment from the get-go, the more likely you are to attract candidates who'll fit well in your workplace.
- **Work with a staffing firm. A recruiter familiar with your firm can help you find and hire professionals who will fit your work environment.**

- **Interview for nontechnical skills.** It's easier to hire for attributes like empathy and collaboration than train for them. Ask candidates questions that will shed light on their soft skills, such as how they've dealt with difficult coworkers.
- **Check references.** Do your due diligence to verify short-listed candidates are who they say they are.

Don't leave something as important as corporate culture to chance. When you actively monitor and shape the environment you desire, your firm becomes more happy, healthy and productive — and more attractive to clients and future top performers.

=======

Paul McDonald is senior executive director at Robert Half, the world's first and largest specialized staffing firm. He writes and speaks frequently on hiring, workplace and career-management topics. Over the course of more than 30 years in the recruiting field, McDonald has advised thousands of company leaders and job seekers on how to hire and get hired.

Hello. It looks like you're using an ad blocker that may prevent our website from working properly. To receive the best experience possible, please make sure any blockers are switched off and refresh the page.

If you have any questions or need help you can email us