

5 Keys To Creating A Great Team Culture

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I deeply believe that the culture of your organization matters. It matters to the people you're trying to reach. It matters to the people you're trying to lead, whether staff or volunteers. And ultimately, it matters to you.

I want to talk about **five keys to creating a great team culture**. See, culture is really not that hard to spot. Think for a minute about some of your favorite places to shop or your favorite brands or products, your favorite place to relax and just hang out. See, odds are that these products or these environments have something in common and simply that they engage you. They give you a sense of belonging.

It could be the energy, could be the atmosphere, could be the quality of service or the attitudes of the people or any combination of the above, but it's a culture that you love to be a part of.

Conversely, there are cultures that make you not enjoy it so much. For example, a couple years ago, my husband and I would frequently get into this battle over going to an electronics store. Whenever he would suggest we go to this store to just pick up something we needed, I would beg and plead for us to go another 10 miles down the road to a different store that I liked so much better.

My husband would always get a little confused about my great disdain for this particular store, but it just felt a little tired and run down. The employees would often badger you to buy products that you didn't need, and it was probably because they were paid on commission. I just didn't like anything about the environment. I would always try to find some way to go somewhere else and avoid going to this store that I disliked so much.

What was it? It was the culture. I didn't like the culture of this organization, and I avoided it at any way that I could.

See, culture matters. The environment you create in your organization is either attracting or it's repelling people all the time. There's really no in between. As leaders, we have the responsibility for setting the tone for the culture. We have to own it. We have to steward it. We have to set it. We have to maintain it. We are responsible for helping shape the culture of the organization that we're a part of.

 THEBIGIDEA

The culture of your organization teams is critical to its health and growth. You as the leader are the one who is responsible to create and maintain a great team culture.

action**steps**

Notes don't change anything, actions do.
So don't take notes, take actions!

Culture is some of the most important work that you'll do as a leader, but it oftentimes is the thing that we take the most for granted. Plagued by goals to achieve, staff to manage, ministries to run, board members to make happy. The list goes on and on.

The last thing we have time for is the proverbial fluffy stuff, but I believe we're entering a season of leadership that makes culture maybe more important than ever before. We have this younger generation of leaders joining us in the workforce, and they're eager to be a part of something that aligns with their values and their beliefs. They don't want to just work to make a living. They want to work to make a difference.

I think we all agree with that, but I think we're experiencing that probably more than we've ever before experienced it in the workforce, and this is why it's so important for us as leaders to recognize the importance of culture and we how we need to create a culture that people want to be a part of. Let's talk about those five things.

The **first one is that we just need to be aware of it and why culture matters**. We need to be aware of culture and we need to know why it matters.

Often times as leaders, we can get so busy with all the tasks that we pay less attention to this issue of culture. I've worked on teams with extraordinary culture and I've also worked on teams with terrible culture. You know, and you've probably experienced the same thing. It brings out something totally different in me. In strong cultures, I'm motivated. I'm energized. I'm engaged. I'm committed. I am all in.

In bad cultures, the opposite happens. I lack motivation. I'm drained of energy. I become disengaged, and I'm always looking for a way to escape. You've probably experienced staff members who are like this, too.

See, culture matters, but before we can fully work on culture, we got to know what it is. We've got to be aware of it. We've got to know what it is and why it matters because it's intangible and it's a bit difficult to describe.

By definition, the word **culture means the beliefs and customs of a particular group, a way of thinking, behaving, or working that exists in a place or an organization**. It starts to give us an idea of what culture really consists of. See, culture is your organization's DNA. It's what you're made of. It's what makes you unique. It's what gives your organization its unique personality and sets you apart from other churches or other ministries in town.

actionsteps

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I often say, "It's the collection of nuances that make you unique or those idiosyncrasies that set you apart, kind of the quirky stuff that makes your organization who it is." The important thing about culture is that we really can't copy it from somewhere else because if it's our DNA, if it's unique to who we are, then it's got to be unique to who we are. We can't copy what another church or another ministry is doing because it's going to lack the authenticity that really makes a culture unique to itself.

See, culture, again, is that personality of your organization. It's born from who you are and, therefore, it needs to be true to who you are. Ultimately, culture matters significantly to you as the leader and the people on your team because you both benefit when your culture is strong, engaging, and inspiring.

First, we want to be aware of culture and why it matters and then, **secondly, we need to define it.**

What kind of culture do you really want? Here's something you need to be aware of, that you have a culture whether you've acknowledged or not.

First, you might need to define what your current culture is and then you might need to define what you really want your culture to be. See, as we begin to understand what culture is and we embrace urgency of the fact that culture is building or eroding every day, as a leader, we've got to define what our current culture is.

Max De Pree, a businessman and author, says, "The first responsibility of the leader is to define reality." If we're going to talk about culture, we've got to be willing to define what our current reality is when it comes to culture.

A good place to start is thinking in terms of what you value because values are the building block of your culture. See, every people unit has a culture or has values. For example, if you came into my house, you would quickly see what we value. Books are stacked everywhere because I value learning. Sports equipment is scattered all around because my husband and I value health and exercise. As soon as you come to the Catron house, you realize what we value.

I want you to take a couple minutes and list what your organization values. When people interact with your team and when they come to your office or to one of your ministry experiences, what do they experience? How would they describe it?

Just take inventory of what do you value right now and then look at that list and determine is that what we really want to value moving forward or do we need to make some adjustments and determine what we want to value and what we want to be true to our culture moving forward. Remember that culture is the beliefs and customs of a group. It's the way of thinking, behaving, or working that exists in your organization.

Think about how does your team think, how do they work, how do they behave, and that's going to help you begin to understand what your current culture looks like and maybe help you define some of those adjustments you want to make to create the culture you really want.

One, be aware of it and know why it matters. Number two, define it. Then **number three is model it.**

If you, as the leader, are not living the culture that you want, no one else will. If you're not living it, you've got to make the adjustments to figure out how can you really embrace and live out these values in a way that will help model it for the rest of your team. John Maxwell often says, "Everything rises and falls on leadership." Leaders, we've got to lead the way. We've got to go first. We've got to model this so people understand what kind of culture we're calling them to be a part of.

Then the **fourth thing is hire for it.**

Every staff person you hire impacts your culture. Remember I said "Culture is building or eroding every day," and every person is either contributing to the building or is contributing to the eroding of your culture.

Sometimes we can be so guilty of haphazardly hiring because we're always running like crazy and there's so many things going on, and as soon as we have the resources to actually hire a staff person, we just quickly fill that slot, but I want to just caution you. Slow down and hire slowly and hire specifically for the values that you want your team to be known for and that you want to be true of your organization because, again, every staff person is contributing to that culture and they're influencing that culture.

You want to build in those values of your culture into things like job descriptions, performance reviews, interview questions. Throughout your organization, you want to make sure that you are creating pathways for inserting the values in how you hire and how you recruit people.

Number five, devote time, energy, and resources to it.

Talk about your culture often. Talk about those values that you want to be true of your culture often. Weave them into staff meetings. Create special events or staff trips where you're talking about some of these values. If there's some values that you feel like you need some work on, take some extra time out and focus on them. Teach your team about those values and how to live them out, but always be looking for ways to reinforce the values and build them into the rhythms of your work and of your week and finding ways to celebrate when the values are being lived out well and give feedback when we're not living out a value so well because you want to make sure that your team knows exactly what's expected of them as it relates to culture and the values and the different things that contribute to making your culture great.

In summary, number one, be aware of it. Just be aware of culture, why it matters, that it exists, that it's building or eroding every day and you, as the leader, are responsible.

Number two, define it. Define the culture that is and define the culture that you want.

Number three, model it. You've got to go first, leader, so go first. Model it and show the way.

Number four, hire for it. Be intentional about how you hire for the values and the culture that's critical.

Number five, devote time, energy, and resources to it, giving it your best attention because ultimately culture is critical to your organization thriving.

Again, I believe so deeply that culture matters to your team, and you, as the leader, get to steward this. I just want to encourage you. Take these five steps and create a culture that great people are clamoring to be a part of.