HOW YOUR HR DEPARTMENT IS CRUCIAL TO DEFINING YOUR WORKPLACE CULTURE

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A company's workplace culture can have a hugely influential effect on everything from employee retention to brand success.

It is an aspect of professional life that means more to employees today than ever before, often taking precedence above salary expectations or career progression opportunities.

Case in point, a study carried out by Columbia University found that the likelihood of employee turnover at a company with a strong company culture reached just 13.9%. However, in companies that lacked dedication to establishing their culture, potential turnover levels soared to 48.4%.

Creating a clearly defined company culture is vital and ensuring its values are upheld, implemented and continuously reviewed is a crucial ongoing practice.

So, first things first…

WHAT IS COMPANY CULTURE?

The culture of a company or workplace is shaped by the core values, beliefs and goals shared by both employer and employees.

It holds great weight internally, having a huge impact on a company's people and its day-to-day operations. Its importance to the outside world is also not to be underestimated, as a business' brand identity tends to be inextricably linked with its cultural behaviours and beliefs.

While the initial foundation of workplace culture will ideally be defined by the owner during the company's infancy, it is the HR department that will go on to build the culture statement, manage its implementation, and oversee its progress.

Essentially, it is the responsibility of the HR team to guide cultural evolution within a company.

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HOW DOES A COMPANY DEFINE, MAINTAIN AND EVOLVE WORKPLACE CULTURE?

Well-established company culture is integral to attracting and retaining top talent.

There are therefore several steps for HR departments to follow to ensure the overarching mission of the business is not only clearly defined but that it is regularly maintained and given the space to evolve.

1. Keep your finger on the pulse of pressing issues

In recent years, the world has reached a turning point in terms of its handling of certain social and environmental issues.

From diversity and equality to sustainability, candidates are now intrinsically more aware of the problems that exist and more importantly, what needs to be done to accelerate change.

Think about what defines you as a brand; what your underpinning values and goals are. Examine how these align with pressing global issues and figure out how your company can support the collective effort.

This will serve to bolster your company's existing belief system while giving your employees an added sense of purpose.

2. Prioritise relationships between leaders and employees

The culture of a workplace is largely dependent on the relationships that exist between employers and employees. Effective communication and managing expectations are at the heart of this.

An employer or senior leader should be extremely clear regarding what is expected from an employee, while the employee should be in no doubt as to what their role entails. Eliminating crossed wires and encouraging fluid communication enhances the internal culture of a company.

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3. Give it the time it deserves

Firstly, ample time should be given to defining or reviewing a company's core ethos and values, considering its importance in the grand scheme of business success.

Input should be invited from individuals at all levels – from senior management to junior executives – to promote inclusion while making it relevant to the company as a whole.

Take all feedback into consideration before carefully building or updating a culture that works for and fits with the business in question.

4. Encourage and reward employees accordingly

Creating a positive work environment is another integral part of upholding company culture.

This can be partly accomplished through the acknowledgement of team achievements, encouraging a healthy work/life balance, or simply by trusting an employee to meet targets and deadlines by working on their own.

This show of faith also extends to a boss's open-door policy, whereby an employee feels comfortable confiding in a leader regarding a professional or personal issue that may be affecting their work.

With 75% of respondents to a McKinsey survey citing stressful boss relations as a defining factor in workplace satisfaction, it is clearly an area that deserves due attention.

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5. Don't underestimate the importance of 'place'

There is something tangible about a sense of place, and this has a direct impact on workplace culture.

A brand is often famously associated with its physical location – think Macy's in New York City.

It also symbolises a company's ability to physically unite employees, who travel to the same building every day and share experiences in the communal spaces. But what about the companies that, since the pandemic began, have continued to embrace remote or hybrid working? Or what about the companies operating within the localisation industry, with branches and employees dotted all over the globe?

In these instances, it is important to find other ways to replace the significance of 'place'.

Strengthening other aspects of your culture will help to influence a cultural evolution in this case. Emphasise the place of diversity within your company, while relying on digital technology to reinforce team relations. And make your common values and mission the binding factors that far outweigh the importance of a shared physical location.

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WHAT ACTIONS CAN HR TAKE TO IMPLEMENT AND DRIVE WORKPLACE CULTURE?

HR representatives are essentially in the driving seat of the company culture vehicle, responsible for the implementation, maintenance and evolution of cultural principles.

Overseeing successful adherence to workplace culture, while identifying gaps for further development of its core pillars are key everyday tasks for any HR team.

Other actions that can be taken to promote a positive working environment through company culture include:

- Encouraging employees and those in leadership positions to act in accordance with the core values of the company, proving the principles set out are not just words on paper.

- Involving team members at all levels in the shaping or redefining of the company culture, through the provision of regular surveys and feedback opportunities.

- Awarding employee excellence and marking important personal and professional milestones.

- Implementing CSR initiatives that resonate with the team.

- Adapting company culture, without compromising its defining principles, to suit each individual market, specifically in the case of businesses within the localisation industry. This will ensure goals and values align with employees and audiences in that market.

- Shaping the perception of the company for new hires while upholding already defined principles for existing employees.

- Hiring with both 'cultural fit' and 'cultural add' in mind to enable thought diversity.

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THE ROLE OF EMPLOYEES IN SHAPING WORKPLACE CULTURE

While HR departments perform a vital role in defining and upholding company culture, employees – both existing and potential – also have a large part to play.

Not only do they follow HR's lead by actioning and driving a company's core values daily, but they may also be partly responsible for the evolution of workplace culture.

For this reason, it is becoming increasingly more important to consider a candidate's suitability for any position, not just in terms of their qualifications and experience, but based on what new ideas and viewpoints they can bring to the table to promote positive cultural change.

HOW A GLOBAL RECRUITMENT PARTNER CAN HELP

Specialising in matching top talent with employers in the localisation industry, International Achievers Group understands just how important the right candidate can be to enhancing workplace culture. We know that people are what make great companies and we pride ourselves on matching the right people and building the best teams.

Our team has over 100 years combined experience providing premium recruitment solutions for many of the world's leading companies and we have developed an exceptional reputation that you can rely on.

Get in touch with our team today at **paula@internationalachieversgroup.com** or on **+353 1 524 1466**

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