



Company Cultures Attract Talent

The benefits of establishing a higher purpose and core business values

With unemployment at a 49-year low, it is more challenging than ever to find and retain new employees. Many employers have responded to this problem by paying higher salaries, increasing employee benefits or both. While these approaches seem like they should work, they don't guarantee companies will keep their best employees or attract better candidates.

In a research study of 25,000 employees by TinyPulse, the top five reasons people leave a company are:

1. Poor management performance
2. Lack of recognition
3. Being overworked
4. Bad company culture
5. No opportunity for growth

“Not enough money” is not among these. Throwing money at the problem won't solve anything and will potentially make matters worse as management struggles with increased costs and lower profits.

The common denominator in all five

reasons is bad management. Conversely, reviewing Fortune's “Top 100 Best Companies to Work For” reveals a common theme: employee empowerment, caring management and great company culture. As a result, people are begging to be hired by these companies and, according to Working Mother Research Institute, they have higher retention and more applicants per job posting than they had before they qualified.

So, what does it take to be one of the best companies in the country to work for? The short answer is a great culture. However, before companies can develop a great culture, they need to be clear on who they are as a company.

Practice What is Preached

Like people, businesses need to be true to themselves. In other words, the image they project has to be real and not just imaginary. Anyone who has ever sat on hold for more than five minutes listening to a never-ending “Your call is very important

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By Dave Rosenberg, Founder and Principal, Locked On Leadership



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to us...” recording knows what this means. Clearly the call isn’t that important, or they would have more staff to answer the phone. The company’s actions are not in alignment with their stated values. They aren’t true to themselves.

Before attempting to build a culture that attracts hordes of wannabe team members, companies need to answer two key questions that will help them identify who they are as a company. The first asks what is their higher purpose? Every company that survives does so because the services or products they offer provide more value to enough people to make it more than worth the price charged for the products or service. In other words, they fill a higher purpose, whether consciously or not. The greater the value provided, the more that can be charged. Plumbers can charge in excess of \$150 per hour not because soldering pipes is a difficult skill — it can easily be learned on YouTube — but because, without proper plumbing, one’s health is at risk. Disease and death were rampant in cities before indoor plumbing was invented. Plumbers helped create modern civilization. Without them, the mega-cities of today couldn’t exist, because they would be breeding grounds for disease.

When I ran a moving company, our higher purpose was to reduce stress for our stakeholders. This meant customers, employees and vendors — everyone we

came in contact with. Moving was the vehicle we used to reduce stress with our customers, but our purpose wasn’t moving people. All of our policies were designed to achieve this goal.

We provided fixed price or not-to-exceed estimates, so our customers knew how much the move was going to cost ahead of time. We called two days prior to make sure they would be ready, then again the next day and finally before the crew left the warehouse. In addition to all our attempts to make sure the customers were ready for their move, we carried extra materials and specialized equipment to be ready for any surprise. We had formal training programs for all staff, so everyone knew how to do their jobs and the expectations. The training also included testing, so we knew all staff had achieved a minimum level of competency. This training and testing ensured our moves were generally faster than our competitors’, which meant our customers could start unpacking and settling into their new homes sooner. Finally, we worked closely with vendors, so they always knew what was happening. We developed systems that minimized last-minute emergency orders from vendors, and we always paid on time. The reduced stress made everyone’s lives a little easier.

Movers don’t charge as much as plumbers, because a plumber’s purpose serves the greater good more than a mover’s

does. Printers also serve a higher purpose.

Before 1440, when Gutenberg invented his printing press, books written in Europe had to be hand copied. This slowed down the dissemination of knowledge, which delayed technological advances that allow civilization to expand and flourish. The Chinese had developed block printing sometime in the 8th or 9th century and had movable type as early as the 11th century. The ability to easily replicate books meant knowledge and civilization advanced much quicker in Asia. Today, in addition to disseminating knowledge, printers enhance communications and improve corporate image. Both are critical to economic prosperity, which improves the quality of life for everyone.

Companies must determine their higher purpose. At the moving company, senior staff took several months to figure this out. Once a company knows what it is, they must test all of their policies and procedures against that higher purpose and make sure they aren't contradicting themselves. All procedures must support the higher purpose. A policy or procedure that is not in alignment with the higher purpose must be revisited and changed.

Prioritizing Values

Next, companies must identify their values. This doesn't mean posting some words on websites and walls and claiming these to be their core values — it means taking the time to really figure out the true

values. Values are the basis for decisions; what is valued more will always be prioritized. Since most printers are closely held companies, their core values are the owner's core values, regardless of what is published elsewhere. When all employees know the values, and if companies hire team members that share those values, decisions will be consistent with them.

Take the example of a printing company that values customer service, honesty, continual learning and communications. However, the owner prioritizes family over the other values. If a situation came up where a customer is having a time-sensitive problem that only the owner can address, and the owner has an important family event, the owner would go to the event since family is his/her top value. Even if this didn't cause irreparable harm to the customer relationship, the rest of the team would see that family comes first. They will be less likely to give up their family time for a customer, and if forced to do so, they will resent it.

Once companies have identified their higher purpose and core values, they need to intentionally incorporate them into everything they do. When they hire, they need to speak about their purpose with a passion. This will attract the applicants that share this purpose. Also during the interviewing process, companies should test for their core values, and make sure all employees and prospects share these. As the last example illustrates, we make decisions

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based on our values. Everyone sharing the same values results in more consistent, better decisions.

Ripple Effects

Company leaders and management should also seek to recognize good work daily, and be specific in their praise. Never provide a blanket “good job.” Instead, limit the praise to the person or people whose actions were praiseworthy. Be sure to talk about the core value or values that were demonstrated. Leaders should point out the specific behavior they want repeated, and do it as close to the actual event as possible.

With these actions, the company culture will start to change. Managers should start to see better efforts — resulting in better output — from their teams. Happier team members create happier customers, which usually translates into better retention and growth of the business. And when companies grow, there is more opportunity for growth within the organization, which benefits and retains employees (as also noted in the top five reasons employees leave their organizations stated earlier).

This is just the beginning, but with these small tweaks, a company’s culture should start to change for the better. Leaders should find it easier to retain top talent because they are comfortable and appreciated. The culture will also attract potential team members who share the company’s values, allowing companies to recruit from a better pool of applicants who will ultimately make it easier for their businesses to grow. When a company’s team thrives, there’s a ripple effect of improved service, which elates and retains customers.

It might even be safe to say companies who take these steps to improve their culture may just end up on Fortune’s “100 Best Companies to Work For” list.

As a former naval officer and president of several companies, Dave Rosenberg understands the difficulties of managing tasks and personnel. Now he is on a mission to replace TGI Friday with TGI Monday by providing managers with practical tactical leadership skills needed for them to lock on target and inspire their team to greater productivity. Dave is the Founder and Principal at Locked On Leadership, a consulting firm that focuses on practical tactical leadership skills that yield results. He is a Certified Professional Behavioral and Driving Forces Analyst and has worked with over 90 companies in 13 states, arming them to achieve sustained and managed growth.



PRINTING United Means Business

Don't miss these business-oriented sessions in between browsing the sold-out show floor.

Communicating with Consumers: What Agencies, Brand Owners and Marketers Want

Barb Pellow, Pellow & Partners
Wednesday, October 23,
10:00 AM

Beat Your Competition Without Lowering Your Price

Karen Kimmerer, Keypoint Intelligence/InfoTrends
Wednesday, October 23,
11:00 AM

Developing the Next Generation in Talent

Jackie Wang, Summit Inks
Wednesday, October 23,
1:00 PM

Selling to the Agency/Marketing Executive

Barb Pellow, Pellow & Partners
Wednesday, October 23,
2:00 PM

SGIA Research: Trends & Conditions in Printing

Olga Dorokhina, Andrew D. Pappozzi, SGIA
Wednesday, October 23,
2:00 PM

Solution Selling

Paul Reilly, Frank Steenburgh, Joe Polanco, Dennis Halley, New Direction Partners
Wednesday, October 23,
3:00 PM

Women in Print Award Winners Panel Discussion

Moderated by Adrienne Palmer, Big Picture and Screen Printing magazines
Thursday, October 24,
10:00 AM

Anatomy of the M&A Deal

Process in the Printing Industry: The Gory Details
Mark R. Hahn, Graphic Arts Advisors
Thursday, October 24,
10:00 AM

Creating Increased Customer Value

Moderated by Sam Klaidman, Middlesex Consulting
Thursday, October 24,
11:00 AM

Tales From the Trails of Project Peacock: Collaborate or Die!

Deborah Corn, Print Media Centr
Thursday, October 24,
11:00 AM

Using LinkedIn for Print Sales Professionals

Adam Peek, WS Packaging Group
Thursday, October 24,
1:00 PM

SGIA's Women in Print Alliance: Fostering Leadership and Professional Growth

Moderated by Elaine Scrima, GSP
Thursday, October 24,
2:00 PM

Valuation Boot Camp: Workshop for Graphic Company Owners

Mark R. Hahn, Graphic Arts Advisors
Thursday, October 24,
2:00 PM

The Changing Landscape of Printing and Technology

Johnny Shell, SGIA
Thursday October 24,
3:00 PM

Grow Your Business with Supply Chain Wizardry

Pat McGrew, Keypoint Intelligence/InfoTrends
Friday, October 25,
10:00 AM