

What Lies Beneath

Company culture, for many, is mysterious and elusive and as executive leaders and human resource teams work to effectively communicate their vision to their respective associates, they struggle to put theory into action. There is often a mission statement supported by core values at the center of each company, you know, some of those agenda items listed for discussion at the annual leadership retreat. These are the results of belaboring conversations in an effort to drive “who” an organization is, or maybe better put, who it wants to be.

The challenge, while these are well intended, is that they are just words and leaders need to take action in order to make them real, essentially, bringing the culture to life that mirrors the vision of the core values. It truly is very simple, or is it?

Ask yourself, “What was the last action I took that supported my company mission statement/values?” Now jot that down and come up with one for each day in the last week, two weeks, etc. If you are having trouble with this little exercise you may not be fostering the culture intended or desired.

It’s okay, I am sure you have been busy staying focused on important areas like service and driving revenues. There is no question these are essential to your business, for without them we wouldn’t be in business! However, in today’s highly competitive talent market, by NOT living the core values, it places your organization at a distinct disadvantage and over time this becomes the difference between a mediocre company and a great company for which people want to work. The revolving door, other than the one at your main entrance, maybe a sign and more importantly, an effect of this.



If you are not certain whether or not your organization is living the culture through their daily actions or you believe you are but just want to be certain, ask. In order to determine this, you have to investigate what lies beneath the mission statement and core values posted on the corporate Website. Engaging your associates at a variety of levels within the organization will provide you with the insight you are seeking. Maybe this is too much of an undertaking and the time and/or expense doesn’t warrant it. Well, if you are looking for quick, honest feedback, ask a few employees that are no longer with the company (some that were let go and others that left of their own accord) and internal associates who, for whatever reason, have had to be reprimanded within the past 12 months, omitting those in the past two months. The omission is because the reprimand is still too fresh and responses tend to be wrapped around that event verses the overall course of employment. These select groups have a lot to share and surprisingly are extremely fair with their evaluations.

The bottom line is that culture exists in every organization and is a product of actions, or in some cases a lack of actions, that take place within every single workday. To be a great company for which others want to work, and to instill pride into existing associates, leaders and associates must make a conscientious effort to live the core values.