



10 STEPS TO BUILDING A HIGH-PERFORMANCE CULTURE

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Everywhere you look you can find and hear the buzz words “High Performance Culture.” Sounds good but what does it mean? How does a “High Performance Culture” organization look and behave. As the leader in the organization, what can you do to create an environment to attract and retain talent that will perform at the highest level. Four major elements guide us through learning the foundation of high performance culture: world view, orientation, standards and patterns of behavior.

Let's start by defining culture. According to Investopedia “Corporate culture refers to the beliefs and behaviors that determine how a company's employees and management interact and handle outside business transactions.” The Company culture, in essence, is how the organization chooses to conduct business internally and externally: how employees relate to one another and how those same employees relate to external clients. While this seems simple it is often the simplicities that complicate success.

Developing a company culture is like raising a child. The child will grow and develop no matter what you do; however, in order for that child to grow into the adult we all want as an active member of society; the leaders/parent must be intentional in all their actions. Many organizations have not been intentional about developing a desired culture, they have allowed the child to raise itself and now find themselves with a spoiled brat and no idea how fix the monster. In a [YouTube](#) interview Tony Hsieh discussed how he once failed to monitor the culture of his company and was dissatisfied with the result.

Tony Hsieh cofounded LinkExchange which he later sold to Microsoft for \$265 Million. According to Hsieh, he was interested in selling the company because the culture had become one he was not pleased with: he had not paid attention to the culture; he simply hired the best people to do the job with no regard to the best fit for the company culture. Hsieh was fortunate, he was able to fix his failure with a sell, the rest of us are not nearly as fortunate. For the rest of us this lack of attention and intention are destroying our teams, our projects, our customer's experience and our bottom lines.

High Performing Cultures are innovative, customer focused, resilient, efficient, effective, economic changers and value adders. High Performing Organizations are those companies where everyone wants to work, not by name but by environment. When asked to describe the perfect work environment people very easily describe a company where there is a culture of high performance. Such cultures have been proven to attract, retain and optimize the performance of top talent. This culture is not just about leadership, it is about the entire company from the person who answers the phone to the person who signs the contracts and paychecks.

While it may seem as if developing a high performance culture is about the employee, it is not. High performance cultures are about making money. High performance cultures produce results; they create people and process that produce and makes things better. They find ways to save money via efficiencies and make money via innovations. While the employees and customers benefit, creating a high performance culture is all about the bottom line.

Time to get some tips on how to create your High Performance Culture. Here are 10 steps to building High Performance Cultures

1

LEAVE ONLY IF YOU MUST.



Home that is. Technology has made location independence a reality. Employees no long have to make hour long commutes to an office to be productive. They literally have access to the world at their fingertips. Smartphone, tablets, laptops all make working away from a traditional office feasible, efficient and effective. While every job may not have the duties that allow for location independence, there are many that have this flexibility. In those instance exploring the possibilities of working in alternate locations have proven to have a positive impact on productivity as well as a positive impact on the company's bottom line. ExecuPrep worked with one company that saved over \$200K in the first year by reducing the number of people who reported to the office. They were able to reduce rental cost, utilities, turnover by 25% and improve their employee morale rating.

2

SET AN OPEN MEETING POLICY.



Any meeting that doesn't cover sensitive subjects such as pay and personnel issues should be open to everyone in the company. Employees can learn a lot from attending meetings with executives and members of other departments. Secrecy and a lack of transparency amount to a recipe for mediocrity.

3

ESTABLISH AN OPEN-BOOK MANAGEMENT POLICY.



Along these lines, treating the company's financial information like a state secret is no way to run a business. Providing transparency about how the business is faring lets employees feel like trusted members of the team and have as much certainty as possible about the company's future prospects. Also, if employees don't know the score, they don't know how to improve it.

4

SHARE AND COMMUNICATE A CLEAR MISSION, VISION AND GOALS.



Employees not only need to know how the business is performing but also where it's headed. All employees should understand the goals of the company and how their individual jobs support them. This is essential for employee engagement. Also, by asking for regular feedback about how employees are tracking toward meeting their goals, leadership can get a good idea of the organization's progress. Strong cultures stress the "we" over the "I" and adopt a unifying creed (i.e. purpose, sense of history).

5 CREATE AN ANONYMOUS FEEDBACK MECHANISM.



In the absence of information, people make up stuff. And if they have to make it up, it better be darn good. Rumors are never simple and mundane, they are elaborate versions of what all the things that could have possibly happened. High performing organizations crush the rumor mill before it gets a chance to fester. ExecuPrep worked with one organization to implement an “I heard box.” Employees would put everything in the box from “I heard the company is about to close its doors” to “I heard the CEO is going through a divorce.” CEOs are isolated at the top, often receiving only positive information about the company. That's why they should set up a way for employees to provide anonymous feedback. This empowers employees and makes the CEO more informed about potential issues. While some of the things in the “I heard box may seem trivial, they matter to the employee(s). The more time employees are focused on the minor issues of the rumor mill, the less time they are focused on performing at the highest level.

6 GIVE EMPLOYEES SOME CONTROL OVER THEIR WORK ENVIRONMENTS.



Employees need to feel some autonomy at work. Freedom to treat their offices the way they want without going against the organization's policies. This small gesture allows them to create their own unique work environment. Combined with policies such as flexible work hours and unlimited vacation (within reason), employees begin to feel some control over how they engage at work. Control and autonomy are the two elements that high performing employees need to perform at their optimal level.

7 ABSORBING NEW EMPLOYEES INTO THE TEAM QUICKLY.



Starting a new job could be stressful. Engaging employees can also decrease their uncertainty and help them more rapidly feel part of the organization, which decreases turnover and improves team performance. New employees at companies should meet with members of the executive team during their first few weeks of work. This helps them understand the purpose and strategy of each department at a high level and quickly build connections across the organization. It also lets each executive know each employee's role and value. High performing cultures view employees as assets, to be nurtured, empowered and placed in the best role with their skills.

“Even a motivated and trained employee in the wrong role or team, like a nurtured seed in a poor garden, will just not grow and produce,” says Boynton. Workers are regularly challenged with interesting work and supported with the right amount of leadership development training and coaching. Organizations should strive to get their recruiting, hiring, and on-boarding processes right

8**CREATE OBJECTIVE PAY POLICIES.**

Fundamentally, people aren't motivated by pay, but they can be demotivated if they feel that they or others in the organization are paid unfairly. For this reason, salary decisions should be made on objective data, not subjective opinions. Salaries should be decoupled from the review process. Starting pay and regular raises should be tied to third-party data showing the value each person has in the market, making compensation conversations much less contentious. This does not mean that high performing teams should not be commended, but the focus should not be solely on them alone.

9**AVOID CREATING AN EMPLOYEE CASTE SYSTEM.**

No one -- not even the CEO and the executive team -- should feel superior or inferior. Everyone is a part of a team and while each person on the team has a different role, no one on that team is less important than the other. Perks such as executive wings and private eating areas should have gone the way of the dodo long ago. Employees notice when they are separated into the haves and have-nots, and this is detrimental to camaraderie and to optimal levels of performance.

10**PROMOTE LEARNING AND GROWTH AT EVERY OPPORTUNITY.**

For everyone in a company, from the CEO to the entry-level employee, continuous learning is essential to growing and adapting to dynamic market conditions. Encourage employees to constantly improve their skills and market knowledge. Support employees who want to go back to school, attend training sessions or expand their market knowledge. This can provide tremendous long-term value to a company. Succession planning has to be a top priority for the growth of high performing employees and the continuation of leadership as seasoned employees retire.

GETTING THE RIGHT HELP

Given today's uncertain business climate, rapid change is critical for success. High performing cultures not only role with the changes, they are well prepared for those changes to occur. They understand the importance of partnering with organizations that are experts at offering what the company needs to maintain their high performing status. ExecuPrep has helped companies large and small go from underperforming to exceeding performance standards. Knowing what is wrong and who to call are vitally important pieces of data. Calling ExecuPrep is a wise choice for any organization that wants to have a high performance culture. For enquiries, please contact us @ www.ExecuPrep.com or call 866-580-2596