Communication, communication, communication

Why your employees need to be reminded of your core values at every turn

It is all well and good to have organizational values. That's the easy part. How do you keep them alive? How do you position them to be a living, breathing part of your company's DNA? That's the hard part.

Organizational values can provide a moral foundation for taking the high ground in tough times or when temptation comes knocking. They reflect and reinforce organizational culture. Put another way, they are the anchors of your business.

Many organizational leaders spend countless hours coming up with an explicit set of values that reflect the beliefs and aspirations of their company. Often, they are inspirational, professing integrity, leadership, teamwork and collaboration. When asked about organizational values, it is often determined that the executives are enthusiastic and supportive of them. Why? Because they were instrumental in their creation.

Although there may be a lot of energy put into selecting the perfect set of values for your organization, don't get trapped into thinking that once they are communicated everyone will remember and abide by them. Simply put, they won't. Mistakes and misinterpretations will be made, but as an organizational leader, you can increase your chances of having your values front and center by adopting four basic principles:

Principle No. 1: Keep them memorable

Long drawn-out lists containing complex descriptions are a thing of the past.

In today's world, people don't read and are even less likely to remember. Make the list brief, two to four values max, and make the descriptions simple so they are memorable, aim for six to 10 words max. Print them on business cards and post them around the office in strategic locations. Keep them front and center in the eyes of your associates.

Principle No. 2: Lead by example

Make sure that you personally keep your organizational values in the forefront of the decisions and actions you take. Refer to them liberally at company meetings and acknowledge your associates who have "lived" them.

Don't be reluctant to ask for regular feedback on whether your firm is in proper alignment.

Principle No. 3: Build your values into every message

At the expense of being redundant, when you are speaking with others in your organization, refer to those values to make your case. Give examples of how you've observed employees embodying those values. Tell stories about how they are being followed in other areas of your company.

Connect the dots for employees about how following the values make your workplace and your company better.

Principle No. 4: Observe when values aren't being followed

Provide timely feedback to those who have strayed and remind them of the specific value(s) they've strayed from. Let them know what impact this has on you, others and the organization.

Keep your organizational values alive and in the forefront of each and every one of your actions. Make sure you are modeling them and expect the same from your associates by infusing them into your communication, recognition and feedback process. And then, sit back and relax. Watch them bring energy and commitment to your organization's culture and future success. ●

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