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ARTICLE BY SUZIE WALKER, MD & FOUNDER - SUZIE WALKER EXECUTIVE SEARCH

EQUILIBRIUM

THERE IS A SHIFT IN MINDSET FOR LEADERS, THAT ARE NOW SEEKING MORE PURPOSE AND JOY IN THEIR LIVES. THIS IS DRIVING AN EVOLVING WORK-LIFE CULTURE THAT IS MORE ABOUT EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE THAN TECHNICAL ACUMEN AND POTENTIALLY, MORE CLOSELY ALIGNS PERSONAL AND CORPORATE VALUES. BUT THERE IS NO SINGLE GUARANTEED FORMULA FOR SUCCESS.

Unquestionably, there is a greater emphasis on the importance of soft skills in the shaping of corporate culture, along with alignment to foster a sense of belonging, supporting both performance and retention. That sense of belonging has also been supported by the improvements to diversity and inclusion at board-level and, as boards become more balanced - although there is much more to be done - formerly unyielding cultures are moving towards collaboration and engagement, where employees are given a chance to speak and to be heard. A recent study found that, 'Employees with a strong sense of belonging report a 56 percent higher level of overall job performance'. Plus, with attrition rates showing no sign of decline and a shrinking pool of talent in the market, attention to retention has never been more important. We are seeing a real shift in workplaces, from 'places to work' to hubs for community, purpose and belonging.

An example of this can be found within a FTSE 100, consumer-facing brand where the Chief Executive Officer has built a senior team that strikes a much-needed balance in terms of diversity and inclusion. This progressive team has worked together on an organisational design, reflecting an agenda that all senior leaders wholeheartedly support and commit to. They truly buy into it, embedding the vision and values into

their teams, systems and processes in order to deliver it. This evolving culture is traditional, in that it is driven from the top, but its customer-centric and progressive CEO has delivered a powerful and dynamic change to improve corporate culture as a whole.

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Another approach was seen within a FTSE 350 retail brand, which was forced to evolve after finding the company heavily exposed to economic circumstances and increased attrition over the past few years. Interim senior leaders were brought in to transform the strategy, while the permanent and experienced senior leadership team was pragmatic, flexible and dynamic in their thinking. A significant amount of change took place

in a short amount of time and, while this was initially a case of survival, they started to think about what kind of business and culture they would like to achieve when they came out of the other side. Their Chief Executive showed a level of courage that inspired and motivated their team, transforming company culture for all.

When it comes to leadership acumen, while technical skills and experience still form the basis, there is a greater emphasis on emotional intelligence. A FTSE 100 client with a traditional and steady culture - known as a solid performer in their sector - was struggling to connect with new generations of customers, that expected more than technical competency from the brand. For this reason, they embarked on a bold new vision for the future, bringing in a female senior executive, who offered a vision and influence that shaped their thinking and is moving them towards a modern and collaborative culture. Concurrently, new and diverse teams were developed, to move away from the past, change perceptions and attract new talent to take the business forward. This brave new beginning is now disrupting and inspiring others within their sector.

FOR FURTHER INFO
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