

What Cultures are at Work in Your Workplace

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Culture at work is expressed by the way people interact with each other and with customers. What is valued and what is daily done in the workplace and in the community by a company are also parts of workplace culture.

What cultures are in action in your workplace? Is the culture conducive to working? Or is it threatening to productivity? The following descriptors are some of the cultures that occur in workplaces of all sizes. See which ones, or variations of these, are at work in your office.

Cover-up – When something goes wrong, some people or even entire teams work together to cover it up and keep things going on as normally as possible. This is unhealthy because it prevents real problem-solving.

Openness – When questions arise, something goes wrong, or when customers complain, an open and honest conversation happens so that answers and solutions can be found to keep making work processes better.

Blaming – When something goes undone, or goes wrong, finger-pointing and blaming begins. In other words, people fail to take responsibility when things break down. This is also unhealthy for work productivity and for people who want to work together.

Fun – People laugh, enjoy their jobs and enjoy interacting with customers. Company décor may even express how fun the company is.

Innovation – New ideas are encouraged and even rewarded. People experiment and invent in a culture of innovation.

Research – Looking for cures, identifying sources of problems, and solving mysteries are part of a research-based culture.

Hiring from within – The company always hires from within when possible. This culture rewards people who already know the company, its products, and processes.

Hiring “outsiders”- Always hiring someone from outside of the company to fill a company opening. This can bring in new and helpful ideas. It can also prevent people who know the company and who have the skills from being promoted and staying committed to the company.

Legalese that paralyzes action – Some of the clients I’ve had for over a decade have moved to a culture that is driven by lawyers, contracts, and legalese. It slows down the process of doing business and limits innovation.

Chaotic clutter of things and thought – This culture is visually recognizable and emotionally stressful.

Order and structure – This culture may be more calming than chaos, yet overly ordered environments can stifle fun, creativity and morale too.

Of course, there are other cultures that can also be in action in your workplace. To further identify the culture, look for the way people interact, the way jokes are told or played on others, the way employee coaching occurs or doesn't occur, and for issues or problems around employee retention.

Action Item: Explore and define what your workplace culture is. Is it what you want it to be? If so, celebrate that and keep going. If not, regroup, redefine what is important and begin living a new culture of interacting every day.

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