

### Culture and Character

Do people wave and smile in your neighborhood? These little things and many more are how a neighborhood builds a culture. In the same way, every business has a culture, built through how we handle events and customer issues. The business culture can have strengths which help or flaws that hinder the business.

In the past, often businesses left culture up to chance and assumed things about how employees and customers will

react. But culture is becoming too important to leave to chance as events happen and our world becomes more diverse. Businesses are becoming more aware of the need to build and manage the business culture. Often, some significant event

happens to make top management aware of flaws in the culture and the need to manage it. Although there are some companies that decided from the beginning to have a specific culture.

Business culture is not about adding game tables and places to relax. Business culture is the pattern of how customers are selected, how they are served, how employees treat each other, and how management deals with people issues. Business culture is made up of the written and unwritten rules by which we operate while dealing in and with that business.

We can have flaws in the business culture. For many years, some businesses assumed certain people couldn't be top managers or even employees till their competitors hired them and showed that they did well.

Other businesses tolerated mistreatment of certain employees or other forms of harassment. Some businesses assumed that certain people walking in the door were not good customers, or couldn't be trusted to wander the place and they treated those customers differently than how they treated others. Often, those customers go to the competitors with their cash. Other businesses have lied, cheated, or caused harm to their customers. The flaws in our business

culture will cause a lot of harm both to us and our customers.

The flaws in our business culture often come from some valid issue that got distorted or warped out of shape. Many culture flaws can be corrected by changing who benefits

from the actions and that change has to start at the top. While we serve the company owners, the company does better overall when we focus on serving others. We find a balance between serving the owners, our employees, and our customers. We work to benefit the community as well as the stockholders.

We build the culture by how we live the business purpose: who actually benefits from the existence of this business? Our purpose statement defines who we serve and can't be something filed away and forgotten. We celebrate those who follow that statement and reward those who move it forward. We build the culture we want as we celebrate every step that along the way.

Business culture requires top management attention. We have to decide what style the business will have.

### Change Who Benefits

### Compliance

President Ulysses Grant vowed in his inaugural address to enforce bad laws so that people will force them to be repealed. This idea has also been ascribed to President Lincoln. A number of employees have taken this advice to heart when given bad instructions and decided to follow the rules to the letter. In some cases, the results have been humorous. There are numerous stories of "malicious compliance". Being in one of those stories is not a "win" for the company.

We all have days when we say something crazy. There will be days where we give out bad instructions. What we want is a business culture where people trust us enough to challenge our insanity on those days. That takes a vulnerability, a vulnerability to admit to mistakes, to being stressed out, and allowing our employees to have the same while asking for rational thinking most of the time. It also calls for apologizing for the bad instructions as publicly as when we gave the bad instructions.

Often, "malicious compliance" happens when we don't listen to the employee. Often, the "tipping point" is when the employee has tried to communicate with management and feels that nobody is listening. We do well to hear the employee out in the conflict, periodically review rules and regulations, and trust employees to do the right thing (but also verify).

One way to prevent falling into the situation is to give "goal-oriented instructions" instead of "task-oriented instructions". When we lay out the goals and ask employees to find a way to meet those goals, we rarely find ourselves in a situation of "malicious compliance".

Let us have the strength to admit to mistakes.

### Risky World

"Crypto" Currencies have had a hard fall. A recent study showed that there some fundamental weaknesses to the way that Bitcoin and some other "Crypto's" were operated. Because more and more these are operated by just a few organizations and the traffic is not encrypted, there are more technical opportunities to subvert the technologies. There aren't any known examples yet, but the theory is becoming clearer.

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