Lead Team Culture Improvement

You're not happy with how your business is tracking so you need to make changes. How do you get the team behind it? This challenge is made more difficult when a poor culture exists – ironically, the most likely reason for the poor business performance.

Culture is one of those nebulous areas of an organisation. Difficult to define, it has many origins, takes on many forms and typically has developed over many years. As a result, culture change is difficult but not impossible. A great team culture is probably the biggest single factor in the success of a company. Equally and unsurprisingly, a toxic culture, its demise.

How do you do set up the right culture for your business? I'd be keen to get your thoughts. I believe the following are at the core of all possible answers to this difficult question:

1. <u>Encourage the Team to Understand and Own the Plan</u>: From the very beginning have the patience and set aside the time to involve your entire team in the development of the plan of whatever you want to do. Be positive, seek participation by all team members and solicit their feedback and ideas. Encourage understanding and buy-in of the goals and the strategies to get there, and importantly, the individual role of each employee. On an on-going basis, communicate this at every opportunity. Do this in an open, transparent manner, building trust and relationships with all employees.
    But some might say, "My management team and I just don't have the time to do all of this – we need to make quick decisions and move on". You need to find the time. If you want a prosperous business, you need a great team to get there. Open communication and patience are the key attributes.
    However, sometimes no matter what you do, no matter how you present it, and how hard you try, some employees will just not "own" the plan or idea. That's OK. At the very least, they will know the rationale behind the plan.

2. <u>Promote and Instill the Continuous Improvement Habit</u>. Everyone wants to improve. And as C.W. Barron quite rightly stated, "Everything can be improved", equally applying to an individual's self-development as well as a business' systems, services and products. A mindset of continuous innovation and improvement is at the heart of every successful sustainable business. The ideal situation is to have every employee with this innovative mindset, continuously throughout the working day, always thinking if there is a better way of doing things. Encourage employees to improve their own skill sets via training and, wherever possible, taking on different roles within the company. Schedule regular meetings or incorporate a feedback system where ideas and thoughts can be presented. Set up KPIs/Metrics with incentives to encourage participation and improvement. The goal is to instill a mindset which always looks for continuous improvement. A team which does this and is recognised for it, is motivated and a key component of a great team culture.

3. <u>Trust, Communicate, Lead</u>. Throughout the entire business, trust must be developed. Without this, great teamwork will not take hold and any good plans and continuous improvement systems will quickly falter. Truly lead by example. Don't let an attitude of "do as I say not as I do" be a part of the organisation – the single biggest contributor to a toxic culture. Communicate in all forms and often. Build and maintain open relationships with the team members, take a genuine interest in the individual's personal life. Be positive, genuinely compliment, confidentially rectify any issues and quickly eliminate any persistent unfounded gossip and rumors. Via appropriate questions at the appropriate time, monitor the mood and

culture within the business and quickly address the issues – do not let it fester.

All simple basic stuff here right? Yes, but how many of us fail to implement these best practices citing lack of time, policies set in stone, troublemaker but indispensable employee, and a host of other reasons. History tells us that time must be found, policies can be changed and indispensable is dispensable in order to build a great team culture – a mandatory requirement for a sustainable business.

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