

**Build a culture that will keep  
your staff happy—and around  
for the long term**



## Your guide to the importance of culture in elevating the employee experience

We're happy to see you here, digging into another educational resource developed to offer you valuable information on the ways the right business culture improves your team's morale, productivity and retention.

The COVID-19 pandemic sent seismic changes rolling through the business world. A lot of those changes have been scary for small businesses. However, it's also given owners a chance to change the way they think about the intersection of work and life—especially at a time when the Great Resignation has sent millions of workers searching for more fulfilling work situations.

That's why we've created this eBook, to help you build an appealing culture that will keep your employees long-term loyal...and big-time happy.

If we can help you stay on top of your business finances or assist you with growth opportunities, please reach out to our firm today with any questions.



# Why is business culture so important?

## What is culture?

Culture is the collective beliefs and behaviors of a group. In a company, culture determines how the leadership and employees interact and conduct business.

Every so often, a profound change (like, for instance, a pandemic) occurs that makes workers stop and say, "Wait, this isn't how things have to be. We need to be able to enjoy our lives, too."

That's when the employers who know that people matter most—those who take the time and care to offer their employees an engaging culture—have the advantage over employers who pay well, but who don't consider the human being behind the job.

### **According to insights from business coaching company BetterUp's 2022 Employee Experience Guide, employees want the following:**

- To bring their whole selves to work every day
- An environment that helps them learn, grow and reach their full potential
- A diverse workforce with inclusive leaders
- To upskill and learn new things (including how to develop as professionals)
- To find purpose and meaning in their career and overall career goals
- To feel a deep sense of belonging, connection and purpose
- To feel valued and cared for

## **From the Great Resignation to the Great Reassessment**

As we mentioned earlier, the Great Resignation involves record numbers of workers quitting their jobs to find more fulfilling work situations. According to a December 2021 CareerArc/Harris Poll survey, 23% of employed Americans planned to resign within the next 12 months. That leaves nearly a one-in-four chance that one of your team members could leave.

But right now, instead of worrying about the Great Resignation, let's change our framing to call this a Great Reassessment—a fantastic opportunity for us to reassess how we meet the challenges of staffing our own business.

First, let's acknowledge that for a business to be truly successful, it's the business's people who must matter the most. Not just customers and clients, but your team—the people who make the company run; the people who do the day-to-day work.

Now, let's get down to the business of making your business culture a happy and fulfilling one for your employees, executive team and, ultimately, the customers and clients you serve.

**As of December 2021, 23% of employed Americans planned to resign within the next 12 months.**



## Four questions (plus a bonus one) for a better business culture

A recent U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics survey showed that, even with the change in work habits caused by the pandemic (e.g., working from home, no commute), in 2019 and 2020, the average workday was still 7.65 hours long. When we spend that much of our time at work or on work-related matters, it's fair to say our employer's culture has a major influence on our general mindset and well-being—and helps determine our loyalty to (and longevity with) that employer.

There are four basic questions (and one bonus question) you need to ask yourself—and answer honestly—before you can build the kind of culture employees seek out:

### **QUESTION 1** **Does my team have the CLARITY they deserve?**

All team members (including you!) deserve to know exactly how they're progressing and how important they are to the success of the business. The best way to do this is to create a set of clear objectives and goals to measure their growth and performance on a regular basis. That requires clear answers to questions such as:

- **Who do we serve?**
- **What do we sell?**
- **How do we deliver it?**
- **What's my specific role in that process?**
- **How will I know if I'm successful?**

We recommend you go through the exercise of asking these questions together with your entire team. And once you settle on the answers, continue to have regular meetings with the team to ensure they have clarity on all information and issues.

It's also a good idea to start the clarity process from the very beginning of the employment cycle. Why not create expectation statements to use during interviews and hiring, so there won't be any surprises? "This is what you can expect from us, and this is what we'll expect from you."



## QUESTION 2

### Can my team expect CANDID, timely input and answers from me?

There's nothing more disappointing than asking questions of the leadership team and getting evasive answers, misleading answers...or no response at all.

Ask yourself:

- **Can people really be honest in our workplace?**
- **Does my team get sincere input from me, or are they just following orders?**
- **Are whispers, gossip and passive aggression the norm in our business?**

The answers to these questions will let you know how much work you need to do to keep, earn or regain the trust of your team. That will involve not only working with everyone collectively to take the temperature of the team and get their feedback but individually as well. Here are a few effective ideas we've heard for gathering feedback:

- Instead of meeting in an office, take regular walks outside (or in a protected place in inclement weather) with individual team members. Don't consider it a lunch-hour activity; keep it a paid part of the workday. For the first half of the walk, keep things casual and more personal; the second half of the walk can be work-centered. Ask them what issues they're seeing and what the leaders are missing—and ask for their input on ways to solve any issues.

- Send out regular, short surveys (two or three questions) via an online survey creation tool like Survey Monkey. Be sure you acknowledge and—if possible—act on the survey results. And if you can't act on the issues at the moment, be honest and transparent about that, too.
- To ensure everyone has a voice in the process, consider creating and working with a culture committee that consists of a team representative from each department.



### QUESTION 3

#### Do I sincerely CONNECT with my team?

We all want to feel that we matter; so much so, in fact, that it's not uncommon for people to leave jobs that pay less to become part of something they personally care about or connect with. What's the connection like at your business?

- **Do leaders care about team members, or are they just replaceable job titles?**
- **Do team members really get to participate in the success of the business, or are they treated like a means to an end?**
- **Do coworkers care about each other?**

If the answers to these questions make you uncomfortable, find the one person who genuinely cares about everyone they work with (every business has one). We're talking about the one who remembers birthdays, who organizes a collection for flowers when there's an illness or death in the family, who orders lunch for everyone. Acknowledge that they're good at this role and give them leeway—and a budget—to run with it.

Some ideas: last-Friday-of-the-month parties; dedicated Slack or Teams (or your messaging app of choice) channels to offer birthday wishes or congratulations on other milestones; reasonably priced and thoughtfully chosen employee appreciation gifts.

Note that if you haven't done company lunches, after-work get-togethers or birthday celebrations, it might feel awkward at first. But trust us; you'll get into a rhythm, and it will give your team the stability and reinforcement of knowing that they do matter. Keep in mind that connection happens organically; it can't be forced. But with intention, it will happen!

Another idea: Reach out to your team members one on one by scheduling short (15-30 minute) weekly or bi-weekly check-ins. Ask how they're doing and if they need help with anything, but let it flow and give them the opportunity to lead the conversation. The check-ins will tend to be work-centered at first, but they'll become more organic over time.

**“In a world where money is no longer the primary motivating factor for employees, focusing on the employee experience is the most promising competitive advantage that organizations can create.”**

– Jacob Morgan, author of  
“The Employee Experience Advantage”



## QUESTION 4

### Am I CONSISTENT?

There's no morale-buster like seeing an improvement in company culture...only to see it fade away just as quickly. That can drive your employees away faster than low pay or job issues, and it's why you need to ask yourself these questions:

- **Are we just following the latest workplace fad, or are the activities mentioned here a dedicated part of our calendar?**
- **Will our leadership team stick to their commitment to improving the company culture when it gets in the way of billable or profitable work?**

If there's never been much attention paid to culture in the past, it's easy for employees to feel that the company doesn't really care about the team as people, but rather as a means to an end.

Some (easy) ideas that can help you stay consistent: Create a shared employee calendar just for team events and schedule your walks and input meetings at the beginning of the year for the entire year.



## Take your culture's vital signs

### 1. Lack of Clarity

Your team is anxious and irritable

### 2. Lack of Candor

Your team is whispering and socially manipulative

### 3. Lack of Connection

Your team is just working for a paycheck

### 4. Lack of Consistency

Your team isn't engaged in the health of the firm

### 1. Healthy Clarity

Your team members are confident and optimistic

### 2. Healthy Candor

Conflict is often surfaced and directly addressed

### 3. Healthy Connection

Stories fill the building, and the team is engaged

### 4. Healthy Consistency

The groove of your business becomes irresistible

Source: John Mitchell,  
Director of Firm Culture Strategy, Rootworks



## BONUS QUESTION

### Do we have an ONBOARDING program?

The day you start onboarding a new hire is the day expectations are set for their tenure. Some questions to ask yourself:

- **Do we have an official onboarding process?**
- **Do new employees have problems easily understanding how the business operates?**
- **If we have an onboarding process set up, when was the last time we reviewed it?**
- **How do we communicate onboarding process changes to our long-term employees so they're on the same page as new hires?**

Remember, first impressions are everything. That's why new employee onboarding should focus on more than just, "Here's how to do your job." You'll want to offer:

- **A positive, welcoming environment and a sense of belonging and investment.**
- **Clear communication and expectations.**
- **An introduction to your business's mission, strategy and core values.**
- **Regular check-ins to see how the onboarding experience is going for both sides.**



**Everyone wants to do the big things, but it's being steadfast with the little things that makes you a ninja!**

– Kerri Walsh Jennings,  
American volleyball player

### The 30/60/90-day training plan

Consider setting up a 30/60/90-day training plan for the first 90 days of employment, with a different focus for each 30-day period. Give every new hire the opportunity to meet with the leader of each team to understand how everyone works together, and how their own job fits into the larger picture. Then, meet with the new employee at the end of each 30 days to review how things went—and get the employee's feedback, as well.

Here's an example of how it can be broken down:

#### ■ DAYS 1-30

Focus on learning goals; should be related to the company's mission, vision, values, policies, the employee's responsibilities and your company's technology.

**Example: Understand how the software is used.**

#### ■ DAYS 31-60

Focus on performance goals that complement the learning goals by explicitly outlining the actions resulting from the learning goals. These goals should be a top priority past the 90 days, but still a focus on days 60-90.

**Example: Spend 80% of time on billable work.**

#### ■ DAYS 61-90

Focus on the employee's personal growth goals and how they can assess themselves during the first 90 days and beyond. Focusing on personal goals can help them excel at their performance and learning goals. These goals should be created by the new staff member and their manager before each new 30-day section of the plan.

**Example: Create strong workplace relationships.**



## Summing it all up

It's natural to want to create big plans for your company. But to do that, it's important to be steadfast with the little things that put human beings first and make them feel that they're a vital part of your mission.

When you create an engaging culture that's based on the "People matter most" concept, you'll be the company people talk about when they say, "My employer's company is one of the best places I've ever worked—and by the way, we're hiring, so you should send in a resume!"

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We hope this guide has given you a place to start with creating a culture that will keep your team happy and employed with you for a long time.

Check with us if we can help you in any way with your business planning or finances...or if we can help you put together an action plan for business growth.

Just click the **GET IN TOUCH** button and complete the brief form or give us a call. We look forward to hearing from you!

