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Cara Silletto

I'm your contributor, host, Cara Silletto. If we haven't met yet, I'm the president and chief retention officer at Magna Culture, a firm dedicated to reducing unnecessary employee turnover. And I'm the creator of the employee retention ecosystem. Now our ecosystem model breaks down. Who needs to do what? To create a place where your employees can thrive. So what do all employees need to do?

Like showing up and building connections? And what do all leaders need to do? As in acclimating their new hires, cultivating their team? And then what do I need to do? They need to establish this attractive and protective environment, and equip the staff and the leaders with the tools they need to be successful. So last month I talked extensively about how we develop leaders.

How do you create a leadership development program, in fact within your organization? So that was about equipping leaders as an executive. Two months ago, we also talked about analyzing capacity around the right org charts, the right workloads. How do we adjust that as an executive team. And then today I'm going to finish up this establish section of the model.

And we're going to focus on assessing our values and setting priorities. Now before you tune out I know those sound like kind of fundamental or oh yeah yeah yeah we've got those right. We've got a mission vision values. We've got priorities. We're good. But I want to give you a little different flavor, a different take on that, especially from the view of the new workforce today.

So I'm going to dive into kind of how we define these areas of the model. And some new ideas to bring back to your leadership team to talk about, so that we can take our values and our priority list to the next level to be much more effective. All right. So let's start out talking about the values and the way that we define this particular action within the ecosystem model is to quote redefine organizational mission vision and core values as the workforce evolves to attract aligned talent, unquote.

So that's the key piece. It isn't just about having a mission, vision and values, but having one that evolves with the workforce to make sure that we are able to attract and keep the talent that we really want. So question for you, when is the last time that your organization reassessed its mission, vision and values? And did you compare that to what today's new workforce is looking for in an employer?

I happen to be one of the oldest millennials born in the 80s, but now we're hiring folks who were born in the 2000. So it's a whole new workforce that has a different view of this employer employee relationship. So some people think that values should never change. All right. And that's correct with some of the basic characteristic values that we put in our statements like integrity and customer service and quality.

Those types of words mean certainly we want everyone to have those. But sometimes the way we word that mission, vision and values, I got to say it, it might become less sexy over time. Okay, so for example, here is just one perspective. Many of my nonprofit provider clients have historically had a faith based mission. Okay, but today, less and less of the workforce is tied to organized religion.

They are, you know, openly saying that they are not part of organized religion. So some of these organizations have to consider whether or not that wording that they use is attracting potential candidates or possibly deterring candidates from applying. And there's no right or wrong here. Some have chosen to keep the meaning behind their faith based mission, but reduce the religious language around it that that was previously included.

So while some have done that, I have also seen some of my faith based clients go the other direction and go all in on a faith forward recruiting message with that built into their mission, vision and values. So it's really up to you. And even if you're not faith based, just really looking at those words again to make sure they are attractive, not attractive to the older workforce, as far as you know, the way that we were recruiting people ten years ago, 20 years ago or more.

But today, how we recruit folks and really focusing on the why of the mission, connecting ourselves to that. So there's no right or wrong, like I said. But I do want companies and executives to be more intentional in the choice and in the language. Making sure that they understand this decision impacts the workforces view of their relationship with the organization and what those expectations are going to be.

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Cara Silletto

So it's funny, in a lot of my training classes, some way or another, I end up asking the leaders in the room this question, how attractive are we really? How attractive are we really? And right now we're talking about the mission, vision and values. But you can also apply that question to our onboarding, our pay, our compensation package, our benefits, our schedule.

You know, our leadership approach, our communication internally. How attractive are we really. Okay, so a tip I'd like to suggest going back to the values piece is if you're ready to reset, it may be time to turn your values from words into actions. So for example, instead of saying collaboration is one of our values, instead I've seen groups use phrases like we win as a team, so that pulls way more than just collaboration.

It talks about we do things together, but we also celebrate together. We support one another. We win as a team. Also tells me if there's a weak link, we're going to help get that person caught up and take care of them, right. So you can often get a lot more out of each line of your bulleted values.

If you make it into an action, into a phrase or a sentence, even, rather than just those more generic words integrity, customer service, collaboration, quality, that type of thing. And this

approach is much clearer to everyone on your team and helps everyone understand exactly what ideal collaboration actually looks like. Okay, so once you have decided on your current mission, vision and values and a lot of you are saying already, well, we're not going to reassess this, this is not maybe that's not your job or you recently did it or it's it's a sacred cow that is not to be touched, which I argue that all of those should be addressed, but that's a different conversation.

So anyway, if you've already got your mission vision of values kind of set, then I want to ask how are you promoting them? Do you get out there and really say it? Is it not just posters on the wall? Because I'll tell you, your company culture is not those posters on the wall. It is what actually walks down the hall.

So how are you teaching people and promoting these values so that people are living them every day? An example I have is several of my clients have been doing it either for years or newly created, like a mission minute type of conversation. So at every staff meeting, every huddle, every discussion, it starts with a mission minute, for example, of if it is we win as a team, then they not only say what it is, but they define it through an example.

There's a group in Ohio that I work with, and they do this really well where they will say, I'd like to do our mission minute today about we win as a team. And I want to share with you what Michaela did the other day that really lived this value. It exemplified this value on our floor. And so they gave the example of what Michaela did beautifully, so that other people can follow those footsteps and follow that great kind of role model of behavior as well.

So for your mission, Vision of values. Is the language included in interviews? Are you sure? Are you sure that everybody's doing that? Is it included in your onboarding? Not just a here's our core values, but throughout the onboarding time to make sure that the core values are built around all of the behavior that's expected. How about the performance review conversations?

Are the values built into what we expect of our folks, and if there's any room for improvement, maybe it is around living out some of those values as well. Is it built into your employee satisfaction surveys? Do you measure your values in any way? Because some groups, they have tied those values to their satisfaction surveys, or they have added in special questions to make sure that people feel we are living up to those standards.

And in fact, you know, would your staff say that others around them live up to those standards, or would they describe your company culture different in a different way than the values you promote? Meaning they say, well, the posters on the wall say this, but the real company culture here is not that. So you may want to ask around.

And unfortunately, sometimes as executives and senior leaders, we unintentionally become disconnected from the front line because we don't live there, right? We're not out on the floor all the time with our folks. And so before you assume the company's ideals are being lived out on the floor, because some of you might be thinking, oh, yes, absolutely. We promote it.

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Cara Silletto

We tell everyone, but I do want to encourage you to go on a listening tour, go out to your buildings, go out on the floor and ask, go find out for yourself. And remember, people are typically on their best behavior when you're walking around, so you might have to dig a little bit to learn the truth. You may even want to include the question, did we live up to our stated values in your exit interviews?

There's another way to really kind of find out if that was the truth. Because as we all know, when folks are walking out the door, a lot of them nowadays tend to be much more candid about what we could have done better as an organization or stronger culture, better leaders and things like that. So, okay, we've got to reassess these values.

We've got to promote those values. And then ideally we also want to enforce it. So this final conversation on this section for today is are you and your leaders at every level enforcing that mission, vision and values that you have determined is the best for you? So are you hiring and firing based on these behaviors? Now, of course, we want to coach people into the behavior that we want if they're missing the mark.

But if I come to work for your organization, will I find that nearly everybody lives by these values that you explain to me bearing the interview process? Or is it more so that you wish that you held everyone to those standards, but you don't? Or sometimes we feel like we just can't. It's too high of a standard. So maybe if that's the case, we go back to step one and say, let's reassess our values to what we really can expect, what we really can even enforce, because it gets really tough to have that disconnect of what we say we are versus what's actually happening.

And that can absolutely cause employee turnover if they are misaligned. All right. So it may be time to restate those values to be something that you can promise that you can deliver as a team. You can still have strong values without overpromising. The great thing is this industry, y'all, this profession of senior living and senior care, we have a fabulous mission already, unlike some industries.

Okay, we don't have to stretch the truth about how our widgets make the world a better place. You know, that type of thing. I mean, I do work a little bit in manufacturing and construction and things, although about 80% of my work is in senior care. And sometimes in those spaces we have to stretch. The truth might not be the right phrase, but we have to really work to find a connection for the people on the front line to a good internal mission that people care about.

We don't have that problem. Our care is so meaningful that that is not even a question here, okay? Because people who are drawn into senior care, they love the residents typically. So it's simply the details and the exact wording, the nuance behind that maybe helping or hindering you from getting the talent that we need to provide that great quality care.

14:26 - 18:50

Cara Silletto

All right. So reassess those values, promote those values, enforce those values, and then circle back again and reassess. Because you've got gen alpha coming here in the next five years.

Dun dun. Right. The next generation is about to hit our workforce. They are already 14 ish years old. So if you hire 16, 17, 18 year olds, they're coming.

And they are even going to be attracted by different wording and different missions as well. So we may have to continue making those adjustments. All right. So next up in the ecosystem model is to set priorities. All right. Which for us is defined as solidify manageable goals budgets policies and procedures to appropriately allocate resources and keep team actions focused.

All right. So let me repeat that real quick because it's quite a mouthful. So what we're talking about is when we say set priorities this is bigger picture y'all. This isn't just like what do I need to get done today. This is big picture. How do we solidify manageable goals, budgets, policies and procedures to appropriately allocate resources and keep team actions focused?

So that's one of the key words there is how do we keep people focused on the true priorities? By giving them the right goals and resources to get there. Okay. That's kind of another way to say that I know it's a mouthful. It also pretty much means put your money where your mouth is. So we can't expect to put more and more and more ballooning responsibilities on leaders without giving them more pay or more resources.

Yet I see companies doing this every single day, which is ultimately why they call me to help them reduce turnover. Right? Because then they're seeing those those folks walk out the door. So as our leaders especially, have more and more ballooning responsibilities, particularly around taking care of today's more high maintenance staff. You know, I mentioned on my podcast last month that I was speaking at a conference and the administrators that I interviewed said they were spending more than 50% of their time on staff issues Rama conversations, mentoring, coaching, promotion, you know, career advancement discussions, all these different things.

And so that's just one of those ballooning responsibilities of taking care of your team and checking in with your people, coaching, mentoring, all of that stuff. And so with priorities always shifting, I mean, the the administrator or that manager is going to tell you, my priority is this employee right in front of me who is having an issue or needs my support or help or mentoring.

While the organization at the Home Office might be saying no, your priority is implementing this new software or getting me this report right. There's conflicting priorities all the time. So how many priorities are you setting for your key leaders, and is that and sustainable? Now keep in mind we cannot, as a corporate or home office, set goals for each department.

This is what I see happen, right? The clinical quality teams working on something, the finance team, HR team, the IT group, operations folks, every one of those different Home office leaders

is working on different priorities, and then they push all of those priorities down to the administrator and the Don. Right. They want that director of nursing and administrator to execute on that.

There is no way that they can deliver on all of those things all at the same time, which becomes incredibly disheartening, overwhelming. It is unattainable. Okay, y'all, it's just not possible. And so we've got to think about this differently. In fact, this approach continuing to push multiple priorities from multiple directions onto those community leaders, that is a big part of why they are saying enough is enough.

18:50 - 24:38

Cara Silletto

I cannot do more with less any more. Every year we ask folks to do that, it seems, and they just can't do that. So I'm actually seeing a lot more turnover in a lot of communities and facilities today at that leadership level. You know, it has historically been about the front line and the 30, 60, 90 day churn.

But now I'm seeing a lot more leader level turnover. And I believe after talking with a lot of these leaders, some who stay, some who go. A lot of it has to do with a lack of true focus and an overabundance of these priorities that are just out of whack. Let's be honest. Okay, so this actually goes back to the generational work that we teach as well, because Gen Xers, right, who are between the boomers and the millennials, Gen Xers, mostly in their mid mid 40s through their 50s today, they did what their bosses told them in the past because they were taught to respect authority.

Why? Because their boss said so. They were told, don't make waves. Do what your boss tells you. You know, be patient, pay your dues, wait your turn. All of those things and so many of the Gen Xers really in leadership have worked and worked and done everything the company wanted, while on the other hand, the millennials, you know, under 45 and Gen Z, the ones in their 20s, now they're pushing back as they get into these leadership positions.

They're pushing back on the way it's always been done. And they have seen too many people ahead of them, you know, older than them that have sacrificed at home, their personal hobbies and goals and life, other priorities that are outside of the job. And then they I say they but really it's we I'm a millennial, right? We saw these people sacrifice all my Gen X and Boomer friends kind of work, work work work work work work.

They sacrificed. And I'm going to be honest and say a lot of them didn't see any benefits of doing that. They just kept work, work, work, work, work, work, working. And they got to keep their job great. But they never really got paid out at the level that that should have been, you know, received for all of that going above and beyond.

And for that reason, this workaholic era is over. Okay. The new leaders that you're bringing in today, you should not expect them unless unless you are doing a payment compensation

approach. That is huge compensation for hitting goals. I'm seeing some organizations, particularly out West, that are doing this where they they bonus the top leaders to certain certain metrics around retention and financial performance and clinical performance and things like that.

But unless you're doing some massive compensation and bonus opportunities for folks, I will tell you that we can no longer overload administrators and directors of nursing or other department heads with these unrealistic expectations. All right. So like I said, a couple of months ago, I talked about the org charts and analyzing people's capacity. We went into all that.

But I bring it up again today because we're talking about setting priorities. And I don't mean to be rude or disrespectful or unkind, but as a millennial myself, we were raised differently and we simply have lower tolerance for putting up with that. If it does not make sense, you know, all this stacked on top of one another. Priorities.

If we can clearly see that it is not sustainable over time, or it can't all be done at once, we've learned that we're not going to get anything extra just because we do what the company says. You know that we stay till the job gets done, and we put in more and more and more hours and effort and more sacrifice.

So the leaders of today, this next generation of leaders, there are not enough promotions and raises available for them to continue in an unsustainable way. All right. So I'm just trying to break this down here of just because we've done that in the past. And as much as I hate to use these words, you know, we we kind of took advantage of the folks who were willing to keep working that way because that's the way they were raised.

But now the leaders are not going to do that. Okay. So I think you understand that now, this means employers, we have to listen and adjust our approach to take better care of our leaders. In fact, this ecosystem model is all about every employee in your organization is a house plant. So if you didn't hear the ecosystem overview, go back and listen to that episode because it's all about everybody is like a house plant, which means they need their own type of care, whether they're an orchid or a snake plant or a cactus or a fern.

They need their own care. And we need to also think about that for our leaders, that leaders also need their own care. And we cannot just keep pouring and pouring and pouring onto them and think that they're going to just stick it out. Okay. So the employers that I see who are listening to this, they are truly paying attention.

They're adjusting their approach with both the workloads and the priority list. They are the ones that are winning the talent battle, and they're able to keep these leaders in the positions, you know, much longer. We get more continuity of care that way. It's just much, much better. Right. So let me tell you about a real world situation that I recently saw in our senior care space.

24:38 - 30:33

Cara Silletto

So I have a senior care group I've been working with on reducing turnover. And as soon as I arrived, I just kept hearing from all of their different administrators in particular. Others said it too, but the administrators, it was loud and clear. They just kept telling me whenever I asked, how are things going? Or what would you change around here for retention sake?

They kept saying, there are just too many priorities over and over. I heard this during our many discussions throughout our leadership training programs. You know, for months I heard this from them. And so I went back after a series of training programs, and I went to run an executive Summit on retention, just a one day program with just the small executive team from the Home Office.

And I asked them before the session, make a list of priorities. What are all the priorities that you yourselves at the corporate office are working on, and that you're expecting your communities to be implementing right now? What are all of those priorities that have going on you all? I am not joking. I am not exaggerating. They had 68 priorities, 68, 68, six, eight.

No, no, they they they were almost like proud of it. Which I get it that they're moving quickly and they're hitting all their metrics and these kind of things. But no wonder the administrators are exhausted and looking at me for help. They were they were secretly kind of calling out to me throughout these discussions and training sessions and saying this, I can't do it for much longer, right?

So now what was interesting is when I looked at this list of 68, quote unquote priorities, they were actually what I would call projects and initiatives, mostly. Okay. But they used the term this organization used the term priority. So whenever these items came to a leader's desk, it said priority project or, you know, a priority for this quarter, whatnot.

So can you imagine the administrator's frustration with every single person from the Home Office is working on multiple projects. Remember it, HR operations, clinical, you know, all of these things and they're telling the administrator to implement it right now. This is the priority is the way that that kind of comes across, whether it's new software, new training, new processes, new equipment, just on and on and on, that is not going to fly.

All right. Now, some of you know that I'm a big fan of EOS, the entrepreneurial operating system from the book traction. And it is really just a fundamental model of how to run your company. It teaches you how to hold meetings and how to do your metrics and your scorecard and project management, your org chart, all these things.

Right. But I went back to look specifically at what it talks about with priorities, because it has specific lessons around that. And the EOS model suggests that companies only have 3 to 7 priorities each quarter. Okay. They call these the rocks. You might hear people say, you know, my quarterly rocks are this, this and this. And so they say that if you have any more than seven, those are not priorities.

They are just a to do list. It's just a to do list. It shouldn't be called priorities because you can't possibly if there's more than seven, you can't possibly say that. Those are all at the top of the list of the to do list, like a priority would be. So EOS actually teaches that less is more because your leaders will actually accomplish the items that are on a small list when there's focus, rather than being spread to thin where they can't get anything done or they can't get it done, well, okay, so we all know what happens when you bounce from one thing to another trying to multitask.

Everything takes longer to get done, rather than if you focus on 1 or 2 tasks only. They get to the finish line and not only do they get to the finish line, they get there much faster and usually better, because I wasn't distracted by all the other conversations and things that I need to be reading and thinking about and talking about and doing.

Okay. So using our employee retention ecosystem model, that helps to truly prioritize retention initiatives okay. So we we built out the model. It does have 18 areas of the business that you need to audit. But we never say well you've got you know, ten of them are a priority and need to be worked on. No. Instead, when you use our audit tool for the ecosystem, that's going to break down whether you are thriving, surviving or wilting in each area.

And then the lowest scores become a priority, only the lowest 1 or 2, for example. So I've got some clients who have brought me in now to go deeper and really do some consulting around certain areas of the model. So for example, they found that onboarding, which we call give guidance in our in our model kind of the the give guidance onboarding section.

They said it is our lowest score and it's causing a lot of that 30 6090 day churn. So Carol, we want you to come in and make this a priority. So we're meeting every month to decide what action to take and to move just that forward. I'm not saying you need to be working on onboarding and your job descriptions and setting new priorities and, and and right.

30:33 - 36:04

Cara Silletto

We pull one maybe two areas at a time. And that's what we're working on. Also because this is just around retention. You've got other programs with software updates and clinical changes and new regulations and things like that. So retention cannot possibly be five of your top priorities because you have other areas of the business that need attention as well.

So for example, in our rubric of the Set Priorities audit, it says that if you are thriving, that is a five out of five, okay. And the way that we define it is the organization clearly communicates priorities and allocates resources effectively to support them. So you've got enough hands, enough bodies, enough dollars, enough time going to the truly clearly communicated priorities.

All right. That would be a five out of five on our rubric for this. If you're a three out of five, that's what we call surviving. You're doing okay. Could be better, but you're keeping your head above

water typically. And that is defined in the rubric as some goals and resources are aligned. But confusion or inconsistency still exists.

So that tends to be the score that we get the most on the audit for this set priorities area. Is that still some confusion and inconsistency exists. All right. Or every once in a while we get a one out of five on the rubric. And that is what we call wilting, right? We're not thriving. We're not even surviving.

We are wilting and headed in the wrong direction. The way we define that one is that the priorities feel scattered. Resources are stretched thin with no clear direction. All right. So hopefully you're definitely not there. Hopefully you're at least at a three out of five. And many of you may even be at a 4 or 5 out of five, which will be great as well.

So think about it. Where is your organization? Are you thriving, surviving, or wilting in this particular area? Now, if you haven't already taken the audit of the employee retention ecosystem, you can find that at magnet. That is our hidden treasure trove at Magnet Culture of downloadable retention resources. And the audit tool has your 18 items there that you can score from the audit, and it'll help you set the right priorities.

Okay. So you want to look at those lowest scores in the audit or take a look at your employee satisfaction surveys. You know. But again, we want to make sure we're not having more than 3 to 7 true priorities each quarter. And that doesn't mean that everyone is finished within the quarter for us. We we run EOS and and for us, a quarterly rock might be to start this project, and then the next quarter might be to finish the project, because we know it's going to take 5 or 6 months and not three.

So it doesn't mean that every priority has to be completed in three months. It's just that we know every single quarter where any of our available time outside of our day to day operations should be spent to move those initiatives and true priorities forward. All right. So your next steps on the two areas that we talked about today, one is to reassess your mission, vision and values to be sure that they are current, compelling and attractive for today's new workforce.

And number two is to pare back your current priority list to what you could actually accomplish this quarter, even if that's just a step toward a larger goal. As I was explaining, it doesn't have to get done, but you want that movement moving forward. All right. So I hope the values and priorities discussion today has been helpful to help recalibrate your thinking around these aspects of company culture and employee retention.

I'm excited to say we are halfway through our year together, and I'm excited to continue this journey with each and every one of you every month as I have a new episode on Wednesdays. So on my next Bridge the Gap podcast episode, I'm going to dive into ways to make that new hire experience, aka onboarding, much more effective for today's workforce.

We'll explore various ways to build more competence and confidence, which is a big one in these new hires, so that you can reduce that 30, 60, 90 day churn and keep your new hires longer. If we can focus on that 30, 60, 90 day retention, that makes a huge difference on our continuity of care and ultimately our quality of care as well.

So that's what we'll be talking about next month. But if you're impatient and you want to learn some more strategies now, you can connect with me on LinkedIn. I'm the only carousel on the planet, so pretty easy to find. It's Cara with a C, and you can also subscribe to our YouTube page at YouTube.com, where we post our own webinars and more content for you for free that you can share with your leadership team as well.

And so if you don't already have a copy of my book, *Staying Power Why Your Employees Leave and How to Keep Them Longer*, it's available on Amazon Kindle and Audible. I'm Cara Silletto, and thanks for listening to this week's Bridge the Gap contributor Wednesday.