

LEADERSHIP & CULTURE

Aligning Company Culture - Its Necessary!

By Leyla Hussein • 24 September 2018



I walked into a design agency once where the walls were covered in bold artwork, the furniture was mismatched and wonderful, and the whole place hummed with a kind of relaxed energy. Then I met a company the same week, a financial firm, all quiet corridors and closed doors and precision. Both cultures were exactly right, because each one matched the brand it existed to serve. Culture is not decoration. It is the personality of the business made visible.

Just like people, companies have personalities. That personality is the sum of a business's values, principles and attitudes, and together they make up the brand. A brand should show in how a company behaves and operates, and that reflection is its culture.

What company culture is

Company culture is the environment your employees work in, the physical and the intangible elements around them. It is fair to expect a graphic design company to have a culture that promotes creativity: the tangible part might be abstract art around the office, the intangible part simply rewarding original thinking. A financial services firm, by contrast, will lean toward a more [structured, autocratic culture](#). That does not mean every single person at the design company must be an artist. It means every one of them should understand and support that creative aspect.

Why define it

In any company it is the employees who deliver the work, and that work becomes the brand. So it is only sensible to create an atmosphere that supports the brand's traits. If that environment is inconsistent because the culture is poor, the brand's reliability weakens with it. Being clear about your culture lets you deliver the brand more accurately, gives your current people the conditions to work at their best, and projects the right ideals to future customers and employees alike. Think of it as a chain: the leader's values translate into the brand, the brand is delivered by employees, and the employees are supported by the culture. So the culture has to reflect the brand.

Developing and implementing it

Culture can be genuinely hard to build and maintain, especially for smaller businesses, because doing it well is both costly and time-consuming. Part of it involves tangible assets, the way you design your office or the equipment you buy. Part of it is intangible, the [leadership style](#), the attitudes, the values, the procedures, all of which take time to embed and to keep alive.

Bringing it together

In short, company culture [helps your people do their best work](#) in a way that fits the brand. It is made of tangible and intangible elements, from office layout to management style, and while both cost time and money, both enforce the right culture. Get the fit right and you portray the brand accurately to customers and employees, raise your chances of winning both, and set off a virtuous circle that keeps putting the [right people in the right job](#) to deliver the right message to the right customers.

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