

A Big-Picture View

Vol. 56 No. 6

Define the why, how and what of your organization to provide employees with a big-picture view.

6/1/2011

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Employees typically focus on daily tasks without an understanding of the big picture—the core principles and goals that should unite and guide everyone. When employees understand how their daily activities align with the organization’s purpose, values and goals, then work becomes more meaningful. And when employees see the organization from this broad perspective, they focus on results that make a difference.

To gain a big-picture view of your company, look at the “why,” “how” and “what.”

The Why

The “why” of an organization defines its purpose. Businesses exist to make a profit, but they also exist to make a difference or to provide a service or product that meets a need. Through work, individuals can make a difference and be part of a meaningful legacy.

Ask yourself and your employees “Why does the organization exist? Why is the work important?” After asking the second question several times, you will uncover the collective contribution of the organization—its purpose.

Employees must understand how their daily activities help to achieve the purpose. Once you and your employees have identified the “why,” communicate the purpose and live by it. Do the people who work for you genuinely care about the cause? Are their daily activities contributing to that purpose?

Doing meaningful work leads to a prosperous life for the individual and the organization.

The How

The “how” is the collection of values that inspire and guide behavior—the organization’s guiding principles. These layers of principles form your competitive advantage.

The “how” creates the mind-set that influences attitudes, drives behavior, and thus characterizes the organization and its employees. It’s not just what you do in life that matters; it’s how you do it that can make the difference.

The three layers of principles are the organization’s distinctive, strategic and engaging values.

The organization’s distinctive values make up its philosophy. The philosophy is the prime, distinguishing value or set of principles that



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guide how employees do their work. Consider what makes your organization different from other organizations doing similar work.

Strategic values guide how employees must behave to achieve the organization's vision and goals. To determine your strategic priorities, ask employees these questions: To achieve our vision and goals, what standards should guide how we do our work? And what key values, if followed, would help the organization compete and thrive?

Engaging values are the universal themes that contribute to building a culture of highly engaged and motivated employees. Universal priorities consist of the following six values:

Fit. Am I a fit with the organization and its culture? Is the purpose of the organization meaningful to me? Are the values of the company in harmony with my values? Am I a fit with my job? Is my work significant, challenging and the best use of my abilities?

Trust. Do I have a trusting workplace where leaders have integrity and are honest, respected and fair?

Caring. Do I have a caring workplace where my peers and managers feel like family, and they encourage collaboration and teamwork? Do I have friends at work?

Openness. Am I informed, and does my manager listen?

Development. Does the company support individual development? Am I developing and growing in ways that nurture achievement and mastery?

Ownership. Do I feel like an owner? Do I have autonomy where I participate in decision-making, have responsibilities and have flexibility in how I achieve my goals?

Ask employees to rate themselves on these six priorities and discuss with them how you can help improve areas of weakness. Work is more than an economic transaction. Addressing workers' social and human needs can help achieve optimal performance.

The What

The final ingredient of the big picture is the "what" of the organization—its vision and goals. Employees must align their actions with the vision and goals. A clear picture of the vision and goals establishes desired results. Employees must understand what actions will support the health of the organization.

The "what" provides quantifiable measures to gauge results. Employees must be able to make smart choices in how they spend their time. With a clear vision and goals—the "what"—expressed in ways that are descriptive and quantifiable, employees can construct individual objectives and gauge how well they are making a difference through their work.

Put the Picture Together

When employees have a passion for the "why," live by the "how" and focus on accomplishing the "what" of the organization, then they see

the big picture. Employees don't need to be micromanaged. Motivated by "why," guided by "how" and targeted to achieve "what," they can evaluate their daily activities to determine what they should be doing and how they should be doing it.

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