

Internal Comms Hub
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Understand cultural differences for clearer communication

In the *Understanding your company's culture: Tools to make HR practices strategic* session, Sheila L. Margolis, president of the [Workplace Culture Institute](#) explained how some describe a company's "culture" definition as an "internal brand".

Highlighting existing companies who've done an impressive job of creating unique, inspiring workplaces, Margolis mentioned how one restaurant at [the Inn at Little Washington](#) operates using a "mood-rating" system, whereby each table of customers is given a rating on a scale of 1-10 for mood.

If the table's collective mood is judged by the employees to be too low, they get special attention to help boost their score. No one is "allowed" to leave the restaurant without a high score of 9 or 10. Could you apply this level of service within your organization, or to show effective your communication understanding has been across the company, or to show effective your communication understanding has been across the company?

Thinking like Spielberg At animation studio [Pixar](#), Margolis reports that all employees, as part of its training process, complete filmmaking training. "This is to encourage all employees to think like a filmmaker," she says.

Margolis also mentioned the progressive recruitment practices at US supermarket, [Whole Foods Market](#). Because of the emphasis placed on teamwork at the organization, job candidates are required as part of the assessment process to spend time having work experience working with the group they could potentially join as an employee.

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At the end of the probation period, instead of managers and HR deciding on whether to employ the candidate, the decision is given to the team itself. The idea being that the team members have been able to gauge how well the new person would work and fit within the team and company culture.

Aligning HR with communication The Hub spoke with Margolis after her presentation and asked her how HR could work with internal and external communicators to align its processes with company goals and culture.

"First, HR can lead the process for defining the organization's core culture – its vital purpose, distinctive philosophy and strategic priorities. Then, HR can encourage leaders throughout the organization to talk about the core culture principles so a consistent message is shared," Margolis said.

"Meetings, written messages and the intranet should reflect the core culture principles. And leaders and managers should reinforce the values by living them each day."

Aligning with external messages "Marketing and PR should also reflect images to the public that are aligned with the core culture," Margolis said. "The image that's communicated externally should be aligned with the customer experience."

She continued, "Communication promotes knowledge and understanding in an organization which can enhance employee satisfaction – a basis for employee engagement. Sharing the message of what distinctively defines the organization and what will enable it to thrive is essential for a unified perspective."

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