

What I've Learned About the Power of Culture

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I used to think a good company culture was about having good morale. I've since learned that a good culture will create good morale, and a bad culture will destroy it. Morale is a result and culture is the basis of the road map to affect morale. A healthy and focused culture helps employees work at a place that feeds their soul, challenges their skills and is rewarding. This pandemic knocked us all for a loop, and will be a good realization of what a solid culture is all about. Let's consider at two dilemmas.

This week I saw Mark Cuban (gazillionaire Shark, Dallas Mavs owner, etc.) on a cable news show espousing that the way companies respond to the Coronavirus "will define their brand for decades". His point was that returning employees to the workplace is not only a safety issue, but one that reveals the culture of the business. Returning employees too soon, putting them at risk in order to get going and earn more money, shows where a business' values are (and are not). And that trait of the brand will stick for years to come.

A friend I spoke to last week told me her CEO posed this question to her and her fellow executive team members, "We can either furlough half of our workforce or all of us can take a 50% pay cut, which do you want to do"?

I learned about culture like we all have – through experience, and seeing how it was regarded or ignored. A former boss of mine had the philosophy that "the people make the culture and there is nothing we can do about it". Do you agree with this? I saw his point about the people, but did not buy the "nothing we can do about it" part. I believe that if we allow "the people" to shape the culture we run a huge risk. Who says they know best? Who says they have good intentions? Who says? Who says? Leadership should say, that's who! If that shaping is not deliberate or goal-oriented it will be up for grabs. That's a risk any business owner cannot afford to take. So, what do we do?

We get deliberate. We define who we are, why we do what we do, what we stand for, will not tolerate, and what we value. That's the starting point – a deliberate identity.

In closing, I have one question: Who do you want to work for? The company that rushes their team back to the office too soon? Or the company whose executives immediately and unanimously agreed to a 50% pay cut in order to not furlough their team? The answer's easy – the one with the great culture!

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