

WITH VARIABLE LABOR, MAKE CULTURE A CONSTANT
By John Johnson

The global marketplace is facing a rapidly changing labor environment that is perhaps unprecedented. For instance, the U.S. Department of Labor states that on average, Americans will change careers 5 to 7 times during their lifetimes. Presently, 30 percent of the workforce changes jobs every 12 months.

Another factor, at least in the Western world, is what some experts have termed “Reduced Workforce Participation.” This refers to the impending massive unearned inherited wealth transfer that may reduce

for many people the necessity or incentive to work. Inheriting money and other resources from parents, individuals may be able to forgo the everyday reality of going to work, at least in the traditional sense.

This raises a strategic issue: How can businesses and organizations succeed in making expected work output a constant when labor is a variable? This is problem new for many work environments, but it is not unheard of. For instance, college athletic coaches manage to maintain winning cultures despite having to replace 25 percent (or more) of their most experienced players with rookies every year! If they fail at this, the coaches are terminated and someone else takes over this challenge.

The unchanging culture of the U.S. Marine Corps can be stated this way: “Find the willpower you never knew you had, the strength you never knew you needed, bonds that never break, a lifelong desire to serve a purpose far greater than self.” This branch of the U.S. military has succeeded in doing this for many years – and with a largely teen-aged labor force.

With these variables in recruiting and retaining workplace talent, how can companies succeed in sustaining their culture and the products or services they offer? It requires aligning management values with employee behaviors. Here are just a few of them, along with biblical principles that support them:

Clearly Define Organizational Values. Ensure that management values are clearly articulated and accessible to all employees. Following His resurrection, Jesus Christ made certain they understood what their mission was. He said, “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations...teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19-20). His followers are still doing this today.

Integrate Values into Company Culture. Foster a culture that embodies the organization’s values. This involves modeling the desired behaviors at all levels of management, integrating values into training programs, and building a positive work environment. “For you have been called for this purpose, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you would follow in His steps” (1 Peter 2:21).

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Communicate Values Effectively. Regularly communicate the company's values through various channels, such as team meetings, internal newsletters, and digital platforms. Use real-life examples to illustrate how values translate into actions and decisions. "Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people" (Matthew 4:23).

By integrating organizational values into various aspects of the workplace, from communication to performance management, and by providing ongoing support and reinforcement, management can effectively shape employee actions and foster a culture that reflects the desired values.

© 2024. John Johnson is a businessman, philanthropist, the author of *Love As a Management Practice (LAMP)*, which has also been developed into a curriculum for business and professional leaders. He has been actively involved with CBMC for many years.

Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. What changes in the contemporary labor environment have you observed? For instance, many retail establishments – especially restaurants – are finding it difficult to hire enough employees to properly serve their customers. Why do you think this is, and what other examples have you seen?
2. Does your company or organization have a culture that is readily understood by staff who if needed could clearly communicate foundational concerns such as mission, vision and values? Explain your answer.
3. When an organization experiences considerable turnover and change in its staffing, why do you think trying to maintain a constant culture is so critical?
4. Do you think biblical principles can be applied to the 21st century marketplace? Why or why not? If so, can you think of any other principles from the Bible that would apply to establishing and sustaining a stable corporate culture?

Challenge for This Week

Take some time this week to consider how you are – or could be – contributing to the culture and work environment in your organization. If you do not think its mission, vision and values are clearly articulated and understood, what steps might you take to help in bringing this about? Perhaps you can interact with some coworkers – or individuals that report to you – and discuss how collectively you can become a positive influence in promoting a strong and positive culture for your workplace, especially if you desire to be effective in serving as an ambassador for Jesus Christ.

NOTE:

For more about what the Bible says, consider the following passages:
Proverbs 6:20-23; Matthew 5:38-48, 7:12; Romans 13:8-10; James 2:8-10

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