

# How to Create a Positive Culture for Your Company

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## Introduction

When you think of “culture”, what comes into mind? An organisation’s culture is a key driving force for the environment that employees operate in. It influences many aspects, from the way people interact with each other to the way clients are treated. Creating a certain culture for an organisation is not easy and needs to take intentional efforts on everyone’s part. Although it is not easy to create one, there needs to be an all-inclusive communication (top-down and bottom-up) on the desired environment: a negative culture is easy to slip into and can be difficult to get out of. In this article, I will be exploring the importance of having a positive work culture and how culture, in general, can have a massive impact, both good and bad, on your organisation.

## What is organisational culture?

In the famous words of Deal and Kennedy (2000), culture is “the way things are done around here”. Kane-Urrabazo also defines culture as, “the personality of an organisation, having a major influence on both employee satisfaction and organisational success”. Organisational culture includes the expectations, experiences, philosophy, as well as the values that guide member behaviour in an organisation. This culture manifests in various ways such as employee self-image, the organisation’s inner environment, interactions with the outside world and the future expectations that are set out by the company’s leaders.

As with “culture” in the more general sense, organisational culture, according to The Business Dictionary (2019), is based on shared attitudes, beliefs, customs, and written and unwritten rules that have been developed over time and are considered valid. Culture also includes the organisation’s vision, values, norms, systems, symbols, language, assumptions, beliefs, and habits. Culture does not come with a manual and this is what may make it a bit more difficult to deal with when problems arise as a result of it.

## What influences the culture of an organisation?

Something as simple as the symbolism that is portrayed at work can influence the way that environment is experienced. An example is, if you were to walk into a building and most of the images were of colonial days with hardly any images of present times, the environment of that company would most likely not match the contemporary age that we live in.

## How to create a positive culture

Creating a positive environment is not only at the onus of an organisation’s leadership. Everyone should play a role in ensuring that the environment that they spend most of their days in is one that is

comfortable to be in. Below are some ways that can be implemented to ensure that the culture is positive and is one that helps the growth of the organisation and its employees.

### **Role modelling and visibility**

As a leader at any level, your employees look to your behaviour as a model of what is and what is not acceptable behaviour in the workplace. When senior management is observed by employees to take the ethical route, it sends a positive message for all employees. It is like when a child learns their behaviours from their surroundings but mostly at home, learning from their parents. Being a leader means being intentional about the way you conduct yourself and treat others.

Kane-Urrabazo (2006), reinforces that “managers are always under the magnifying glass, with each action carefully scrutinised by subordinates. They must exercise caution when making decisions, ensuring that fairness and equitability exist among staff and that ethical standards are upheld on a continual basis”. This goes to show that integrity is an important attribute that managers need to have. It would be unfortunate for employees to exhibit the behaviour that does not portray the organisation’s values as a result of them learning from the behaviours that they see the managers portraying.

### **Communication**

Ethical ambiguities can be reduced by creating an organisational code of ethics. It should state the organisation’s primary values and the ethical rules that employees are expected to follow. Having rules that are readily available in writing makes following the rules much easier. It is difficult when there are blurred lines as to how one can dress, speak and do in the workplace is different people have been told a different version of that rule. When this is in writing, everyone can be on the same page and take away any space for anyone to be unsure of what is expected.

In addition to writing the rules down, there should be verbal communication about what these rules mean. Holding meetings where these can be discussed may be beneficial for employees to ask questions or raise concerns about some of the statements they may be confused about. However, it is important to remember that a code of ethics is worthless if top management fails to model ethical behaviours. This goes back to the previous point of one being intentional about the behaviours they portray in the workplace.

### **Ethics Training**

Hosting training sessions such as seminars and workshops may be a good way to ensure that all employees are involved in working towards the image that the management is hoping to achieve. Use these training sessions to reinforce the organisation’s standards of conduct, to clarify what practices are and are not permissible, and to address possible ethical dilemmas.

During these sessions, role-playing may be used as a way to interact with each other and put different scenarios underplay while giving everyone a chance to comment on what was wrong or right and why. It is also beneficial to educate employees on how to treat others they are not usually familiar with. The

environment does not end indoors that specific organisation but people on the outside as well can see and sense what goes on by the way they are treated.

### **Rewarding actions**

Performance appraisals of managers should include the evaluation of how his or her decisions measure up against the organisation's code of ethics. Appraisals must include the means taken to achieve goals as well as the ends. People who act ethically should be visibly rewarded for their behaviour. By doing this, other employees may be inspired to do the right thing as well and by rewarding in a way that everyone can see, reinforces the behaviour shown by the recipient.

Just as importantly, unethical acts should be punished. In doing this, there must be consistency in how people are punished, as once favouritism is shown, the whole idea behind this act, dies. Everyone must know what may happen if they do not act accordingly and that it is not easy to get away with it because once it slips, it is easier to repeat the actions.

### **Protective mechanisms**

The organisation needs to provide formal mechanisms so that employees can discuss ethical dilemmas and report unethical behaviour without fear of reprimand. This might include the creation of ethical counsellors, ombudsmen, or ethical officers.

### **Conclusion**

Organisational culture is an interesting topic that each organisation should look closely at. Its performance may be influenced by the way business is conducted within its walls. Whatever happens inside has the potential to spill over to the outside. It is never too late to take a look at the way the organisation is running and trace back where these results may be stemming from. A positive environment brings out positive people who are positive about their work and where they do it.

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