4 Tools That Help Establish Culture

Tool #1: Let Feedback Do Just That, Feed You!

It is easier to hear feedback when we agree with the feedback, or it is given in a way that makes it more digestible. However, creating a space for people to share feedback especially when the feedback is off-based, ill-timed, or poorly given is important.

What about their feedback might you agree with? What bits and pieces could be valuable? The better you can understand where the feedback is coming from, the more likely you are to learn something valuable, which informs how you respond and move forward. You don't need to agree with the feedback all the time or how it was presented to you. Feedback is meant for growth, not as a form of criticism.

Tool #2: Audit Roles and Responsibilities for Alignment and Clarity!

One of the most predictable and common causes of conflict is misaligned expectations. This starts with individual roles and responsibilities as the baseline for expectations and clarity around tasks and collaboration within teams. When people know and understand what is expected of them and those around them, it creates trust. If you do not have clear job descriptions and expectations for each role, you ought to create these immediately.

How often do you revisit the job description after they are hired? What becomes standard practice within the job functions isn't always consistent with how it started out. It is possible that roles and responsibilities shift and adapt to best meet the needs of the team and organization. Team members must be clear on their own job roles and responsibilities to feel effective, productive and valuable in their role.

Make it an annual practice to audit job descriptions, roles and responsibilities. Ask each team member to review their job description and notate the inconsistencies between what is written and what is practiced. After you review the job description, have a conversation about what changes need to be made to bring what is written into alignment with what is being practiced.

Tool #3: Write Down 3 Strengths

As human beings, we are wired to be threat detectors, and with that comes a natural tendency to focus on what is wrong with people and our environment. This mindset although dangerous at times, evolved to help us in many areas of our lives. We are resilient beings, we are built for challenges, and we easily spot where we need to make changes or adjustments to be more effective. However, when this mindset extends to people (and it often does), we create a culture where there is a lack of safety.

When we feel constantly monitored, scrutinized, and criticized, we will start walking on eggshells, constantly suspicious and cautious, or even worse, get defensive. This is no good for a culture. You can easily start developing a strength-based mindset to increase your tendency to appreciate and celebrate individual strengths, which will increase safety and trust in your team and organization. Become strength-based by writing down what people do well, celebrating them, and focusing on how to build up people skills.

Tool #4: Restore Behaviors and Solve Problems, Not People

Remember, our tendency to want to fix and address problems is a natural human response. However, we often conflate process problems, system problems, resource problems, or execution problems, to being people problems. We attribute someone's behavioral flaw to a character or identity flaw. When we make it a person problem, it becomes just that, personal, which raises defenses and often makes what would be a solvable issue, a more complicated one. When these types of issues and problems occur, we tend to respond from a fight/flight/freeze response leading to defensiveness, attacks, or counterattacks, and sometimes pretending the problem isn't there.

When we separate our judgments of behavior from our judgments of people, we increase safety and trust, which leads to awareness and realistic perceptions. When people feel like others don't view them as a problem person, they maintain their dignity, allowing them to feel more empowered and included.