

HOW HEALTHY IS YOUR CULTURE?

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According to Gallup's 2013 *State of the American Workplace* report, only three out of ten U.S. workers were involved in and enthusiastic about their places of employment. The other 70 percent are either not engaged (52 percent) or actively disengaged (18 percent). This lack of engagement, which likely holds true in the printing industry, points to corporate cultures in which employees don't feel supported, listened to, and acknowledged.

Corporate culture may seem like a nebulous concept, but the best companies recognize a culture's critical connection to financial performance. An 11-year study by John Kotter and James Heskett looked at the effects of culture in 207 companies from 22 industries. The results, published in their book *Corporate Culture and Performance* (Free Press, 2011), showed that companies that managed their corporate culture significantly outperformed similar companies that did not. The right corporate culture can be one of a business's most critical assets.

Many companies are oblivious to their culture—the values, beliefs, norms, and rituals shared by employees that influence their behaviors. The power of culture largely goes unnoticed until companies try to implement a new strategy, such as Lean manufacturing, that requires thinking and behaviors that may be incompatible with the existing corporate values and norms. That conflict can make the strategy unsustainable.

Where Do You Stand?

The health of cultures can be measured and judged to be negative, neutral, or positive. Companies with a positive culture tend to see employees as their most valuable asset. They have clear objectives and push employees to meet them, but they are sensitive to personal and group needs. Collaboration is a hallmark, with employees often demonstrating high productivity and company loyalty. Companies articulate and reinforce their values and expect employees to make decisions based on those values. Conversely, a negative culture also guides actions, but in a counterproductive way that undermines management's efforts to enact meaningful change.

Culture is built, in part, on the employees' observations of how managers spend their time. Whether managers consciously intend to or not, their words and actions speak volumes to the underlying belief and value system. Employees listen to the words, but they watch far more closely the

actions of the people responsible for leading the organization to discern what underlying values truly guide the organization.

Kevin Cooper points out in his book, *Lean Printing: Cultural Imperatives for Success* (Printing Industries Press, 2010) that people are generally recognized as the most underutilized resource within most organizations. The same effort spent on getting the most out of capital investment like a printing press needs to go into establishing a return on human investment. However, this can only be done if companies understand the health of their current culture.

Do You Have a Credibility Gap?

An established way of measuring culture and employee engagement is with an employee survey. A survey can reveal a huge difference between what a company says its values are and what employees believe its values are. That's the sort of credibility gap that produces the disengagement found in the Gallup report.

To assist member companies in being more aware of their culture, Printing Industries of America has introduced the Culture Audit Tool. This collection of 33 statements lets managers reflect on how their employees would assess the company in these areas:

- Mission, Purpose, and Success
- Communication, Respect, and Trust
- Team and Empowerment
- Training, Development, and Support
- Corporate Behavior and Ethics
- Compensation and Benefits

Managers are asked to predict the extent of their typical employee's agreement or disagreement with each statement. For example, you would guess how your employees will respond to the statement, "I know our company's mission (what we are trying to accomplish)" or this, "Management has a good track record of acting on employee ideas."

Member firms can access the free tool at <http://prmt.in/cultureaudit>.

Companies can choose on their own to ask their employees to respond to the same statements so that gaps in management perception become obvious. Collecting the input of your employees is only recommended, however, if leaders are committed to both sharing the results and using them to take action.

SOLUTIONS

A way to get further insight into your culture is to measure the satisfaction of your customers. Our new Customer Feedback Management Program reveals your customers' opinions of your product quality and service. If your culture places a priority on customers and continuous improvement, then customers should like dealing with your company and report that your employees are responsive to their needs. The customized consumer feedback survey is branded to your company and delivers feedback via a built-in management tool. Contact Ed Gleeson at egleeson@printing.org for more information.

Leaders are responsible for forging a strong culture and the benefits that come with it—employee retention, success in recruiting talented people, a collaborative environment where employees volunteer and implement improvement ideas, high levels of productivity, and satisfied customers. It's time to give your company culture a checkup and make sure its bringing out the best in your people.

FOR MORE INFORMATION



PIA Culture Audit Tool
<http://prnt.in/cultureaudit>



Lean Printing: Cultural Imperatives for Success
<http://prnt.in/ZyA>



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