Organizational Culture

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Fence Company: Our Organization's Culture

As we continue to develop and grow our company, how is understanding our organizational culture and the impact on performance important? Organizational culture can be defined in many ways, and its effect on our company is immensely important. Organizational culture is a set of values, beliefs, assumptions, and symbols that define how we conduct business (Barney, 1986). Positive organizational cultures have shown positive economic impacts on companies by enabling the company to be positive in every aspect of its business, including employees, customers, and suppliers (Barney, 1986). Understanding our organizational culture is important in areas of the creation by our founder's values, the onboarding process, and cultural communication in the workplace.

Understanding how and why our organizational culture exists as it does today can be traced back to the founder's values. According to Bauer and Erdogan (2017), this and the industry demands are key to the creation of our organization's culture. Our fence company was founded on the principles of serving the customer first and taking care of people. This is evident in all aspects of the way we do business, from our industry-leading warranty to people-first policies in the workplace. While our company is only a few years old, it quickly turned into a strong culture. A strong culture can have either a positive or a negative impact on the business and is one where the founder's values are embodied by all the employees (Bauer & Erdogan, 2017). In our case, the strong culture of the "customer is always right" is a positive instance, and its impact is noticeable in the increasing number of customer referrals year after year.

Another important area to highlight and understand the effects on our organizational culture is the indoctrination process, or onboarding. "Onboarding is the process of introducing a new employee into his or her new job; acquainting that employee with the organization's goals,

values, rules and policies, and processes; and socializing the employee into an organizational culture" (Watkins, 2016, as cited in Caldwell & Peters, 2018, p. 28). Though our company does not have an official onboarding process, I did get a mentor who showed me the company policies and the right way to do business. This very much included customer service and top-notch quality work being the highest priorities in our day-to-day jobs. Our approach to job-related questions do involve all decisions being made by the owner; however, he frequently solicits employee input to solve the problems. I believe this aspect does increase the amount of trust employees have in management. This also is why we have a strong service with our proactive approach to solving customer problems, usually before they even become problems at all (Bauer & Erdogan, 2017).

In addition, employers who personalize their interactions with employees and have a high degree of trust in their employees typically result in happier employees who stay with the company longer (Caldwell & Peters, 2018). This company approaches this aspect of employee relations as one of the most important aspects from the owner down. This was very clear from the first day I started working here, throughout the onboarding process, and has not diminished in the past eight months. This helps us as a company as all current employees are more innovative than my previous experiences due to the high trust created by the employer, which can directly contribute to a more profitable company (Caldwell & Peters, 2018). Throughout my onboarding experience, I assess that our company has maintained the people-oriented culture that was strongly created by its founder.

You can easily determine our company's culture by observing the employees, including how they interact with each other, behave at work, and approach their work (Bauer & Erdogan, 2017). Our company does not have a written or communicated mission statement, stories, nor a

real workspace so I will focus on the rituals as the method of how we communicate our culture. The biggest ritual we have is first thing in the morning, the owner of the company will put a location and type of fence or work we will be performing into a group text. Then all the employees will say if they are able to work that day and what time they can be there. If you are unable to work that day or need to show up later, no reason is required, and no pressure is applied by anyone in the company to change your mind. This allows complete personal flexibility and really solidifies the people-oriented culture we maintain daily. This fair and equal treatment of all employees is an indication of a positive leader-member exchange which does, in turn, lead to better employee task performance (He et al., 2017). I attribute this largely to employee satisfaction with the company, but also employees are more focused on the task they are performing when they are not distracted by tasks requiring completion in their personal life.

Another ritual and visible aspect of our culture is the daily rule reminder. Every day when we arrive at work, we sit around the trailer and either the owner or manager hand every employee a bottle of water when they show up. There we all drink the water because it is very hot in southern Georgia, and we talk about non-work-related topics, usually family or weekend plans. When this is done, the owner or manager reminds us of the only rule we have at this company: we are here to install a quality fence and make the customer happy. That is, there is no lengthy employee policy handbook or even a small list of policies; just do quality work that pleases the customer. The owner's philosophy is that if every employee makes decisions at work based on following that one rule, no other rules are necessary, and it is highly effective. As Barney (1986) discusses, having a management team with strong values that they instill in their employees will lead to the financial success of a corporation. This is evident in our company

with no rules yet very high customer satisfaction and referral rate. Therefore, I do agree these external symbols reflect the underlying values and assumptions of our fence company.

The area I would focus on strengthening in our culture is in the onboarding process. Now that we are growing as a company and hiring new employees, I recommend creating a formal onboarding program to ensure new employees feel welcome and understand their role in the company. I would do this by creating an effective training program to ensure employees understand the new norms and expected behavior to really accept this change in our culture (Bauer & Erdogan, 2017). The role of an onboarding process is important to a new employee effectively transitioning as the most productive member of our organization that they can be to add value and wealth to the company (Caldwell & Peters, 2018). Having a strong onboarding process will develop employees who have a strong commitment to the company, high job satisfaction, and will stay with the company longer by effectively communicating the company's culture and their role in the company while building positive relationships (Bauer & Erdogan, 2017).

Another way to effectively strengthen the onboarding system will be to promote a new manager from within the company to lead the second team with the acquisition of the new trailer as the business grows. This new manager could serve as a positive role model who fully embraces the change in the onboarding process, as Bauer and Erdogan (2017) describe in the six steps to culture change. Promoting a manager from within the company is an effective way to build trust within all the employees, not just with the person who is promoted (Ganeson et al., 1993).

In conclusion, understanding our organizational culture is important in areas of the creation by our founder's values, the onboarding process, and cultural communication in the

workplace in order to validate a positive culture as our business expands. Having a good

understanding of the culture within an organization allows managers to ensure employee

behavior continues to sustain the founder's strong vision of customer and employee satisfaction.

If we can continue the strong and people-oriented culture within this fence company while

strengthening the onboarding process, the company will continue the growing success it has seen

in its first few years of existence.

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