

How to establish—and keep — a strong corporate culture

By David Robinson



Whether it is written, spoken, or posted on a company billboard, your corporate culture plays a big role in determining how successful your business will be. Corporate culture is established by having strong leadership with a set of core values that represent the actual business itself, including how it operates and what it stands for. The leaders of an organization must embody these core values in everything they do, at all times.



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There are a few key attributes necessary for a company's core values to be effectively implemented: Everyone in the organization must understand them, live them and never compromise; they have to represent attainable and realistic behavioral traits; and there needs to be a constant pursuit to enhance them.

Achieving that will be done if the employees of an organization are inspired by the actions that represent the core values. These actions will help employees clearly understand their meaning. If a core value is honesty and integrity, for example, always do the right thing. If community service is a core value, build in opportunities for employees to volunteer with nonprofit organizations.

Whatever your core values are, be sure that you define them, talk about them, lead by them, and give examples of what they mean to the organization. You will need to make decisions every day that support exactly what these values represent.

When it comes to employment, companies that are serious about integrating their values into operations should make hiring and end-of-employment decisions based on these core values. For example, if a business wants to adhere to their value system, they can't hire an A player who doesn't reflect the core values. That will cause the entire culture of an organization to be compromised.

Articulating the company culture often starts with an overarching goal or vision statement, and then details some of the specific values. Using Rogers & Gray as an example, everything we do is governed by one simple guiding principle - to do the right thing for our people and our clients. Here are some specific ways we use our core values to guide our business operations:





Rogers & Gray is only as good as the people we employ, so we strive to hire and develop talented professionals with strong character. We foster an environment that is challenging, fun, respectful, supportive and one that provides the right people with the opportunity to grow professionally.

Client understanding and advocacy is paramount, so the starting point of every client interaction is to assess and understand their needs.

It is crucial that we have the confidence of our people and our clients, so consistency and accountability are keys to the way we do business. We conduct ourselves with integrity and are authentic and sincere. We keep our promises and honor our commitments to our clients, to each other and to our business partners.

We work to inspire excellence in ourselves and in others, therefore it is each employee's responsibility to both drive and embrace progress. We are accessible and accountable, and when making decisions, we are thoughtful to take the right path, not the easy path.

Rogers & Gray is committed to the future strength of our business, the advancement of our co-workers and the evolving protection of our clients. We are committed to accomplishing these goals by fostering an environment of empowerment, collaboration, innovation and professional growth.

It is also important that Rogers & Gray be a good corporate citizen. Put simply, we support our co-workers' and our clients' efforts towards the betterment of our internal and external communities.

Once you have established your organization's company culture and the means by which you will live out those core values, how do you keep them vibrant and top-of-mind for the entire team?

From the top down, everyone needs to conduct themselves in a manner that conforms to those core values. People get chances, of course, but the expectation is there that they will adhere to core values — after all, they are what defines us.

A strong company culture will serve to enhance the business. A thriving culture creates an environment for

employees where they want to work hard and be a part of something greater than themselves — because it empowers and inspires them to do their best. It also creates a corporate family bond where they all pull together — the power of a special environment like this cannot be underestimated.

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