

## Improving the Organizational Culture

By Maureen Tazzioli

*"You can't do today's job with yesterday's methods and be in business tomorrow."*

– Anonymous

Who defines your organizational culture? To some, the answer may appear rather obvious – *"Why it's the people...the staff...the men and women who work together using their professional expertise, skills and abilities to benefit their clientele, their customers*

*– the buying public."*

If your answer to the above question would be similar in nature, then let me ask you this. How successful is your organization when it comes to attracting and retaining staff members?

During my recent travels I have been privileged to converse with some of the most intelligent business leaders from across Canada. With each conversation details regarding current business practices and long term organizational projections were shared. With great interest I began to notice some similarities between all the conversations I was having with various individuals. So much so that I have created a few ideas to help you and your organization attract and retain staff members.

1. **People desire to feel valued and appreciated** – Whether our job duties involve cleaning dishes, investing mutual funds from high profile clients, or working as professional administrators in executive offices, many of us wish to be and should be treated with appreciation and respect. Our value as individuals living and working in a diverse society should be consistent regardless as to the duties of our jobs. Wishing to make a significant difference, daily contributions become the stepping stones to a legacy we leave behind. Organizations that recognize the importance of acknowledging individual and teamwork contributions while giving credit where credit is due will be the ones that continue to attract and retain high quality personnel.
2. **Create growing opportunities** – I am always baffled why it is that during a job interview a potential employee is asked this question. *"Where do you see yourself in a year? In five years?"* Admittedly there are only so many ways an organization can learn of the seriousness of a potential employee especially if planning for long-term growth, however, I cannot help but to wonder if a more appropriate question should be asked from the interviewee, such as: *"if I am hired, how long will it take your organization to grant me additional learning opportunities, or a different position, or should I assume that the position I am applying for today will be the one I will be forced to stay in for the rest of my time here?"* Simply put, if there are no growing opportunities for employees, two things will happen. Either their individual productivity levels will slow down to a crawl and job dissatisfaction takes over, or they become passive in their actions and behaviors towards their co-workers and their caseload, forcing morale to significantly drop.

If however, an organization is looking to attract and retain employees then they must be able to recognize the importance of allowing educational learning opportunities for all employees. Getting employees involved in the early stages of their employment is a step in the right

direction. Consider asking each staff member to list on their employee profile the top three positions they would like to work towards within the organization as a whole. See what their willingness is to further their education whether through night classes or on-line correspondence. Ensure that whatever course of action they choose for themselves; they receive an unlimited amount of encouragement and support. Show you care, grant them various opportunities to get involved. Consider having them become an active member on a committee or have them take a leadership role on a project best suited for their qualifications. Lastly, offer them the opportunity to fulfill a few of the job duties reflective of the position they desire to be in. Keep in mind that in order for this to work flawlessly, the organizational culture must support active job shadowing scenarios as a means of growing their staff.

3. **Apply some much needed flexibility** – According to the American Heritage Dictionary, the word *flexibility* means, “Capable of being bent or flexed; pliable. Susceptible to influence or persuasion; tractable. Responsive to change, adaptable.” With this definition in mind, how flexible is your organization in its ability to work through daily situations? Are your rules and policies so engraved in stone that there is little room for common sense or flexibility to enter?

Contrary to what some may think, rules and policies are a necessary factor in establishing safe and protective measures for all people in any workplace culture. However, a little flexibility in some things can make a world of difference as the solutions may surface more frequently, instead of spending time and money trying to defend outdated, ineffective policies.

A great way to introduce a little flexibility into the minds of others is to play a game I like to call, “What would you do?” All that is required for this game to be successful is a little creative fun. To begin, it is best to have every respected and trustworthy manager and/or supervisor from each department write an email consisting of 3-5 questions specific to that department. Once received each employee is asked to provide their best answer in a fun, but realistic fashion.

For every response handed in a numbered ticket is presented to the employee keeping all things anonymous unless their idea was chosen as the best one for the situation. If chosen then their name is entered into a draw for a nice gift certificate somewhere. Now keep in mind that the central focus of this activity is to open up communication in a fun, enjoyable way, while at the same time, discovering possible solutions to situations that may require just a bit of common sense. Therefore, expect to offer no criticism but rather to just have some fun searching out the best solutions.

Every week the same thing would take place only with different questions or scenarios being asked. By the end of one year you could have a great little booklet of healthy ways to remain flexible in times of uncertainty.

Helping to improve organizational cultures, this strategy can go a long way in improving communications between the various departments. Try something new, allow yourself and your co-workers the opportunity to explore together various solutions to daily situations.

If you are curious about how well your organizational culture is picture yourself as a frontline staff member and see how easy it would be for you to accomplish plenty with the current rules and policies in place. Then be courageous in your efforts to find those areas where a little flexibility may be the best solution.

*As an international speaker, corporate trainer and President of The Maureen Tazzioli Executive Corporation, Maureen promotes the importance of raising standards to influence positive change. Call Toll Free at: 1.855.280.2920 or visit [www.maurentazzioli.com](http://www.maurentazzioli.com) for more information on how you can involve Maureen at your next event. This article is reprinted with the author's permission.*

