The Importance of Culture: Evidence and Practice

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What do I mean by “culture”? 
Norms
Stories, Jargon, Metaphors, Artifacts
Values
Beliefs and Assumptions

Observable
Unobservable
MANAGE YOUR EMOTIONAL CULTURE

Most leaders focus on how employees think and behave—but feelings matter just as much. by Sigal Barsade and Olivia A. O'Neill
Beliefs, Assumptions, Values, Norms, Rituals, Facial expressions, Stories, Jargon, Metaphors, Artifacts, Norms, Rituals, Values, Beliefs, Assumptions
So what?
Figure 1. Theoretical model of emotional culture of companionate love.

OUTCOMES

Employee Outcomes
Less withdrawal from workplace
- Less emotional exhaustion
- Less absenteeism
Greater engagement with workplace
- Better teamwork
- Greater employee satisfaction

Patient Outcomes
- More positive mood
- Better quality of life
- Better health outcomes

Family Outcomes
- Greater satisfaction & willingness to recommend facility to others

Source: Barsade & O’Neill (2014)
Is there a place for caring ("love") in competitive, results-oriented companies and industries?
Source: 2016 National Business Group on Health Fall conference live audience poll
Effects of Anxiety and Caring ("Love") on Department Operating Costs

Source: O’Neill, Barsade, & Sguera (under review)
And the reason I used the term “family” was because we are kind of like family. We had a great camaraderie. We were probably like brothers and sisters, a lot of us. Really strong core, we did a lot of things outside of work together. Till this day a lot of us still do. [...] And obviously you’ve got special bonds…it’s like brothers and sisters, because we pick on each other. We fight, but we still have a camaraderie and when the tough comes around…That’s always been something that we’ve done as a corporation. We always seem to pull together when there is a big issue and hammer through it, work it up.

-- Senior Staff Test Engineer, Global Semiconductor Firm, U.S.
Can we go from “caring” to “inclusive”? 
Culture of Inclusion

• Different from hiring quotas or mandates
  – Easier for successful firms
  – Unintended consequences

• Desire for impact
  – A seat at the table is not enough
  – The dance metaphor

• Importance of authenticity
  – Not being required to hide how you really feel
  – Fit with personal values and convictions
  – Meaningful activities and behaviors
Challenges

• Necessary evils and the need for “tough love”
  - Having difficult conversations
  - Sanctioning bad behavior
  - Delivering negative feedback
  - Letting people go
• Maintaining a positive culture as it grows and changes
  - Financial pressures
  - Bureaucratic structures and systems
  - Rapid hiring, growth
  - Leader transitions
  - Changing norms and regulations
Top management: craft the vision and provide the resources
  • Create a vision to cultivate and manage emotional culture
  • Provide the resources (financial, psychological) for desired culture

Managers: Model the behavior you want to see
  • Leaders drive rules, rituals, and practices
  • Leaders’ emotions disproportionately influence the culture (e.g., through emotional contagion)

HR: Hire the right people, hold people accountable
  • Creating job interview questions that give an indication of whether employees would complement or detract from desired culture
  • Create performance appraisal measures that assess behaviors that support or undermine desired culture

Individual contributors: Maintain or create desired culture through small acts and micro-moments
What does it take to be successful?
1. Establish the business case in moral and monetary ($) terms
   • Cultivate or seize onto a sense of urgency
   • Provide “hard” evidence and a strong rationale

2. Partner with change agents outside HR
   ▪ Establish greater credibility by having line managers in other functions involved (e.g., Investment, Risk, Operations)

3. Select middle managers carefully and partner closely with them
   ▪ Encourage face-to-face interactions whenever possible
   ▪ Send HQ representatives frequently to distributed sites

4. Cultivate a meaningful and authentic corporate culture that can be understood embodied across people and cultural differences
   ▪ Example: BigTech (on coming to any BigTech site around the world): “It’s like coming home…”

5. Encourage and respect local norms, rituals, and routines that are consistent with overarching corporate culture
   ▪ e.g., Company-sponsored off-sites that promote high-quality connections
grat-i-tude
/ˌgrædəˈt(y)ood/
noun
the quality of being thankful; readiness to show appreciation for and to return kindness.
"she expressed her gratitude to the committee for their support"
synonyms: gratefulness, thankfulness, thanks, appreciation, indebtedness; More

Questions? Suggestions? Collaborations?

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