

THE ACHIEVEMENT CULTURE

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ACHIEVEMENT culture is a type of culture that encourages and values the performance of people.

The leaders spell out and communicate clearly the vision and goals to all levels of staff in the organization. These organisations have measurable objectives and hold people accountable for achieving them. They have a transparent and fair appraisal system tied closely to rewards based on performance.

The achievement culture places emphasis on the work to be done rather than on roles. People will cross roles to get the job done and swap responsibilities when needed. This culture empowers trusted individuals to get on with the job and react appropriately to what the job requires. There are no job descriptions or thick manuals to limit what people can do.

Decisions in such a culture are made laterally rather than hierarchically. Individuals are driven and motivated by enthusiasm for the job, or because they know they will be fairly appraised and rewarded according to merit. Collaboration is the order of the day and employees are encouraged to think of new ways of doing work.

The strong achievement organisation is an exciting and creative place to be in. Rules, regulations and policies are under constant review. Consultation takes place on all levels. Change is part of the working life; creative thinking and innovation are common practices that result in higher and higher levels of achievement.

There are eight common shared values that are critical to developing a strong achievement culture.

1. Results-Oriented

One of the most distinctive shared values of organisations that practice the achievement culture is their strong focus on results. These companies have leaders who are relentless in their effort to pursue results. They communicate the importance of results and demonstrate it through their consistent follow up.

2. Superior Customer Service

One of the great lessons to be learned from the failure of dot-coms throughout the world is that there is no substitute for customers. Wonderful Internet technology and inflated and unrealistic revenue forecasts will not do. And for that matter, even a spate of venture capital funds cannot save these companies if they fail to turn

their 'virtual customers' into paying customers. Companies that practice the achievement culture know how to integrate technology, process, strategy and people, to the extent that customers value their services and products highly and will pay for them.

3. Innovation

The shared value of innovation goes beyond departments. It is a mindset that everyone in an organisation must practice, everywhere, every time and on everything, in a continuous fashion. It transforms dreams and ideas into reality that adds to the bottom line. Innovation is about creating things that the world has not seen before. It requires experimentation and is therefore risky. To create an innovative environment, leaders must encourage risk taking and develop a tolerance for mistakes.

4. Fairness

People in organisations will not continue to strive to do their best if they feel that there is no sense of fair play in the workplace. In this respect, fair play refers to treating people fairly. There should be no favoritism, no backstabbing, no blackmailing, no credit snatching and no rundowns, among others. The shared value of fairness also requires leaders to communicate

the rules of the game and the scoring system early and clearly. This refers to performance measures and the appraisal system. A fair system is merit-based, where rewards are linked closely to the performance of individuals.

5. Respect

Respect is having regard for people. In fact, the lack of respect is the cause of many undesirable behaviors in the workplace, such as shouting at people, being late for meetings or appointments, producing shoddy work, not delivering what one promises and humiliating people, among others. Organisations that promote this shared value create a more conducive environment for people to do their best. It has been said that some of the best work comes from people who have a sense of pride in their work and their workplace. People who respect others are in turn respected by others and they are happier. It has been generally proven that happier employees are more effective and productive.

6. Change Responsive

This is the most critical shared value, as it will determine the future of an organization. The ability of an organization to align internal changes to the external forces of change,

such as increasing competition, new technology, industry regulation changes and customer requirements, is the key to surviving in an increasingly challenging environment. The significance lies not in the changing, but in the intensity and speed of the change.

7. Accountability

Accountability is about taking ownership of problems and making sure they are solved. By being accountable, employees add value to the organisation and to themselves. Achievement is a result of being accountable. Successful organisations have clearly defined areas of accountability and effective systems to follow up with the expected results. To promote this shared value, leaders in organisations should encourage people to share and communicate the results they have attained on a periodic basis and in an open manner.

8. Passion

Many great organizations become what they are due to the passion of the leaders behind them. These leaders communicate and translate their visions into a passion that their staff can identify with and work towards.

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