



CO.W TIPS



FOR AN AMAZING CULTURE AND ENGAGED TEAM

> *From Claire Day, founder of CultureWise*

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CLAIRE DAY



Claire Day is the founder of CultureWise, and a highly experienced human resources and communications professional. She shines a light on staff engagement and company culture, why this is important for us and what to consider.

TIPS FOR AN ENGAGED TEAM

"I've supported a number of fantastic businesses and organisations on their journeys to develop awesome cultures and surveyed thousands of employees over the past few years. Some clear themes arise in terms of what matters to people and I'd love to share a few of my top tips with you here, to help you fast-track your way to an amazing culture and engaged team." - Claire Day (CultureWise)

TIP 1 COMMUNICATE

The quality of your communication will have a significant impact on the culture you want to build. It is, without question, the most consistent area of feedback from teams about what could be done better in the businesses they work in. The intricacies of what exactly needs to improve are different for each company, but the overarching message is always the same. Never, ever underestimate the importance of timely, honest, thoughtful, regular, succinct, authentic and consistent communication with your team. It really is the glue that holds everything together.

Never assume. Check in with the team so you know they understand what you want them to do. Step up, be heard and be seen. It's rare to win the hearts and minds of your team from behind a desk. Constantly reinforce what you're aiming to achieve, what's going well, what's not, which team or person does what and ensure courageous conversations take place in your business.

Remember, telling someone something does not mean they have heard you. Anyone with kids (myself included) can attest to that!

TIP 2 LISTEN

This is actually the other half of the communication equation. Often perceived as the poor cousin to Top Tip #1, make no mistake – listening is really the twin sister! It's a sadly all-too-secret weapon in the war for engagement. We need more warriors who give a voice to the many.

I am always telling my kids we have one mouth and two ears for a reason – we must listen to others! There is untold power in listening to people. I mean really listening – not just pretending because you've got something else to say. People want to be heard – not humoured – really heard. Ask any coach. Their whole industry is built around the ability to really listen.

Sometimes a simple one-on-one catch up is what's required. At the other end of the scale is a company-wide survey where you've really thought about the questions you're asking the team, so it's customised to suit your unique needs. The absolute key to success here though is taking appropriate action as a result. If you have no intention of learning from your team or of doing things differently, then don't bother asking in the first place.

TIP 3 CREATE CLARITY

Stand for something worthwhile. Have you framed the purpose or vision for your business in a way that will resonate with your team? Is there an emotional hook? People thrive as part of something they believe in that is bigger than themselves. And beware of thinking a financial target will drive the behaviour you're after (no matter how much it excites you!).

Have you tried to get clear and describe your existing culture? If you can consciously design your ideal culture, it's the foundation for strong team engagement.

Remember to ask yourself how you would finish this sentence about your business: 'Around here we...'. Brainstorm that and articulate what you really want your ideal culture to be. Then look at the gaps and what's needed to bridge them.

TIP 4 DO VALUES WELL (OR DON'T BOTHER)

You'd laugh at the number of times I've sat with a CEO or an HR manager and they've struggled to articulate what their company values are, never mind what they are supposed to mean. If they don't know, I can bet a decent wad of cash there is zero chance anyone else in the business has a clue!

The other big failing here is choosing generic values without any real thought behind them about how they will differentiate you in your marketplace. Things like respect, communication, teamwork. I mean, shouldn't every business value these? How will they help you stand out from the crowd?

Ironically, for those who are interested, the values of the now-infamous Enron Corporation were integrity, excellence, communication and respect. Go figure!

Your values should serve as the behavioural compass for your team and believe me, it's worth going through a proper process to define these well and make them meaningful, because if you do and if you can sell them to your team, you're onto a winner.

TIP 5 RECOGNISE WELL

Let's face it, we all love to be recognised for our efforts. Desire to be recognised for job well done is deep-rooted in our human psyche, but how to recognise well depends on the individual. It's not a one-size-fits-all task. While one person will lap up praise in a company meeting in front of everyone, this can be another's nightmare. Be careful with monetary recognition. Once received it can become an expectation.

The best kind of recognition is, ironically, the one that costs next to nothing. It's the informal 'pat on the back in the trenches' type of recognition. Catch them doing the right thing and say so in the moment. Recognise something someone has done in context of a bigger company goal or team objective. Be authentic – only say well done if you really mean it. Be appropriate – match the extent of your praise with the quality of the job well done. People become engaged with our businesses one by one and no matter how big the company becomes, it's wise never to forget that.

cheat sheet

TOP TIPS FOR AN AMAZING ENGAGED TEAM

- > **TIP 1** COMMUNICATE (CLEARLY AND OFTEN)
- > **TIP 2** LISTEN
- > **TIP 3** CREATE CLARITY AROUND YOUR VISION AND IDEAL CULTURE
- > **TIP 4** DO VALUES WELL (OR DON'T BOTHER)
- > **TIP 5** RECOGNISE OTHERS AND MAKE IT PERSONAL

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