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# THE SHAMELESS PRIDE IN PURSUIT OF PURPOSE - A NEW APPROACH TO CULTURE

**Culture can be measured very simply by two critical factors. The first gauge for culture is what people say and do when their CEO isn't looking. It is the real deal in every company. When you listen to the unfiltered memes in the organization, you get a sense of the true culture.**

In short, it is not what's on the wall but rather what's in the employees' souls. The second criterion is the scope of empowerment the frontline employees pose. It is their ability to create memorable experiences for their customers. Greater empowerment demonstrates greater trust and transparency in the organization in addition to a spirit of innovation. Less empowerment means we are back to the hierarchy-based all-soldier march to the same order of culture. In short, culture is what employees dare to do, not just what they are forced to do.

**Culture is developed one of two ways—by default or by design.**

Neglect the development of your culture, and your culture will rise from cynicism and skepticism developed by years of employees who seek purpose but instead feel that their ideas, initiatives, and the purpose of the organization are consistently ignored. Meanwhile, their leaders are pursuing a strategy of satisfying profit generation at the expense of customers and doing the right thing. Like brushing your teeth, culture is not a one-time decision or design event. It is a constant nurturing exercise, every day, in every decision, by every employee, in every interaction. Would employees bring the company's values to life or hide behind safe, restrictive processes? Would they be proud of what they've created or just view themselves as cogs in a big machine where their actions make little

to no impact? Customer centricity is not optional for organizations who seek an authentic culture. After all, for most employees who joined your company based on the inspiration to make a difference in people's lives, the company's purpose was at the core of their decision. From creating healthier lives to nurturing the world's humanity, whatever your purpose, your employees believed in what they were going to do.

Our employee engagement studies have demonstrated to us that, up until three years in, employees are still excited and seek to pursue their purpose and make a difference in the world. Usually, if the organization fails to pursue its purpose authentically after three years, those employees will be disappointed and their engagement will start to decline. After two to three years, they will either leave the company or accept the fact that the culture will never be what they had hoped it would be. They will adjust their commitment to the organization accordingly.

In the study of a Canadian organization, we discovered that branches who committed to the purpose of making a difference in customers' lives and focused on empowering their employees outperformed the rest of the branches by six times! That is, those committed branches delivered a return on sales six-times better than their counterparts did.

**What do those branches do differently? First and foremost, they do not apologize for pursuing their purpose. They don't see it as a**

**means to an end. It is their end goal, and they purpose it with love and authenticity.** They embrace their purpose as core to who they are and not just something they do to look good in the eyes of their employees. The second thing these branches do differently is they empower their employees. They diligently work to provide access to information, tools, and decision-making power that enable employees to deliver the most exceptional experiences.

**When employees are empowered to make a difference and see the impact they make in the eyes of the people whom they serve, they know that they matter, and they act accordingly. So, how do we translate the intended culture to an operational behavior for each and every one of your employees?**

- 1. Love your customer – Speak about your customer as a person you love to work with. Humanize his or her needs, and develop an approach to connect with him or her emotionally.**
- 2. Do the human thing first – Explore ways to demonstrate empathy and sympathy when relevant. Always focus on how you make your customer feel first. This emotion will determine their advocacy and loyalty.**
- 3. Empower to surprise – Provide your team with the tools, knowledge, decision scope, and confidence to approach difficult situations so that they may turn "difficult" into "delightful."**

**4. Measure memories and stories – Customers are not KPs; they are humans with stories that are evolving and shared. Focus on creating memorable stories that will become part of your customer's life story. Don't focus on the few stories that happen once in a lifetime; aim to create thousands of stories.**

**5. You first – Be a role model. Demonstrate your own personal commitment to your employees. Go and do something they don't expect you to do.**

**6. Purpose-centric rituals – Create culture rituals that carry out the company's purpose and fulfillment on a regular basis. Make sure that the purpose is at the center of everything that you do and discuss.**

When discussing culture with executives, we often see the reluctance in their eyes. They all admit how important it is, but few champion culture as often as they should. Through deeper discussion, we find that they feel uncomfortable, assuming it will portray them as weak and less commanding. Living by your purpose is probably the most empowering thing you can do in your organization.

Allowing your employees to see your humanity and your commitment to making a difference. The purpose-driven leader gets the most commitment from employees and creates the most impact. Delivering culture often and authentically is the new way to attract the best talent and most loyal customers. It is at the center of delivering the results you promised. Let's start by being human.