

How to Attract and Retain the Right People

If you're one of the many executives struggling with finding and keeping the right people to propel your business forward, you'll find these insights helpful.

If you're frustrated by trying to motivate people, work instead to develop a company where people are *self-motivated* - where they do things because they *want* to. When we're inspired, we enjoy our work, we're productive, and we're proud of our efforts. We remain focused and committed to the task at hand. In short, we put forth our best effort.

An organization will attract and retain a team of people dedicated to the success of the organization and its goals when it has a Purpose, a Mission, and a set of Values that it lives by, effectively communicates them throughout the organization, and measures its actions and decisions against them. Let's define what Purpose, Mission and Values are and talk about the implications of having them clearly defined and embodied in the organization.

Purpose:

Purpose is the "WHY" of the equation. Purpose defines why we do what we do. It defines why we go to work each day. Without purpose, people just go through the motions and as most of us know, there's a great difference between activity and achievement. Having a purpose creates a yardstick, so to speak, to measure our decisions against. It helps us become passionate, helps us to select among the many options presented to us, helps us make better hiring decisions, and keeps us on track. It's possible to succeed without a clear purpose, but having one speeds and magnifies the results.

When a company has a clearly defined purpose it begins to act as a magnet, attracting the kind of people who will further the purpose; people who are like-minded. Not only will having a purpose retain the right people, but it will also act to attract them. This is the power behind the success of many not-for-profit organizations. Although they often are unable to pay their staff great sums of money, they continue to attract and retain people who are dedicated and who work hard to achieve the purpose of the organization. While your organization's purpose may not be as altruistic as a not-for-profit's purpose, it definitely plays an important, almost critical, role.

How do you develop a meaningful purpose? Involve people throughout the organization in order to develop and distill the essence of why your organization exists. Don't simply rely on the executive team to develop and then dictate the purpose to the group. And certainly don't rely on an outside company to create your purpose for you! It has been my experience that a well-defined statement of purpose is a single sentence, crafted to capture the essence of "why" the organization exists using as few words as possible and resonating when read or spoken. This brings clarity and energy to it, and makes it much easier to keep in mind when making decisions and policies.

Mission:

Mission is the "WHAT" of the equation. Mission defines what the company does to achieve its Purpose. The better defined a company's mission is, the easier it is to choose among the many opportunities that will present themselves. A mission - the means to achieve the Purpose - can be fairly narrow or be somewhat broad. However, one that is too narrow can unduly restrict an organization from considering opportunities that would otherwise be an excellent fit, and one that is too broad offers no guidance at all and may cause an organization to spread itself too thin, do a poor job at everything, and essentially dilute its effectiveness.

How do you determine an appropriate mission? Again, remember to involve people throughout the organization to develop and distill the essence of what your organization is about. Don't

simply rely on the executive level to develop and then dictate the mission to the group. Work to strike that balance between clarity and confinement - not too broad, yet not overly restrictive.

Values:

Values are the "HOW" of the equation. Values define how the Mission will be carried out in an effort to achieve the Purpose. They define the "rules of the game". Some of these values will come to mind quite easily, things like honesty, courtesy, kindness, and ethics. But some other important values will only surface when brainstorming takes place - when different perspectives and voices are heard. Values like authenticity and vulnerability may be placed on the table for consideration. (Which, by the way, are two essential qualities of an exceptional leader.) It doesn't matter which values are decided upon as being important to the company. What *is* important however, is that whatever they are, everyone in the company lives by and supports them. It's important that the policies and decisions of the company are in alignment with them. If the company has an acknowledged list of values it purports to live by and then chooses to ignore them, the list becomes a sore point and acts as a negative reflection of what kind of organization you really lead.

When a company has clearly defined its Purpose, Mission, and Values, then all decisions, policies, and actions will have a measuring stick to keep them on course and you will have an organization which attracts and keeps the best! You'll create an organizational culture which naturally acts as a magnet to attract and retain like-minded people. And you'll also have the framework to interview about the things that matter most to you and your organization. No longer will people be hired based solely on technical abilities or simply to fill seats.

Exceptional leadership inspires the best effort in others!

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