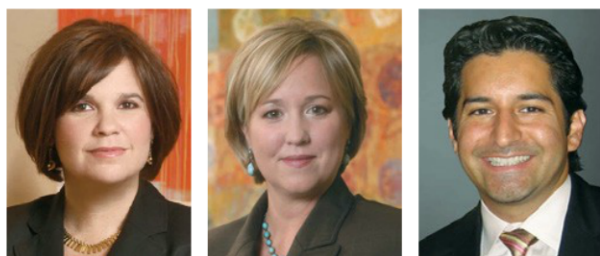


Everyone's Talking about Culture

So What Does it Mean?



by Elise M. Bouchner, Jill Cormier Meaux and Manuel F. Valencia

*"The oil & gas industry has a rich culture."
"Our company has a great culture."
"Our department has a high-performance culture."
"I love our team's culture."*

The Louisiana oil and gas industry is full of dynamic companies with great cultures. The topic of company culture is top-of-mind these days for high-growth companies. How do we communicate and sustain our culture when new leaders and team members join the company?

A solid culture is present when company leaders and employees are making all decisions based on a set of agreed-upon core values. Culture is the set of behaviors and practices that evolve from the values and mission of the company; the way the people in your company act even when no one is watching. When people in the company act in alignment with core values, it is a reliable indicator of a good culture.

Core values define what is truly important to an organization. These values determine what a company stands for and are non-negotiable when making business decisions.

A company's vision and strategy are set based on the environment in which a company exists. When there is a change in the environment, a company may change strategy or adapt its vision. A company's core values, however, are like the roots of the tree acting as an anchor for the business.

These core values are consistent and typically do not change much over time, or for different situations or people. Company core values endure; they do not sway with the trends and fads of the day. And they do not shift for the sake of expediency or in response to changing market conditions.



Core values define what is truly important to an organization. These values determine what a company stands for and are non-negotiable when making business decisions.

A company's culture reflects the behaviors and practices that the leaders and employees demonstrate. The values are the roots; the culture is what can be seen atop the tree.

Should We Write Them Down?

In some cases we see that core values simply exist as a company's working philosophy and that the values have yet to be written down or published so that all employees and stakeholders can see and share with others.

When a company grows, articulating core values helps to preserve and promote company culture. For a company that is expanding its geographic footprint, it is beneficial to communicate and share the core values so team members can make decisions consistently at all locations. For a company that is expanding in one location, it is beneficial to display core values so that new employees understand 'why' and 'how' decisions will be made.

A company can come up with a near endless list of good core values. Therefore, the most important criteria for setting a core value is whether it is right for your company. Do the core values reflect the kind of decisions and actions we want our people to make?

Developing a Culture

In order to effectively develop and nurture a strong culture that is in alignment with your company core values, follow these five steps.

1. **Identify** – Engage in a process to identify the company's core values – what is important to the leader(s) and key people in the organization.
2. **Communicate** – Tell employees what the values are...often. An organization cannot over-communicate their values.
3. **Demonstrate** – Act in ways that support and demonstrate the stated core values. Actions are more powerful than words, so back up the verbal communication with behavior that supports the values.
4. **Reinforce** – (feedback and accountability) Positively reinforce employees for acting in line with company values. Many companies include core values as part of a performance evaluation.
5. **Recruit/Retain** – Attract and hire people who resemble the culture; this is a signal to all members of the team and will allow you to retain employees who support your company's culture and values. ●

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