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Bedrocks of a Winning Culture and How to Know Where You Stand

A company's culture is the foundation of every organization and is crucial to a successful workers' compensation program. Companies who take steps to analyze and improve their culture will realize many positive benefits.

THE FIVE BEDROCKS OF A WINNING CULTURE ARE:

- 1 AUTONOMY / BUILDING SAFETY
- 2 MASTERY
- 3 BELONGING
- 4 VULNERABILITY
- 5 PURPOSE

1 Autonomy/ Building Safety

Autonomy/building safety means employees feel safe in a group environment; not safe in the sense of personal protective equipment (PPE), but:

- Safe to speak up
- Safe to say something and know it would be heard and considered
- Safe to express ideas without being punished

Elements necessary for individuals to effectively contribute to a group include:

- Cognitive stimulation
- The feeling they are valued
- The ability to leverage their strengths
- A safe environment to take risks, share ideas, and know they are supported

Micromanagement, rules, and restrictions are the enemies of autonomy/ building safety.

2 Mastery

Studies of human motivation reveal what many in the corporate world believe incentivizes employees to be incorrect.

When the Carrot and Stick Approach Doesn't Work

In Daniel Pink's book, *Drive*, he discusses the fundamental reward system we believe to be true...

- 1) If you reward something, you will get more of the behavior you want.
- 2) If you punish something, you will get less of the behavior you want.

... is not always true.

Research from MIT revealed the following conclusions.

- "As long as tasks involve only mechanical skill, a financial rewards system works as designed, the higher the pay, the better the performance.
- Once the task requires even rudimentary cognitive skill, a larger reward leads to poorer performance."

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One of the strongest forms of motivation for individuals is an internal drive to master a task. Getting paid for doing something we love often detracts from our motivation for this activity. The results from this study have been replicated several times by different researchers.

Give employees as much autonomy as possible within the boundaries of their job descriptions and allow them to feel safe and attain a sense of accomplishment, or mastery. Without these practices, employee outcomes have a higher likelihood to merely meet the status quo, or worse.

3 Belonging

The feeling of belonging to a group or organization is something all humans seek. In addition, this sense of belonging needs to be constantly reinforced.

In a group environment, as stated in the book *The Culture Code* by Daniel Coyle, we all subconsciously ask ourselves three questions:

- 1) Am I safe here?
- 2) What is my future with these people?
- 3) Are there dangers lurking.

Injured workers who feel a sense of belonging to the company are more apt to engage in their own recovery from a work-related injury.

4 Vulnerability

Showing vulnerability with employees or coworkers can go a long way toward building solid relationships and positive groups. It puts everyone on the same level and enables better team efforts.

The phrase "tell me what you need, and I'll help you" is a powerful phrase and sentiment. The best outcomes occur when everyone works together

as a team, is vulnerable, open to suggestions, and willing to listen to one another for the greater good.

5 Purpose

Purpose is a yearning for something greater than oneself. In Maslow's *Hierarchy of Needs*, purpose is the strongest driver of internal motivation.

Examine your organization, is the only purpose of the company to make widgets? Or does it stand for something greater?

An Exercise to Assess Your Company's Culture

Improving your company's culture begins with assessing its current status. An easy way to assess the current culture of your organization is by ranking, on a scale of 1-10, where you currently stand with the 5 bedrocks of a positive culture, along with indicators of a negative culture.

Rank where your organization stands on a scale of 1 - 10, with 1 being lowest and 10 being highest.

1-10 RANKING

- Autonomy/building safety.** How safe do employees feel to bring new ideas to the table?
- Mastery.** To what extent are the employees or managers driven by a desire for mastery of what they are doing?
- Belonging.** How connected do your employees feel to the company?
- Vulnerability.** This pertains to senior managers. Are they willing to consider ideas from employees, or are they more dictatorial?
- Purpose.** Is the company's purpose clearly defined? Are employees actively engaged in what they are doing?



To rate the negative indicators, put a checkmark or an "X" next to each:

— INDICATOR

- Turnover rate.**
(X if your average is above those stated by the Compensation Force)
- If employee participation in company events is high.**
(X if your participation in company events is low)
- Injury reporting.**
(X if your average lag time is > 7 days)
- Litigation rate.**
(X if litigation rate is > 20%)
- RTW timing.**
(X if supervisors won't allow employees back until they are 100%)

The rankings for the bedrocks and negative indicators will provide a quick indication of your company's culture, as well as highlight areas for needed improvements.



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