It Takes More than
Casual Fridays and Free Coffee
Building a Business Culture That Works for Everyone

By Diane K. Adams

Welcome to the online workbook that's a companion to my book, It Takes More than Casual Fridays and Free Coffee: Building a Business Culture that Works for Everyone (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015; ISBN 9781137526946).

Whether you arrived here by chance or after reading the book, I hope you're here because you recognize the importance of a positive values-based culture in your organization.

Building and sustaining a great culture in any business doesn't have to cost lots of money. But, it does take commitment and conscious effort. Each of us has the potential to "extraordinize" our lives given the opportunity and in the right environment. This is your opportunity to get started on that road to excellence.

Here you'll find the basics--and then some--of how you, too, can build the right culture for your company. I'll introduce you to concepts, then provide pertinent questions, directions, and exercises to help you explore and understand the elements of a positive culture at your company. You'll also get tips on how all that can translate into long-term success both personally and professionally.

Now is your time, so let's get started. Happy reading!

Chapter 1
Culture: Why Should You Care

People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care.—Diane K. Adams

Culture is the set of clear values that drive the thinking, actions, attitudes, and guidelines of an organization and its people day in and day out. It's a way of life. Companies have unique cultures—and so do families, schools, churches, and favorite sports teams.

Culture affects organizations, their employees, customers, and the communities they touch.
Culture is the game changer personally and professionally. I believe each of us has the potential to be extraordinary. Working and living in an environment that encourages excellence enables each of us to achieve that potential.

Company cultures as do values vary because of every company and its people are different.
As proven, successful companies do, the first step is to take the time to define the culture—positive as well as negative—in your organization, and then figure out what you would like the culture to be. The latter means addressing the issues, asking the right questions, and providing honest and straightforward assessments.
No matter the size of your company, these are questions for you, your peers, and your leadership. Each person's response matters. There are no right or wrong answers, and everyone's answer won't necessarily be the same because every organization has its own culture, its own unique persona. You'll use the answers to these questions to help build the foundation for a positive culture, whether for your life, your organization, or both.

QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS INCLUDE:
- What is our culture today?
- What do we want it to be in the future?
- What are the values that are most important to us as a company and as individuals?
- Do we consistently communicate these values in all that we say and do?
- How can we incorporate these values into everything we do as a company?
- Do we as a company, as leaders, and as employees, truly live these values?
- How does this values-based culture drive our success as a company and as individuals?
- How are we helping our customers succeed?
- What are we doing right today?
- What aren't we doing right, and how can we change that?

MORE QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:
- Would you recommend this company to others as a good place to work? Why or why not?
- Are your team members proud to work for the company? Why or why not?

With these last two questions, the answers to both should be, "yes," if yours is a culture that promotes values-based excellence. If the consensus is "no," then it's all the more impetus to make a difference and take the actions necessary to develop a more positive culture.

Now let's take a slightly different approach to recognizing and understanding your organization's culture. Consider how you or your leadership might react to the following scenario:

Assume you're the leadership and one of your employees has a son in the military who has been deployed in a war zone. You're in an important business meeting when you learn that the son was critically injured in a roadside bomb explosion.

Which of the following describes your reaction to the tragedy?
1. I would tell an assistant to send a condolence note immediately.
2. I would try to remember to offer my condolences after the meeting.
3. I would shrug my shoulders, and move on.
4. I would drop everything and make a personal visit to the employee to see how I could help.

In this situation, if the goal is to establish and promote a strong positive, values-based culture, the answer should be No. 4. People come first.

Chapter 2
Are You Living a Double Life?
CULTURE IS EVERYTHING WHEN IT'S RIGHT.—DIANE K. ADAMS

Companies don't win with strategy. Long-term, sustainable success takes the right values-based culture. That's a culture with positive values that are pervasive in everything a company and all its people do.

Many companies talk about lofty values or even offer employees a few freebies in an attempt to create what they think is culture. But only the very best companies truly do their best to live their high values in everything the company and its leaders say and do. Those are the companies with admirable cultures and comfortable and sustainable bottom lines to prove it.

My years of experience and interactions with the best of the best--and some not so--have taught me that all long-term successful companies share nuances of the same seven essential values. Those values include
- Integrity and respect. These companies foster an all-inclusive workplace.
- Innovation. Winning companies promote discovering new and better ways of thinking and of accomplishing goals.
- Open communication and collaboration. Success is a team effort; everyone is a contributor.
- Customer success. A company's success is a natural outgrowth of its customers' success.
- Giveback/social responsibility. It's the right thing to do, plus giving back to others fosters long-term loyalty through good and bad economic times.
- Learning is your edge. Invest in your people. Ongoing employee learning and education pay dividends because employees' growth fuels companies' growth.
- Leaders who drive operational excellence net extraordinary results. Culture comes from the top, and so does operational excellence. Great leaders develop great companies with great cultures

A CULTURE AUDIT

Now it's your turn to assess your own company's culture with the help of a Culture Audit. For the best results, the audit should be company-wide. That includes you, your team members, leaders, and bosses. If everyone is honest in their answers, the results should paint a clear picture of where your company is on the road to developing a positive values-based culture.

Even if you already have what you think is a strong values-based culture, the audit can flag weaknesses and potential flaws before they become serious problems.
If you opt to do a Culture Audit individually, you'll end up with a snapshot of the company you work for and its current values.

Start by rating the company and its leadership in terms of some of the essential values listed below. The easiest way to do that is to set up a rating system—a scale of 1 to 5 or 1 to whatever, with the highest number as the best rating. With each value and answer, get the details—the why or why not, what works and what needs improvement.

- Credibility: Do you trust your company, managers, and leaders? Do the company, its management, and its leadership follow through and do what's promised for team members, customers, and the community? Or do they promise one thing and do another?
- Respect: Do you feel like the company respects you as an employee? Do the company's actions reflect respect? Remember, actions as well as inactions can reflect respect or lack thereof. Does the company treat and communicate with its employees and customers openly and honestly?
- Fairness: Does the company treat all its employees and customers fairly? Are discipline, perks, and details handed out arbitrarily? Do leaders practice unabashed favoritism? A note of caution here: If someone thinks a situation or action unfair, move slowly and learn more. You may not know all the details, and therefore not understand fully the problem. A disgruntled employee may think the company unfair if he or she was passed over for a promotion because of his or her skill levels. That could signal something very different happening, as opposed to if several employees feel a manager treats them unfairly.
- Pride: Are you proud to work for the company? Do you take pride in the work you do? What about your company's product or service? Engaged and happy employees take pride in their company and all that they and the company do. Employee engagement is an essential ingredient in creating a long-term successful company.
- Camaraderie: Do employees work together, collaborate, and communicate as a team with specific goals in mind? Or is yours a company of lots of lone wolves, each with his or her own agenda? An essential ingredient in long-term success is that everyone works toward the same goals and as a team.
- Is work fun? Do you enjoy going to work every day? People actually do enjoy going to work in companies that promote strong, values-based cultures.

Now decide what specific values matter to you, your company, and your community—your customers. This should be a companywide discussion led by the leadership because culture comes from the top. Also keep in mind that corporate culture and values are not a function of the Human Resources Department. Too often, people figure an HR directive or something else as insignificant creates culture. Instead, your company's leaders own the culture, with HR as an enabling organization.

Ask the following questions:
- What are the values that matter to you?
- What values matter to your company?
- What values matter to the community and your customers?

True culture is pervasive. Think about your immediate environment, and how and what you can influence.

ASK MORE QUESTIONS:

Are you doing your best to live the stated values of the company? If the company doesn't have stated values, can you create a set of high values within your own team? That could be a good starting point to show others in the company how and why values do matter.

For example, if your company is a restaurant, an easy way to support the value Social Responsibility/Giveback would be to look at ways in which to donate your product to the community.

YOU MUST SET UP GOALS FOR YOUR COMPANY, TOO.

Does your company have goals and strategies associated with those goals? Goals alone mean little without strategies to reach those goals. Goals are important too because they are the implementation of a company's values that reflect the company's culture.

How does your company react to an employee or leader unwilling to accept the stated values? Leaders at long-term successful companies are willing to recognize problems and take action. For example, an employee or a team leader may refuse to accept a company's stated value—perhaps an all-inclusive workplace--and rejects attempts at training and education. In a situation like that, the company's top leadership must have the cultural courage to stand up for the stated value and take the necessary action—including separation (firing). Cultural courage is essential because your company's reputation and brand are on the line. That's a risk no company can afford to take in today's competitive environment.

YOUR VSE: VISION STRATEGY EXECUTION

Successful companies—no matter how large or small, geographically diverse or in close proximity—maintain their companywide focus and align actions and goals with the help of a simple tool called a VSE. That's an acronym that spells out the specific short- and long-range set of accomplishments for the company and its team members, and is a part of every business initiative. The acronym stands for:

- **Vision**: the long-term, overarching outlook/goal for a company; encompasses a company's values; to be the most trusted provider and deliver world-class outcomes to customers, for example; visions should be reviewed annually.
- **Strategy**: an overarching plan of action that includes goals that need to be accomplished in the short term with an eye to achieving a long-term vision; improve employee skill sets, for example, to facilitate faster response time, boost customer satisfaction; or administer employee engagement survey and listen to and act on input.
- **Execution**: delivering on the strategies to achieve the vision; for example, increase production by 25 percent, while also keeping employees happy and engaged, customers satisfied, and giving back to the community as deliverables.

Over the years, my teams developed VSE and variations on it to facilitate application of the values and culture of a particular company. The VSE is the roadmap and yardstick for company operations now and in the future. It works

because it's a one-page document that clearly spells out company values, current vision related to those values, strategy to achieve the vision, and the specific goals necessary for success.

Leaders create their own VSE for their team that reflects their part of the company's overall VSE. It's their go-to "elevator pitch" that they know backward and forward, and utilize when making decisions at all times. That may sound dictatorial, but it works because everyone knows what's expected, how to stay focused, and to make the decisions based on the essential real goals at hand.

To develop your own company VSE, once again takes the time and effort to thoroughly examine the issues and concerns associated with each of the three areas. That means ask the right questions beginning with:
* What's your company's Vision with its values in mind?
* What's your company's Strategy, as in its plan of action short- and long-term?
* How does your company plan to Execute the strategies with specific goals/deliverables in mind?

Chapter 3
The Little Things Make a Big Difference
EXCELLENCE BEGINS BY FOCUSING ON THE LITTLE THINGS THAT MATTER.—DIANE ADAMS

To build a great culture requires a recognition of the values that are important; a process that builds all those values into every aspect of the company, its actions, and its people, and then paying attention to the small details. People don't care what you know until they know you care. That goes for employees as well as customers. Companies must invest in both, and then provide top products or services to their customers to compete in today's business environment.

Does your company focus on the little things? When it comes to employees, some of those little things may seem insignificant at first—they certainly don't cost much, if anything extra--but in reality they can motivate, energize, and make a difference. A few of those little things include:
* Providing free beverages and water.
* Recognizing outstanding achievements. A real or virtual Wall of Fame, for example, is a great way to single out achievements, personal or business.
* Recognizing the importance of life outside of the workplace—giving parents time off to take care of their kids, or adults time off to take care of aging parents.

What are some other "little things" you or your company can do that might make a big difference for its employees? Its customers? Remember, it's about valuing, caring about, and appreciating employees, customers, and the community. Write down the ideas, discuss their value, and how the company might implement each. How does your company utilize/not utilize technology to stay connected with its people and its customers? There's a right and a wrong way, to promote better relationships. Email and other digital mediums should be used in tandem with and to complement face-to-face communications. Too often digital is used as a replacement for and falls short, even torpedoes relationships.

Can you come up with creative ways to stay connected with fellow employees, with customers? Some examples could include a company Intranet; company leaders sending out handwritten thank-you notes to employees as well as customers for jobs well-done and/or achievements, and a cork bulletin board in the company break room

that's regularly updated with the latest snapshots of big accomplishments by employees and/or their families. With geographically diverse companies, even the addition of a photo of the sender can work to keep fellow employees connected.

Ask the following questions of your leadership, or, if your leaders won't take the time to answer, ask yourself. If your leaders are "too busy," then maybe those "little things" aren't a priority at your company.

LET'S ASSUME YOUR COMPANY IS ROLLING OUT A NEW PRODUCT TOMORROW. HOW WOULD YOUR LEADER/ LEADERS RESPOND TO THE FOLLOWING SCENARIOS?

- A team member's 10-year-old son falls ill at school, and the team member asks whether it's OK to leave for the rest of the day. How would you or your leadership respond?
  - "That's too bad. We have work to do."
  - "You can run home during your lunch hour, but then come back. There's just too much to do before tomorrow's rollout."
  - "No problem. We can manage without you. Family comes first."

- A team member's aunt, with whom she's very close, is diagnosed with a brain tumor. The octogenarian lives by herself and is several hundred miles away. Your team member wants to be with her aunt. How would you or your leadership respond?
  - - "Great. If you miss work, we'll have to replace you."
  - - "No problem. You can take a leave of absence—without pay, of course. You'll have a job when you come back, but it will be whatever is available."
  - - "We understand the importance of family and will work with you on whatever it takes to make your job work."

- A customer calls on the phone to complain that your company's product doesn't solve his problem. How would your leadership respond?
  - -"Too bad. You bought it, you're stuck with it."
  - -"We know it's not the right product for the customer's needs, but don't tell him that. Convince him that he's not using it right."
  - - "Let's talk further about this. We really thought our product could solve your issues. But perhaps we were wrong. If so, of course we'll take the product back and help you find something that works better."

With each situation, the final scenario is the best and is standard operating procedure at companies with positive, values-based cultures. If that's not what happens at your company, then it's time to make changes or to make a change in your job.

Keep in mind, too, that successful companies and their people—the leadership to the individual employee— whenever possible will try to do something nice for someone else. That applies not just to fellow employees or customers, but their families, too. They'll remember it, and recognize that you do more than simply talk about positive values. You live them. Doing so is one more part of how to build strong relationships with employees and with customers.

Chapter 4
R-E-S-P-E-C-T: It Goes With Integrity
RESPECT IS THE GREATEST GIFT YOU CAN GIVE ANOTHER. –DIANE K. ADAMS

Lack of respect and integrity—conscious or not-- for your employees and/or your customers translates directly to the bottom line.

Respect and integrity is about honesty in words and actions, and diversity and inclusion in the workplace. A true positive, values-based culture embraces the differences each and every person brings to the table, and treats everyone with dignity and respect from beginning of a relationship to the end and beyond.
A best-practice approach to help ensure that integrity and respect are part of the foundation of your company's culture demands open and honest discussions among leaders and teams. Disrespect in words or actions has no place in a successful workplace.

As with other aspects of culture, to better understand integrity and respect, begin by asking questions:
- What do integrity and respect mean to you?
- Can you give examples of both in your workplace?
- Can you give grievous examples of a lack of integrity and respect in your workplace?
- What about a subtle lack of both in your workplace?

Consider the following scenarios. Each reflects a lack of respect and/or integrity in a company.
Do similar situations ever happen in your workplace? If so, what was the end result? What message did the actions convey to others in the company?
- An employee gets a phone call at work from his daughter's school. The nine-year-old is being sent home because she's sick. When the father tells his boss that he has to leave to pick up the child and won't be back the rest of the day, the boss complains loudly about the extra work he's now forced to dump on others. After the father leaves, the negative conversation continues, too.
- A hard-working female employee is on the fast track to the top. All the opportunities come her way. Then she has a child, and although her performance remains top notch, suddenly the bosses look the other way when it comes to promotions and opportunities.
- A midlevel leader habitually is late to meetings with his team. Each time, he blames someone or something else.
- A single mom loses her regular babysitter for her toddler. She needs to find another sitter, so she asks her employer for some temporary workplace and time flexibility. Of course, she says that she'll get the same amount of work done. The employer denies her the flexibility, saying she has to be at work in the office every day at the regular time. "It's your problem, not ours. And, we're not a babysitting service, so don't bring that child here," the employer says.
- A female (or male) boss constantly flirts with an attractive employee in the office. That same employee seems to get all the plum assignments, and even when he/she makes mistakes, never gets reprimanded.
- We've all come across similar situations in various workplaces. Talk about how in each instance, specific behavior modifications might enhance the level of integrity and respect at your company. What can leadership do to better model the expected value?

Think about how your company handles layoffs and/or firings. Remember, how you fire someone is as important as how your hire them because it's a time when everyone is watching.

Is the company honest about the situation and fair in its treatment of those employees facing job loss? Or does it take the more typical attitude of "Here's your pink slip. Don't let the door hit you in the back as you leave"? Most often, it's somewhere in the middle. You'll get a week or two of severance, but not much more and certainly with the attitude of a minimum of disruption for the company. Too few companies recognize the payback that comes from truly caring.

Does your company allow workers who lose their jobs to save face with grace? Except in cases of grievous misconduct, the departing employee should be allowed to leave in a respectful manner. How you chose to handle a firing should be aligned with the positive values that are the foundation of your company's culture.
Does your company's leadership take into consideration how its personnel actions play across the board? This is about clear and honest communications among the entire team.

Do departing employees and the remaining ones, too, understand the reasons for the company's actions? Beyond hiring and firing, is the leadership clear about why it does or doesn't take certain actions. For example, a company rejects raises, but is willing to offer one-time bonuses? That's the difference between a one-time expense and a recurring investment. As an employer and/or leader, it's your responsibility to make sure your people understand the thought process behind actions. It's not about defending what you do; it's about explaining it to minimize misunderstandings.

Chapter 5
Innovation: It's Not Complicated
MAKE THINGS BETTER, OR MAKE BETTER THINGS.—DIANE K. ADAMS

Innovation is a competitive differentiator. If you're willing to have the vision—if you can think long-term; if you can think big and differently, and follow through, the chances are you'll swamp your competition.
Your company's leadership continually should be looking ahead, exploring, and asking, what's the very best way to achieve the goal/goals? That's essential whether yours is a big or small business, or a private, public, or nonprofit enterprise.

Status quo doesn't cut it in today's competitive environment. In fact, without ongoing innovation, a business actually falls behind today.

No matter the goal, I think in terms of the statement "What is the simplest, most effective way to get from Point A to Point Z?" The answer may not be a 100 percent solution. That's OK. But by looking for simple and innovative solutions, and weighing the pros and cons of the different possibilities, as a leader you arrive at the most effective choice for reaching your goal—to arrive at Point Z from Point A.

Does your company approach its goals like that? If so, what are some ways to improve that approach? If not, why not, and how might you and/or others encourage a more positive approach to innovation?

Does your company's leader have a vision for the future? Is he or she willing to think big and differently? If so, does it involve change in some way? The vision could be to become a bigger company or a better one in some way or ways. Or, it could involve both.

What can you personally and/or your team do to further encourage innovation?
What is your company's attitude toward innovation? Keep in mind that talking about innovation doesn't necessarily translate into reality.

- Does your company encourage employees to think of a better way to do things? Or is the boss' way the only way? Success is a team effort!
- How do the company and its leadership handle suggestions from others? Do suggestions have a chance to be studied, understood, and possibly implemented? They should.
- Does the company hand out kudos for new and better approaches within the company's stated values? That's an important part of the formula for long-term growth and success.

Do your company and its leaders formally foster innovation? Does the company have a platform that promotes open listening forums to give everyone the opportunity to offer input? Interactive sessions can take on many forms and carry any moniker as long as they happen regularly, serve as a true interaction of thoughts and ideas, and include follow-up.

Concrete follow-up on discussions is important, not only as an indicator that the company listens and cares, but also in recognizing the value that each of its team members brings to the table.

Chapter 6
Listen More Than Talk: Communications and Collaboration Are Essential
COMPANY SUCCESS IS A TEAM SPORT.—DIANE K. ADAMS

Long-term winning companies think about their employees and leaders as a team whose members work together toward common goals. That means to sustain success requires open and honest communications and collaboration.

Command and control—when leaders take charge and provide all the direction—is OK for start-ups. But quickly that approach should evolve into the collaboration and communications approach as the company shifts from a just-get-it-done attitude to a culture that strives for excellence. That's how entrepreneurial companies of any size grow and transition into established long-term successes.

Are open communications and collaboration standard operating procedure at your company? That means leadership truly listens and doesn't penalize individuals—employees or customers--who speak up. Dictatorial bosses have no place in today's business environment.

Does your company/leadership follow up on communications and discussions? It should. Soliciting feedback means little unless a company follows up. That's truly listening.

Does your company encourage teamwork? Remember, success is a team effort. Each person brings something unique to the table. Capitalize on it by focusing on the "we" and not the "me".

COMMUNICATIONS AND COLLABORATION MUST BE PERVASIVE, TOO.
Are they that way at your company? Or, is your company's leadership arbitrary in its openness? In its decisions, too? The latter often can happen with compensation decisions. One employee may get a raise, for example, and not another, without having established rubrics that lay out specific accomplishments required. Without specific performance requirements, employees and leaders don't really know what's expected and can't align their goals with company goals.

Think about how your company does or doesn't connect with its team members, customers, and so on. What does it do right? How can it improve communications?

Meetings should be approached as an opportunity for interactive communications. Do you hear a variation on the following at your company: "Meetings are a waste of time?"

They shouldn't be. Meetings of any kind should be informational, educational, and a valuable opportunity to exchange ideas. It's about maintaining focus on the tasks at hand, capitalizing on team member strengths, and everyone working toward the same long-range goals.

One of my favorite ways to do that involves what I call a Meeting in a Box (MIAB)! It's an electronic outline—your business can develop its own format--of the current basics to include in every staff meeting no matter the agenda:
- Business update—what's top-of-mind for the company at the moment; this could include key messages from senior leaders as well as expectations of deliverables;
- Team priorities and updates on the status of accomplishing those goals; and
- What's top-of-mind for your team.
- Anything else that may be current or important for the company and team, including specific projects that need to be examined.

An MIAB also should include a final wrap-up of meeting actions and the priorities for the next meeting.
Does your company have a version of a Meeting in a Box? If so, does it work or are there ways to improve it? If not, what can you and others do to encourage that approach?

Chapter 7
The Customer's Success Is Your Success
HAPPIER EMPLOYEES TRANSLATE INTO HAPPIER CUSTOMERS. –DIANE K. ADAMS

The customer experience has a lot to do with your company's success or failure. If a customer succeeds most often you do, too. Therefore it makes sense to make sure your customer succeeds. The No. 1 question to always ask yourself whether you're a manager, and employee, or the owner of the business is: What can I do to make that person's or that company's experience exceptional?

Overwhelmingly customers say one bad experience is enough to prompt them to take their business elsewhere. What do you or your company do to make your customers' experiences exceptional? Having formal customer satisfaction surveys isn't enough either. First, many surveys fall far short due to their content and/or lack of follow-up, and some don't even relate to the specific company's product or service.

Some of the key ingredients of a customer experience include:
- The customer comes first—especially don't make the customer jump through a lot of hurdles.
- The agent's knowledge of a product or service.
- Friendly and engaging agent.

Some additional ways to make sure that your customer's experience is exceptional include:
- Exceed expectations; do more and go beyond what the customer expects.
- Personalize the experience; take the time to know the customer; do your homework.
- Deliver in the expected time frame, or better yet, ahead of schedule.
- Be willing to make exceptions to the rules.

Does your company strive to exceed customer expectations? Does the customer come first? How might you and your colleagues improve your company's customer service? Start with just one action, apply it across the board, and then build on that one action.

Does your company have a customer satisfaction survey? Is it tailored specifically to your company, its operations, and its product and/or services? Even if the company spends lots of money on fancy software and surveys, it means little if the survey isn't tailored to the product and services.

Does the company follow up on the surveys with the customers and with the employees? Again, it should. A successful customer satisfaction survey doesn't have to be formal or cost lots of money. It can be a simple phone call, email, or note to a customer to ask a few questions:
- How was your experience?
- What did we do right?
- What did we do wrong?
- (If we did something wrong . . .)How can we make it right?
- How can we make it better than "right"?
- How can we do better next time?

Survey follow-up is essential, too. If a customer had a poor experience or needs something additional, you must do the follow-up. Make sure that the customer's experience, instead of being negative, becomes positive—make it better than right.

Follow-up is an opportunity to develop those all-important customer relationships that can sustain a company through good and bad economic times.

What's the bottom line when it comes to customer service at your company? Does your company really care about taking care of its customers, about meeting the needs of its customers, and about solving customer challenges, issues, and complaints?

That's the key to real and true customer satisfaction, loyalty, and repeat business no matter the external economics. Long-term success is not about selling the most product or services. It's about satisfying customers and potential customers first. Sales become the natural outgrowth of customer service.

Chapter 8

Paying It Forward: Giveback and Social Responsibility

THERE'S NO GREATER REWARD PERSONALLY AND PROFESSIONALLY THAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE FOR OTHERS.—DIANE K. ADAMS

Giveback is about social responsibility and is an essential ingredient for a company's long-term success. That's because when people volunteer and give back to their communities, people turn to those people's companies, and companies grow their customer base and their bottom lines. In addition, giveback nurtures happier and more engaged employees, who in turn do a better in their jobs and make customers happier.

Lack of giveback, too, can be a job deal breaker for the millennial generation.
Studies also show that giveback/social responsibility translates into dollars and cents at companies' bottom lines. Those companies with employees who give back to their communities have increased productivity, happier employees, lower attrition rates, and their employees take fewer sick days.

However a company choses to promote giveback and the specifics of that giveback are up to the company. However key elements should include:
- Company-sponsorship.
- Providing employees/volunteers time off for giveback.
- Recognition and praise for giveback by the company.
- Make it fun and rewarding.

Is your company socially responsible? Does it promote volunteering? How might it improve at both? If your company hasn't yet embraced the value of giveback, you can encourage it one volunteer and one cause at a time. Some questions to consider if you're looking for the right giveback for your company:
- Is there a specific cause that dovetails your company's mission statement?
- Is there a specific cause that links well with the company's products or services? For example, a food producer might hook up with a local food bank to donate and/or deliver food.
- Is there a specific cause that might appeal to employees? For example, if an individual suffers from a debilitating disease, fellow employees may feel a real connection doing something to help a related non-profit.
- Ask employees what matters to them.

Here are a few nonprofit organizations that offer willing and potential volunteers a starting place in terms of identifying where and how to volunteer:
- A Billion + Change Campaign (www.abillionpluschange.org): formed in 2008 as a campaign to leverage $1 billion in skilled volunteer and pro bono services from the corporate community; includes resources and information on pro bono services, setting up programs, and volunteering
- idealist (www.idealist.org): a nonprofit source of volunteer opportunities, events, and resources

- Points of Light Foundation (www.pointsoflight.org): created as an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization to encourage and empower the spirit of service
- Volunteer Match (www.volunteermatch.org): a national nonprofit that connects volunteers with opportunities and causes

How might your company further encourage a giveback culture among its team members? Think about unique and unusual ways in which you can encourage that. An employer, for example, could agree to donate cash to a nonprofit of an employee's choice.

Chapter 9
Learning Is Your Edge: Invest in Your People
PEOPLE JOIN A COMPANY FOR THE OPPORTUNITY. THEY STAY FOR THE INVESTMENT.
–DIANE K. ADAMS

The best companies and their leaders recognize that talent is the edge. Therefore, value your people and invest in them. Does your company invest in its talent? Or, does the company consider its employees easily expendable? Companies must provide team members the tools to develop and grow professionally and personally from the first day on the job. Ongoing education and training across the board is essential at long-term successful companies.

HOW MIGHT YOUR COMPANY BOLSTER EDUCATION AND TRAINING EFFORTS?
Education and training is not expendable, and should include:
- Career Opportunities: Employees need to know they have a future and that you are willing to invest in that future in the form of education and training, and personal support and mentoring. In organizations with solid learning cultures, every employee has a personalized learning development plan.
- Communications: Two-way sharing of knowledge is an excellent learning tool. That means creating a collaborative workplace, as opposed to one that's strictly top-down command and control.
- Compensation/Benefits: Compensation/benefits don't have to be top tier, but they must be fair and equitable. Again, it's about a willingness to commit to and invest in your teams.
- Recognition/Feedback: Along with recognition comes powerful feedback, which in turn can provide a learning experience for everyone. In addition to quarterly reviews, the best leaders provide ongoing feedback as a natural element of their communications. Incidentally, that feedback should not be at someone else's expense. Any criticism should be individually administered and accompanied by constructive ways for improvement.
- Senior Leadership: Teams need leaders to set the example and to mentor others. Remember, culture, as in living a company's values, comes from the top.
- Employee Morale: Ongoing education and learning, along with competitive compensation and benefits—including perks—have an impact on morale and commitment to growth. Don't make the narrow-minded move to slash benefits without regard for how that might sap team energy, commitment, and moral

If your company doesn't have an established learning plan to help its employees learn and grow, how might you and other team members encourage the leadership to provide it?, Start small rather than grandiose, and your

employer and employees will be more likely to embrace the concept. What about a pitch-in lunch with a speaker who is an expert in a particular skill that can benefit participants? I call that setting a lunch and learn!

Does your company have a formal strength assessment to identify individual areas of personal excellence? Does your company capitalize on individual strengths to strengthen the team? If yes, how can the company improve? If not, again how might you encourage such assessments in terms of a win-win for all parties?

At your company, are people held accountable for personal skill development? Personal skill development should be part of personal performance. Remember, status quo isn't enough in today's competitive environment.

Chapter 10
Leaders Who Drive Operational Excellence Net Extraordinary Results
LEADERSHIP IS BRINGING ORDINARY PEOPLE TOGETHER TO ACHIEVE EXTRAORDINARY RESULTS.
--DIANE K. ADAMS

Operational excellence means an organization simply works—its values-based culture is right, its operations disciplined, its people challenged, and customers happy. That translates into exceptional results no matter external economics.

Remember, culture comes from the top. Behind this kind of operational excellence are great leaders. These are individuals who have the passion, drive, and intentional commitment to excellence in everything they do. Beyond these inherent traits, I've identified five leadership behaviors that are accountable and measurable, and that are characteristic of great leaders across the board in any organization or industry. They include:

- Put Clients and Others First. That means always doing the right thing and not necessarily what's easiest.
- Regularly Communicate with Teams Openly, Honestly, and without Negative Repercussions. Success, after all, is a team effort.
- Develop and Reward Those Teams as Part of Overall Accountability. Accountability extends to the leadership, too.
- Make a Difference and Achieve Results. They're a positive force for peers, the company, and the community.
- Aim for Innovation in All That the Company Does. This means they not only focus on innovative ideas, actions, and processes, but do so with an eye to future success.

A leader who models these behaviors and builds them into everything his or her company does can help transform a company that's struggling or simply getting by into one with operational excellence.

Great leaders encourage others to lead, too.

How does your company foster leadership in others? What else can it do to promote leadership excellence?

To help encourage leadership excellence, a company must first identify the values that are important, and then define the expectations based on those values. Those expectations could be a few key behaviors essential for leaders.

 For example, let's consider the value of open communications and what leaders can do to model and encourage that. Regular staff meetings are one way. Those meetings should be interactive and contain solid content (a

Meeting in a Box, for example), with discussions on specific actions as they relate to company goals, and follow-up, too. Requiring leadership to issue regular internal memos with updates on current issues and concerns also promotes open communications and maintains company-wide focus.

To help identify potential leaders at yours or any company, ask the following questions about potential candidates:

- Does the person have the ability to care, motivate, and inspire others? Can he or she rally others? That ability is inherent in true leaders.
- Can the individual communicate clear expectations no matter what? A leader must be able to understand and live a company's culture, and he or she must also be able to clearly convey shortcomings as well as kudos to others.
- Is the person a team player? I keep saying this, but success IS a team effort.
- Does he or she have a positive approach? Winning companies and their leaders exude positive energy. There are no losers, either, only those who haven't yet achieved their full potential.
- Is the individual open to feedback and makes changes as a result? I look for people who take feedback and learn from it.

How do your company's leaders stack up? Identifying solid leadership requires an assessment similar to that of identifying potential leaders. Pay careful attention when it comes to small companies. With fewer leaders, one mistake can have a broader impact that's tougher to correct.

Chapter 11
My 7 Points to Culture System of Success!
A VALUES-BASED CULTURE IS THE FOUNDATION FOR YOUR LONG-TERM SUCCESS—DIANE K. ADAMS

Now that you understand what makes up a great culture, let's take the next step to implementation, the 7 Points to Culture system of success. This is your seven-point guide. When all points are aligned, ongoing, and intentional throughout your organization, you create an energized, high-performing company.

THE 7 POINTS TO CULTURE INCLUDE:
1. Define Your Cultural Values and Behaviors
2. Communicate, Communicate, Communicate
3. Integrate Your Values into All Aspects of Your Company
4. Drive Culture through Leadership
5. Show You Care: Engage and Invest in Your Team
6. Give Back: Make a Difference beyond the Workplace
7. Make It Fun: Reward, Recognize, and Celebrate

Don't be overwhelmed by the idea of developing such a pervasive culture. Instead, try one step at a time. Get started by asking the following questions:

Are your company's values inherent in everything? Are they reflected in employees' and leaders' actions, as well as customer interactions? They should be. What can you, your teams, and the company do to ensure that? Culture, after all, is pervasive.

Does your company have a VSE or a similar approach that clearly spells out visions, strategies, and execution for all participants? Developing your company's culture should be approached as any other business initiative. That means with a vision (overarching goal), strategy (stages and actions necessary to achieve the vision), and execution (subset of actions to be completed in line with the specific strategy). Remember, the VSE approach helps to maintain a constant and consistent focus on the same values and toward the same goals.

Create your company's own VSE today by making the commitment and taking the time to do so. That means open and honest communications at all levels, the sharing of ideas and options, and then the development of an approach that works.

Chapter 12
Make It Happen
SUCCESS IS THE INTERSECTION OF PREPARATION AND OPPORTUNITY. DIANE K. ADAMS

Now, step by step, let's get started on your 7 Points to Culture system of success.

Remember, each step is designed to ensure that your company's values and its culture are pervasive—a part of everything its employees and/or the company and its leadership say and do.

POINT 1: DEFINE YOUR CULTURAL VALUES AND BEHAVIORS.

This is your company's persona and the opportunity to ensure that the values important to you, your company, and your teams really are a part of operations and actions.

What are those important values? To find out, it's important to solicit input from others—not only leaders, but individual employees, too. If there's disagreement, keep talking about it until you have agreement. Some issues and questions to consider in your company's discussions include:

- Why do the values in general matter; why does a specific value matter?
- What are the expectations related to each value in terms of leaders, team members, and beyond?
- How will those expectations be integrated into actions and behaviors?
- How should expectations be reflected in the company's policies and procedures?

Now, write down the values.

POINT 2: COMMUNICATE, COMMUNICATE, COMMUNICATE.

Now that you've defined the values that are important and have committed them in writing, specifically and intentionally get the word to everyone in the company.

That means leadership should introduce the values, talk about them with everyone whenever possible, follow up on discussions, and model the associated values-based behaviors. A blast email, posted notice, or even sign on the wall is not enough.

Open and honest communications is about interactive discussions, ongoing listening, and follow-up to both. Does your company's leadership talk about the company's values? Are they an integral part of meetings and discussions? A good way for a company and its leadership to convey commitment to its values is by incorporating them ongoing into meetings and discussions. Peer recognition is another good way to communicate the importance of specific values. A simple shout-out in a company meeting, or even a handwritten note from a leader can let others know the importance of strong values-based behavior. That kind of peer recognition does make a difference.

Talk about some ways in which your company and/or its leadership can further commit to and communicate its values.

POINT 3: INTEGRATE YOUR VALUES INTO ALL ASPECTS OF YOUR COMPANY
Leaders at long-term successful companies live the values they promote. Actions, after all, truly are a reflection of words.

Those values are evident in all that the company and its teams say and do, too. If someone on the team rejects a value, the company's leadership has the culture courage to do what's necessary to effect a change.
Are the values and actions aligned at your company? That means paying attention to the details related to a value, too. Everyone must buy into the values and do their best to live and act on them all of the time. Values are not meant to be arbitrary.

POINT 4: DRIVE CULTURE THROUGH LEADERSHIP
Culture comes from the top. If a leader refuses to live the value, then it's up to a company's ownership to insist on it, or make a change in leadership. Otherwise, the company's long-term survival is at stake, especially in today's competitive business environment.

Rate your company's leadership in terms of driving a positive values-based culture. Long-term successful companies and their great leaders model their values every day. Don't be discouraged if your leaders come up short. Instead, think about what you and your peers can do to make a difference.

What else can your company and its leaders do in terms of revising behaviors to further promote a positive values-based culture? A great culture isn't created overnight. It takes time, commitment, and deliberate effort. And, it happens one step at a time.

POINT 5: SHOW YOU CARE: ENGAGE AND INVEST IN YOUR TEAM
If a company's goal is long-term success, that company and its leadership must be willing to commit to engaging and investing in their people. That doesn't just mean fair financial compensation. It's about providing ongoing training and education, and taking the time to fully embrace the concept of success as a team effort.
Does your company spend the money for new equipment, yet cut out the training? Or does the company pay for one person's training and figure everyone else can figure it out? Both are short-sighted approaches and convey that an employer doesn't care enough.
What kind of training could benefit your teams? What skill sets will make your people better at what they do? Not all training comes down to expending dollars and cents, either. Sometimes investing in your team comes down to a company's willingness to give its people the time to learn.
One of my favorite approaches to training is what I call Lunch and Learn. That's when we bring in an outside expert (or find one on staff) and hold a training class over lunch. It's an easy way to show commitment to continuing education and learning.

POINT 6: GIVE BACK AND MAKE A DIFFERENCE BEYOND THE WORKPLACE
Companies that are socially responsible and give back to their communities are resilient and thrive in good and bad economic times. Their teams are energized; their customers committed, and their communities inspired.
Is your company committed to give back? True socially responsible companies aren't those who grudgingly "allow" employees to volunteer on their own time. Instead, those are the companies and their leadership who

embrace volunteering; commit to providing leadership and employees time to do so, and recognize them for their commitment.

Even the smallest companies can give back. It starts with a commitment to a project or cause. Often small businesses will donate products or services as a first step. As the positive feedback grows, so does the enthusiasm and commitment.

What project or cause suits your company? Perhaps a fellow employee, family member, or friend is ill or needs help. Often other employees will rally to help that person.

Is there a local or area project that needs help and interests your team? Ask your people. After all, it's their time and efforts. Food banks, outdoor or educational organizations, and community outreach groups often need help. Plenty of unsung corporate heroes regularly build playgrounds, run assistance groups, and willingly donate time and money.

POINT 7: MAKE IT FUN: REWARD, RECOGNIZE, AND CELEBRATE
Fun is serious business in the workplace. After all, no one likes to day after day spend hours somewhere that's agonizingly boring.

Fun doesn't mean running around laughing, playing, and accomplishing nothing. Instead, in the workplace, fun can be in the form of reward, recognition, and camaraderie.
Is your workplace fun? Think about ways in which you and your colleagues and/or leaders can ease the pressure in your workplace.

What does your company do to recognize outstanding performance? What else might be done to further celebrate a job or jobs well-done? Remember, talk about ideas with your peers and your leaders. That's what open communication is all about.

End of workbook. For more information about Diane K. Adams visit www.dianekadams.com