

4 Tips on Establishing a Strong Culture at Your Company

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Free snacks. On-site massages. Ping-pong tables. Napping pods. Trendy perks like these are often associated with positive company cultures, but a truly great culture is about more than having a playground at your office; it is about who you are at the deepest level. A great company culture is what makes you speak with pride about your workplace and the people whom you work.

Basically, **culture** is about how a company treats people: employees, customers, shareholders, the public, and everyone else the company touches. A company's culture is based on the values a company and its employees hold, which are communicated through guiding principles, expectations, and goals.

Here is what it means to create a real company culture, one that is more meaningful and lasting than arcade games and golf carts:

1. Define Your Guiding Principles

Your company culture is based on what your company values. To create an intentional culture you must first determine what is truly important to your company.

At BIA, we've built and maintained a culture of knowledge and innovation, principles we've emphasized from the start. These principles give us a way of thinking that influences how we do things and how we talk about what we do. We all speak the same language.

Once we laid our foundational principles, we were able to define our mission and vision. All three of these things – mission, vision, and guiding principles – make up the basis of our culture. Determining your principles at the outset allows you to grow an authentic culture remaining true to your roots.

2. Invest in What Is Important to You

Never lose sight of the significance of your guiding principles. To foster a culture of growth and improvement, you have to build these principles into your everyday way of doing things. Conduct trainings and other learning activities that support your principles. For example, at BIA, we have weekly lunch and learns. Every month at least one of those is focused on our mission, vision, and guiding principles.

In addition to regular lunch and learns, you can identify opportunities for employees to attain industry certifications. Not only will such certifications help your team members grow, but they will also boost the reputation of your organization as a whole. BIA operates in the litigation technology industry, and we're currently on track to achieve the **certified e-discovery specialist** (CEDS) certification for every member of our sales and support staff.

3. Hire for Cultural Fit

It is important that employees' beliefs and behaviors align with the company's values. When hiring, look for candidates who genuinely care about and relate to your foundational principles. It's a huge risk to take a chance on someone who won't mesh well with the existing team, doesn't share goals with colleagues, and isn't aligned with the mission of the company. These people can be detrimental to overall culture and morale. Avoid these hires by including team members in the interview process to get feedback on each candidate from multiple parties.

4. Put People First

At the end of the day, your company wouldn't function without your people – your employees. At BIA, we're proud to have fostered an inviting culture where our coworkers are like family. For example, we established a leave-sharing policy that allows employees to donate extra vacation days to their colleagues. These donated days are typically given to employees who have unexpected medical issues or serious family situations they need to address.

We also decided early on that we wouldn't pit members of our sales team against each other. Instead, we encourage our sales people to collaborate toward our common goals. Further, we emphasize the importance of rewarding our team through our WOW! award program, which allows team members to recognize and celebrate individuals who demonstrate our guiding principles, go above and beyond to meet a critical deliverable or deadline, or otherwise complete tasks with excellence, quality, and creativity. We try each quarter to hold a fun company event at each office. From bowling nights to Yankees games, we often do activities that include our employees' family members in order to further build the sense of family throughout BIA.

The result of all this is that we have a staff of people who get along well and are committed to each other and to the company. Having happy, engaged employees benefits our clients, so they reap the reward of a dedicated, in-sync team devoted to providing a superior product and exceptional customer service.

Establishing a Strong Company Culture Can Have Significant and Lasting Benefits, Such As

Employee Engagement: Creating a culture where employees share the same values and goals fosters emotional attachments among team members. When people believe in what they do, they're more committed to the organization and engaged in the success of the business.

Financial Success: Employee engagement positively impacts a company's bottom line. In fact, **recent Gallup research** found that companies in the top quartile of employee engagement

21 percent more profitable than those in the bottom quartile.

Recruitment: Many job seekers place high importance on a company's vision and culture. If used as a recruitment tool, your culture can attract likeminded individuals who believe in your vision.

Retention: Did you know that engaged employees are 87 percent less likely to leave an organization, according to Gallup? With a turnover rate of less than 5 percent, we at BIA have surely found this to be true.

Remember: Strong company cultures aren't limited to the Googles and flashy startups of the world. Furthermore, just because you offer awesome perks, that doesn't mean you have an awesome culture. Start instead by defining what's important to your organization.

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