

Fostering a Positive Workplace Culture:

Exploring the Six Key Elements

By **Johanna Van Bilsen**, Learning
& Development Specialist at MaxPeople

In a time when many employees can easily feel disengaged and disconnected from company culture, it is more important than ever for employers and leaders to truly understand how to foster a strong workplace culture that is meaningful and resonates with their people.

Workplace culture is the character and personality of your organization. It's the combination of values, traditions, beliefs, interactions and attitudes that influence the behaviour of its members at all levels. A positive corporate culture is one that not only engages and motivates employees, but also boosts a company's bottom line.

Here are six key elements of workplace culture.

1. **A strong vision statement** that is authentic to the work being done. This helps orient employees, clients and suppliers to the purpose and direction of the organization, while inspiring trust and engagement.



2. **Values** are the guidelines that establish the necessary behaviours and mindset needed to make the vision a reality. Weave values into performance management evaluations, provide feedback on how to live the values, tie values to recognition measures, ensure visibility of values in your organization and incorporate values into common language used by all staff.
3. **Practices, procedures and policies** are how the vision and values are ingrained in and supported by everyday life. They ensure everyone is working from the same playbook. Assess practices, procedures and policies through an equitable lens to ensure they are fair for everyone and are not underpinned by discrimination or inequality.
4. **The organization's history** tells the company's journey and reinforces the workplace culture. In order to know where the company will go, it is important to know where it came from, who helped get it off the ground and why, and key milestones that led to where we are today. Do your people know the key events of your organization's history?
5. **Environment** is the physical aspects of a workplace, both virtual and in person. This has a direct impact on the employees' productivity, health and safety, comfort, concentration, job satisfaction and overall morale. An unsafe or unfavourable workplace environment leads to stress, errors, injuries, distractions and decreased performance.
6. **People** are what bring your culture to life. As Simon Sinek says, "You don't hire for skills, you hire for attitude. You can always teach skills." Ensure you take the time to find the right talent who hold similar values and can add to your workplace culture in a positive way.

Engage People with the Why

At a time of labour shortages, fierce competition for talent and a workforce who are reconsidering their perspective on work–life balance, it is essential to foster a culture that will enable you to retain and attract top talent.

Your employees likely know what your organization does and how it does it, but do they know the "why." Why does the company exist and why should they want to be a part of it? This is the time to reinforce with your people the "WIFM?" (What's in it for me?).

Typically, our minds go to salary first, but is that really what is going to make people stay through thick and thin? While competitive salaries are essential, we know employees are looking beyond pay to find employers that have their wellbeing at heart.

Next, we think of perks and benefits. These are nice to have, but if they are not seen as added value by your people, it will not make a difference in your retention efforts. It is key to select options that help your people achieve their personal and professional life goals. When we support our peoples' ability to achieve their needs and aspirations, they will bring their most focused and productive selves to work in return.

Lastly, we know employees want opportunities to do great work and become more efficient, capable contributors. As employers and leaders, you can benefit from investing in your people's development by creating a rich source of talent internally that can be leveraged as your business and human capital needs evolve. Be sure to utilize a variety of development tools, such as stretch opportunities, cross-functional training, educational funding, coaching, learning portals and mentorship programs.

You and your team can intentionally create an atmosphere where great work can be done if you take the time to consider your workplace culture, and what speaks to your people, your clients and your vision for the organization. ■

Johanna Van Bilsen is a Learning & Development Specialist at MaxPeople (maxpeoplehr.com), an HR consulting firm specializing in HR, Training, Recruitment and Employment Law services.

For more information, join us for MaxPeople's upcoming webinar, "Creating a Culture of Learning: Three Key Levers," on April 12. Register at: payroll.ca