**Culture and values: definitions, differences and examples**

Having well-defined values and a company culture allows organisations to distinguish themselves from competitors and create a healthy working environment for employees and clients. Many consider values and culture to mean the same thing, yet there are fundamental differences between them. Learning the differences between these concepts ensures you use them to improve your organisation's reputation. In this article, we discuss culture and values, list their differences and provide some examples to help your understanding.

**What are culture and values?**

To learn what culture and values mean, review the definitions below:

**What is culture?**

Otherwise known as corporate or company culture, culture refers to the way an organisation conducts business. It describes the formal and informal systems, behaviours and shared ethos that make up the work environment of a department, office or firm. Company culture determines how employees and management interact and handle operations. Management strives to create a positive and healthy culture where employees feel appreciated and supported throughout their tenure. Ensuring employees feel valued leads to increased morale, higher productivity and reduced turnover.

**What are values?**

Company values are the principles and standards that guide business actions, decisions and behaviours. Core values sum up what the organisation stands for and what drives them to perform. These principles inform employees, management and customers about their priorities, beliefs and commitments. Values directly impact company culture because culture functions as an expression of these values. Having well-defined values allows organisations to communicate their goals and motivate employees towards achieving them. They reflect what the organisation and its employees stand for, providing them with a sense of responsibility and duty. Employees make decisions that align with the company values and differentiate the organisation from the standpoint of its competition.

**Differences between values and culture**

Learning the differences between values and culture makes it easier to differentiate between them. Some key differences include:

**Implementation**

Company culture takes longer to implement and change compared to company values. This is because it requires an organisation to assess the effectiveness of its structure, including leadership and the success of teams. An in-depth evaluation is necessary to identify weaknesses in a company's culture and create strategies that resolve them. New culture implementation also requires a commitment to change, requiring management to communicate changes and ensure employees are on board before making changes. Implementing new company values is simpler and only requires an organisation to announce its new principles for business processes and decision-making. The organisation works on implementing new values immediately by using them to set work priorities and guide team actions. Slow implementation comes from seeing the full effect these value changes have on the company culture.

**Impact**

Values and culture have varying impacts on an organisation and its employees. Although leadership determines corporate culture, its impact is most prevalent amongst employees. Employees contribute to the company culture and are responsible for interpreting it through their actions and interactions with one another. Working together towards an intentional culture becomes easier when the organisation has clear values that create a shared commitment amongst employees. This means that company values have a higher impact on company culture and the leaders that implement them. Values encourage leadership to perform to a certain standard so that they may influence the commitment and morale of staff members. The impact on leadership also filters down to customers, business partners and competitors by influencing how they view the organisation in light of these guiding principles.

**Benefits**

A good company culture leads to better employee retention, as it fosters employee engagement and encourages participation. Some cultural practices that contribute towards employee retention include training and development opportunities and allowing employees to voice their opinions. When consumers know that an organisation treats its employees well, they're more likely to support it, showing how good company culture also helps foster a good brand reputation. This reputation also helps to attract qualified candidates for job openings rather than having top talent choose to work for the competition. Other benefits of good company culture include better communication channels and increased productivity. Alternatively, core business values aid decision-making processes by making it easier for organisations to make choices based on well-defined principles. They also influence the credibility and respect of an organisation by allowing them to make and incorporate values that everyone agrees on. Core values also increase business growth and stability. This is because workflows become more seamless as everyone's committed to the same end goal. When employees connect and share their work's purpose, they're more likely to involve themselves personally.

**Consistency**

Company values are eternal and usually never change. They guide all business decisions and are typically principles that every organisation wants to encourage, such as integrity, respect and transparency. To encourage a shared commitment and belief amongst employees, it's necessary for an organisation to deeply engrain its core values and keep them static. Continuous shifting in these principles causes an identity crisis and may lead to aimless goals and decision-making. Conversely, culture adapts and changes with time. This is because it's informed by those who work for the organisation. Departments often vary in the amount of staff and experience they have, which has a direct impact on culture. Some departments may have their own cultures shaped by working practices, location, the number of employees and job discipline. Good company culture develops organically with some direction from core values.

**Focus**

Values show a concern for people, while company culture shows concern for results. Since values are people-focused, they're unlikely to change. To deliver results, an organisation may continuously adapt its culture to adapt to customers, society and technology.