

How Leaders Build Cultures of Success

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As a leader, you're the person who employees look to when it comes to setting the tone of a company's culture and how an organization is run. This is why it's so important to have a defined roadmap when taking the helm and leading an organization down the path to success.

However, having a clear vision is only half the battle as a leader. Sure, you may have what you believe to be the perfect game plan for your organization to achieve success, but one of the biggest mistakes I've seen otherwise good leaders make is the inability to inspire their employees. Even with the most clear-cut game plan, if you are unable to motivate your employees, don't be surprised when you have a workforce that is more uninspired and listless than gung-ho about the future of the business. Unfortunately, this happens in organizations more often than any of us care to admit.

According to a recent "State of the Global Workplace" report by Gallup, "85 percent of employees are not engaged or actively disengaged at work." This lack of interest results in a whopping \$7 trillion in lost productivity worldwide.

But don't let those stats dissuade you. In fact, use them as fuel as you and your team take steps to build a culture of success. So what can you do as a leader to ensure that this happens on your watch?

Here are a few tactics from my book, "Organization Culture Killers: Deadly Expectations" to get you started.

1. **Define what success means to your organization.** Perhaps it's fulfilling a particular quota by the end of the

fiscal year, bringing on a specified number of new hires, or improving customer satisfaction. Whatever it is, be smart when addressing what success means to your organization.

2. **Build a strong foundation.** Regardless of whether you're a company of five or fifty thousand, it's imperative that you have a clear and fully defined mission, vision, values, and management system. Ensure that your workforce is aware of your expectations (policies, processes, and procedures) to meet your definition of success. This ensures that everyone is on the same page and is working towards a similar goal.
3. **Beware of the concrete barrier.** In my years of experience consulting with leaders of various organizations, I've repeatedly witnessed an invisible barrier, referred to as the 'concrete barrier' because it forms from defects in the organization's foundation. It also blocks and distorts the flow of information between senior leadership (those who define success) and the rest of the organization (those who are responsible for delivering success). As you can imagine, these communication issues often lead to missed opportunities, falsified data, misunderstandings and workforce strife, preventing organizations from traveling their desired path to success. Clear and transparent communication of your definition of success, the expectations necessary to achieve success and the value they bring towards delivering sustainable success with your employees is the first step in mitigating this from happening.
4. **Measure your organization's progress to success.** When defining your expectations, utilize specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) goals to track progress towards success. Goals based on leading indicators will provide more relevant and reliable data, while motivating the workforce to deliver

success more efficiently and effectively.

5. **Feedback and follow-up are critical.** Sure, it's easy to shut the door of your office and pound away at emails all day (the old adage, "out of sight, out of mind" comes to mind), but if you truly want to know the state of your organization, you need to be constantly seek feedback. This includes tracking and trending the progress towards delivery of your goals in addition to observing work in progress, having conversations with your workforce to share updates and learn about opportunities for improvement, and assuring what is being reported is being delivered as reported. Perhaps you're overlooking something that could help propel your organization forward and bring it one step closer to success. You won't know unless the lines of communication are open.

These are just a few steps to get you started on the path to building a culture of success within your organization. Remember, clearly defining what success means to your business, having a well-defined management system in place, and possessing a clear road map to achieving success are the first steps you should take as a leader. Once these items are in place and shared with members of your workforce, you can move ahead confidently knowing that everyone is on the same page and that they share similar goals to creating a successful organization.



About the Author: *Tabitha Laser is a multi-faceted professional with over 25 years of leadership experience in a variety of industries ranging from oil and gas, energy, manufacturing, agriculture, construction and more. Her diverse background has provided her opportunities to work with government agencies and some of the world's largest companies, including Fortune 500 companies, BP, 3M, and General Mills. Her expertise has fueled her passion to help shape the next generation of leaders, especially millennials, to help avoid the pitfalls of their predecessors and lead beyond best. Tabitha is the author of Organization Culture Killers. The first book in a series of leadership books she calls, "The Deadly Practices." Follow Tabitha.*