

The Five Pillars of an Amazing Workplace



Whether you're a professional working in a company, or an executive in charge of a group of employees, the quality of your workplace matters. The conditions you enjoy, or endure, contribute in a very meaningful way toward the success or struggle of the enterprise.

Let's examine some of the primary areas that contribute to an amazing workplace.

1) Community

Whereas culture is a more general articulation of a company's approach and internal philosophies on conducting business and how working conditions are affected as a result, community is how the group of professionals working there feel toward one another.

Community is a feeling of fellowship with others, as a result

of sharing common attitudes, interests, and goals. That doesn't necessarily mean that you all need to become best friends or spend every waking minute together at social gatherings outside of the office, but it certainly speaks to the level of camaraderie within the workplace.

Some workplaces have a feeling of family among the professionals working there – that's the community we're talking about. Of course, the company's culture contributes to this from the top down, including hiring practices and deciding who would be a good fit, but from there on, it's firmly on the shoulders of the team to maintain and nurture that community.

What contributes to a healthy community in a workplace?

Communication is one area that holds up a strong community. If the professionals in an office mostly keep to themselves and the culture of the office is to keep your head down and get your work done, there won't be much of a feeling of community there. On the other hand, if colleagues are encouraged to work together and communicate openly with one another, help one another in times of challenge and share in each other's successes – you're well on your way to developing a lively community. Communication is the tie that binds.

2) Culture

There is a distinct and yet subtle difference between culture and community. While community is about the interaction between employees, culture is the values and vision of the company as a whole.

Culture determines the conditions that collectively influence the workplace atmosphere. These can include policies, norms, and unwritten standards for behavior, values and company philosophy, structure, and communication standards – as set by executives.

To a large degree culture is the yardstick of the behavior set by those in charge. The attitude towards fellow colleagues and employees by managers and executives will trickle down into the attitudes of their juniors.

Culture impacts how employees interact with their work, their colleagues, and the team in general. It impacts job satisfaction and happiness, longevity, and loyalty. Organizations with stronger cultures outperform their competitors financially and are generally more successful over the long term.

Take a recent popular TV show that has announced its end. Reports of an alleged toxic work environment surfaced from employees, guests, and witnesses of poor behavior on the show. This was a far cry from what we saw on the TV each day. Within a year, the show's host announced that they would be ending their run after next season.

3) Communication

Communication is one of our most fundamental skills that make working together in any group, no matter the size, either a pleasant and productive endeavor, or a complete disaster. Whether it's the customer service representative communicating with your consumers, or it's an executive directing those professionals who work under him or her, communication is essential – and good, effective communication even more so.

Unclear directions, wishy-washy orders, barking aggressive answers or requests – these all add up to a pretty unpleasant and unproductive environment. Whereas clear and kind communication, taking care to listen and understand what's needed to get things done – that's starting to sound more like a fun and productive place to work, isn't it?

That's not to say that things don't ever get tense or stressful in a company. Of course, they do. Sometimes it

requires a great deal of urgency to get something done. Time can be of the essence and getting things done right the first time is absolutely a necessary skill in some positions. In some cases, lives depend on it.

But effective communication is still needed, whether you have a week to complete a task or a minute. You can still have a sense of urgency, without being unkind. In the words of Steve Wozniak from the film “Steve Jobs” – “It’s not binary. You can be decent and gifted at the same time.”

Communication has a hand in every aspect of a workplace. From the transparency of management, to clearly stated job descriptions, acknowledging when good work is done, helping a colleague when they’re having trouble, chatting around the water cooler, or even making it safe for employees to talk with their higher-ups or HR. The whole machine falls apart without good and effective communication.

4) Career

Some folks might clock in to work and head home when the whistle blows and collect a paycheck at the end of the week. That’s not what we’re talking about here. That’s a job, as opposed to a career. The distinction is important.

A career should include room for growth, development, mentorship, a relationship with management, good direction, and structure. And of course – good compensation for the work you do.

The word career means “an occupation undertaken for a significant period of a person’s life with opportunities for progress.” An amazing workplace provides these opportunities and prepares the workforce for improvement and progress.

5) Comfort

Whereas with career, we distinguished between a job and a career, it is equally important to distinguish pay vs perks. Pay, or compensation, falls under the category of career. Perks, or comfort, is a category all of its own.

These are things like flexibility of one's job, benefits like medical, dental, 401(k) and those sorts of things. Does your work offer you enough balance between work and life? Do you have the necessary tools to do your job? Is the physical appearance of the office itself up to standard?

Paying attention to and improving these five C's can transform your company into an amazing workplace.