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Unlocking Success

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WHAT THEY SEE IS WHAT YOU GET

How behavior impacts what your company stands for

Companies

spend an awful lot of time and dollars crafting the right vision statements. They want the vision to be inspirational, motivating — something that every person in the company will work hard to achieve. The vision statement gets displayed prominently in the office lobby. It gets laminated on cards for employees to carry in their wallets. It is on the website for all

to see.

Companies hire expensive marketing consultants to ensure that their brand representation reflects the essence of their product differentiation. They want customers to understand how their product, service and program is different, better and preferable. The words, logo, colors, font — no detail is left unattended.

In general, companies attend to new employee training pretty well. Manuals are created to guide how to do the

right thing. Annual performance appraisal processes are in place to ensure that employees hear at least annually if what they are doing is consistent with what the company expects.

A lot of time, effort, thinking and money goes into getting the right behaviors started inside of a company.

Then there is the reality of what employees *experience*.

A company that touts “teamwork and collaboration” in its core values rewards its salespeople with individual sales incentives that

drive fierce competition between colleagues.

A company that touts “innovation” decides to downsize its R&D group, releasing those who went out on a limb for a major product innovation that, in the end, senior management decided not to fund.

A company that professes “honesty and integrity in all that we do” goes searching for any sales that can be pulled into this quarter — so the company can hit its quarterly revenue and profit targets for Wall Street.

Too often, a company will unwittingly ask for and reward behaviors that are completely inconsistent with its stated vision, values and training. Employees quickly observe the difference between an organization’s stated vision and values and what they actually see practiced and encouraged every day. The clash between words and actions weakens employees’ commitment to the organization, causes distrust and lower followership of senior leaders and decreases allegiance to the company as a whole. The organization begins to get a lot less than what its employees are capable of giving — and employees experience less satisfaction from a work environment that has the potential to be so much better. Everyone loses.

Likewise, when employees see their leaders doing what it *really* takes to satisfy a major client, they know that this is what they, too, should do. When they see a senior leader taking the time

to thank front-line employees for their tremendous efforts and discretionary performance, they know they, too, should do the same.

When employees see management working collaboratively across different business units, when they see supply chain, sales and customer service working together to solve issues versus engaging in a blame game of who screwed up or who caused “the miss,” they know that the stated values for “a culture of performance excellence” and “teamwork” are real and alive in their company.

Employees mirror what they see practiced in their organizations. They will strive to live out the vision and values — only until they see behaviors inconsistent with the vision allowed or encouraged, knowingly or unknowingly. Employees figure out pretty quickly what the company *really* expects from its people and what it *really* takes to advance.

The hard part isn’t getting the words in the vision statement sign right. The hard part is ensuring that those words translate into behaviors that leaders at all levels, model and encourage every day. Look no further than the actions of your people to know what behaviors are being modeled at the top of the house. <<



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