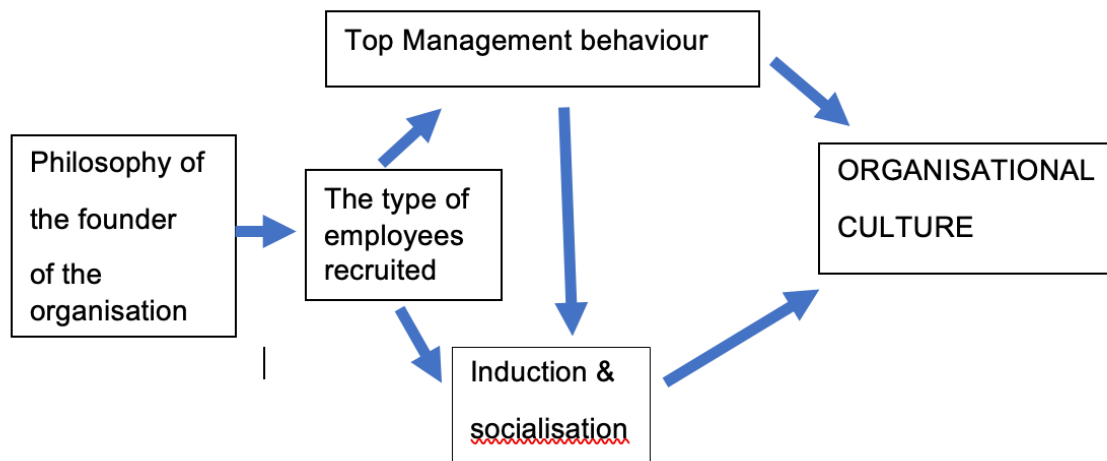




Creating A Positive Culture.

The idea of organizational culture is much debated. It is similar to a national culture in that not all people of a certain nationality are the same, but they may share some common values and views and they may prefer to do things in certain ways.



Key points:

- Culture if you are setting up a Social Enterprise.
- Is it driven from the top?
- It needs to be inclusive.
- It need employees to buy into it.
- Communication is key.
- It needs to enable your common vision.
- Leaders also need to role model the behaviour of the culture.

If you are setting up a Social Enterprise.

You are setting its purpose and goals and also set the way you want to treat people, stakeholders, customers, suppliers and clients. At the same time what you do in the early stages of operation is create the organisation's history, ways of behaving and operating that may well have a long-term impact on the culture going forward. A simple example from the chemical industry is where organisations have had explosions more than a century ago but the (hi)story is remembered in the present and it has an impact on the safety culture and how employees learn to operate nowadays. If the social enterprise you create today grows and perhaps outlives you then how you established it, is of critical importance.



It is driven from the top?

You need to create a vision (see below) and use the appropriate leadership styles at the appropriate moments (see leadership styles). This means giving experienced and skilled colleagues the space to get on and deliver their tasks and work towards the vision with occasional interventions to praise, coach and ask for their views. Less skilled or experienced staff will doubtless need more of your time, support and attention if they are to develop to their full potential (see workforce development).

Whilst you create and communicate the vision you cannot deliver it without allowing your whole team to drive the company culture forward. Your role is more about monitoring performance of teams and individuals and deciding when an intervention may be appropriate to keep things on the right path. In larger organisations this might be about managing clashes between departments and in smaller organisations it is more likely to be about managing personality clashes and personal conflict. (see conflict management)

It needs to be inclusive.

It is hard to be inclusive and takes work to do it well. It is usually best achieved by listening to others, trying to understand things from their perspective and asking to explain why they feel the way they do or if there is a better way to approach something from their perspective.

We are all different. Not only is there difference in gender, sexuality, ethnicity, disability, age etc but there are all different types of personalities in an organisation. Quite often organisational procedures in this area of equality and diversity are seen as lip-service by those minorities who see very little has really changed as a result of the procedure. It is really about inclusive behaviour and mutual respect of difference.

There are employment laws in place aimed at preventing discrimination, but organisations should aim to go beyond mere compliance with legislation and not let the culture exist where such events in the first place.

As part of the culture leaders and organisations need to be clear at the outset that there is zero-tolerance of such behaviour and you want a culture where employees not only feel safe and respected but where they can give the fullest possible contribution.

It needs employees to buy into it.

Organisational culture is driven from the top, but it is delivered by employees in their everyday activities and dealings with others. Employees are responsible for the informal socialisation of new staff and in teaching them the ways to do things, say things and what is acceptable and not. The larger the organisation becomes the more removed top managers



become from the day-to-day activities of employees and having their buy in to the culture is important if it is going to work at both the informal and formal level. Otherwise, we have an organisation's senior management team saying one thing and employees doing something different in day-to-day practice.

Communication is key.

To get buy in two-way communication is key. Saying, doing and thinking needs to be consistent and repeated. This two-way consultative encourages employees to be involved, to participate and become engaged with the organisation and what it stands for. It calls for mutual trust and encourages a place of work that is open and where employees can raise ideas, be listened to and see the results of so doing.

It needs to enable your common vision.

From the outset there needs to be a common vision and employees need some clear steps on how they are expected to turn this into a reality. In some ways a social enterprise is better equipped in this area as the social purpose is likely to attract people of a similar mind to work together. However, there will inevitably be different views of how best to achieve that purpose and these needed to be aired and discussed openly.

Leaders also need to role model the behaviour of the culture.

The culture has to be lived and breathed by senior managers daily. So, in the example of the chemical industry above, many founders moved their own homes and families into the 'blast zone' of their chemical production site to demonstrate how much they cared about safety.

The leader needs to champion the culture, reinforce it through praise and reminding people through regular communication what is important and why.

Employees are more likely to follow your lead if you hold yourself, as a leader, to a consistently high standard. "Do as I say and do" is likely to reinforce the cultural behaviour.

Activity



Consider the kind of culture you want for your organisation and create it from the outset.

Other related information

SEDG Resource – Leadership Styles.

SEDG Resource – Conflict Management

SEDG Resource – Workforce Development



Need help?

You can contact at us and arrange a call at: sedg@tsdg.co.uk