

workhuman*

4 Steps to Transform Your Culture

FINDINGS FROM A GALLUP-WORKHUMAN STUDY





Workplace culture might feel like a buzzword at this point, but everyone's talking about it for a good reason. Work culture isn't just a key differentiator – it also dictates how the work itself gets done.

A strong work culture has no singular archetype, but all successful cultures support a sense of unity and make employees feel they are working towards a shared mission with one another. These cultures aren't stagnant but shift with changing needs while still reflecting past successes and learnings.

Why does any of this matter?

In the ever-changing world of work, many organizations are failing to keep up, resulting in only two in 10 U.S. employees strongly agreeing they are connected to their organization's culture.

When workplace culture is discordant, employees feel it – and they talk about it, too. This can lead to higher turnover, lower productivity, and trouble attracting top talent.



The power of cultural connection

Your work culture is the soul of your organization. It determines how you do your work and gives purpose to why you do things in that way. Your cultural values propel employees to do their best.

Employees who strongly agree with “I feel connected to my organization’s culture” are 3.7x as likely to be engaged at work and 5.2x as likely to strongly agree they would recommend their organization as a great place to work.

Additionally, they are 55% less likely to be watching for job opportunities or actively looking for another job.

In short, strong work culture keeps employees happy and connected.



The role of recognition

Employee recognition can be your silver bullet for an engaged workforce. How? It promotes a culture of gratitude and appreciation that not only makes employees feel good but also inspires them to do good work.

That said, recognition is only effective when implemented strategically. In past research, Gallup® and Workhuman® identified five essential pillars of strategic recognition. The research shows that recognition is most effective when it is:

- Fulfilling
- Authentic
- Personalized
- Equitable
- Embedded in an organization's culture

When leaders practice recognition in accordance with these pillars, employees increasingly buy into the process and become more invested in partaking in this culture of gratitude.

But promoting a culture of recognition is only part of the process of cultivating a stand-out work culture. So how do you transform your culture to get all the benefits? **Here are four steps.**

1. Establish your workplace culture goals and values in alignment with business strategy.

In order to have a real impact, your workplace culture needs to be as intentional and strategic as your business itself. A mission statement can describe what you do and why, but your culture determines how it's done.

When you're establishing these goals and values, do so with care. Just as your strategy needs to be tailored to your industry and business, so does your culture. Identify what has helped fuel your organization's success thus far – as well as what's held it back. What daily behaviors and routines support this success?

Ask yourself: How are decisions made? How do employees communicate? Where does your culture come to life: in the break room, on birthdays and anniversaries, or during off-site gatherings? Where do your employees work? How is leadership structured, and how does that influence the relationship between leaders and employees?

While these are big questions – and some may feel surprisingly specific – it's essential to have the answers to fully realize your ideal culture. This work takes time and effort, but it tends to pay off with a more unified, satisfied workplace.

2. Use recognition to reflect your workplace culture goals and values.

Recognition plays a critical role in workplace culture by modeling and positively reinforcing your ideal culture. It becomes the tangible form of your culture's values by rewarding employees who support and embody these values.

Employees who say their recognition program is aligned with the values of their organization are 4.9x as likely to strongly agree that they know what is expected of them at work compared with employees who indicate their recognition program is not aligned with the values of their organization.

When it comes to cultivating a culture of recognition, modeling is key. Publicly recognizing an employee for a certain behavior makes others more likely to model that behavior, effectively spreading the value throughout the organization. This can be done deliberately; in fact, you should plan proactively to recognize these key behaviors in order to reinforce your cultural values.

3. Continuously evaluate and refine your recognition strategy.

Cultivating a meaningful workplace culture is not a one-and-done. It is an ever-changing, dynamic strategy that should be reflective of your business goals and your employees' best interests. Continuous assessments are crucial to ensure your recognition program is telling the right story across your organization.

Luckily, recognition programs provide a lot of real-time data. But don't forget the qualitative, too. Talk to employees about what is and isn't working, and adjust accordingly.

Remember that results aren't the only thing you can recognize – nor should they be. It's just as valuable to recognize behaviors and progress along the way, which doesn't just reinforce cultural expectations but also helps to include employees across various stages of their careers.



4. Promote quality recognition across your organization so your culture can flourish.

Workplace culture resides within every leader and every employee. This final step is an ongoing one that requires continuous reinforcement. That's why the five pillars of recognition are so important – they help maximize the impact of your culture.

Conversely, recognition that fails to follow the pillars and is inconsistent can backfire and may make employees feel that they aren't being seen or valued. More frequent and organic conversations tend to have a stronger impact.

To maximize your recognition program and accelerate your culture, be sure all leaders in your organization are familiar with and adhere to the five pillars of strategic recognition.

When leaders model strategic recognition, the effects get amplified throughout the organization and the culture of appreciation becomes a natural tenet of the workplace.

Conclusion

Workplace culture requires both careful planning and continuous refinement. There is no doubt that crafting and honing this culture is hard work, but it is a worthy endeavor that pays off in a more cohesive and engaged workforce.

Recognition specifically plays a unique role, as it serves as a piece of culture in itself while also having the power to influence and reinforce other ways of working. That's why it's so important to implement recognition in accordance with the five pillars so that it can have maximal impact and efficacy.

To learn more about these four steps to transform your culture, read the full report here: [Empowering Workplace Culture Through Recognition](#).

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