

Making the Case for Customer Training

Business Perspectives on Managing World-Class Training

Training Industry

Q U A R T E R L Y

A TRAINING INDUSTRY, INC. EZINE

Fall 2008



embracing WEB 2.0

INFORMAL LEARNING,
NEW TECHNOLOGIES
& more

- Rebuilding the Learning Function to Think and Act Globally
- Casebook: Soaring with U.S. Naval Aviation Training

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COMPANIES THAT EMPHASIZE A CLEAR, STRONG AND EFFECTIVE CULTURE DON'T HAVE TO PULL THEIR PEOPLE ALONG

CULTURE RULES!

I've talked with you in this space about the importance of culture to organizational transformation and success. My own studies illuminate the reasons why emphasizing culture can make such an enormous difference.

It can be helpful to think of an organization as a wheel. A wheel requires energy, momentum and inertia to keep it moving forward. Friction, obstacles and lack of momentum are what slow a wheel down. If a company's components revolve in the proper direction – culture first, then people, processes and strategy – a gravitational pull toward superior performance creates its own energy and momentum. In essence, then “Culture is king”! It trumps each of the other three key performance factors. That's not to say people aren't important, for example, but their impact is compromised in the absence of a strong and functional operating business culture.

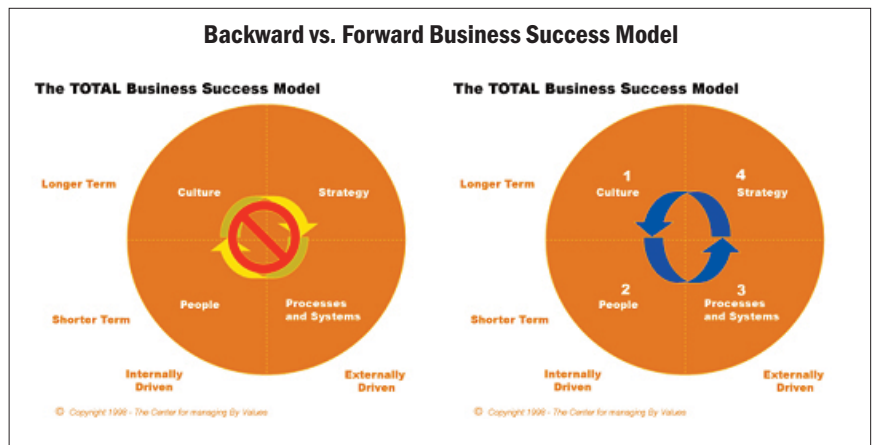
Organizations that do a poor job of uniting their people to execute the business vision and mission tend to slow themselves down by strategizing like maniacs and dragging most of their people along for the ride. Companies that emphasize a clear, strong, and effective culture don't have to pull their people along – their vitality energizes and re-energizes the people, who in turn, propel the company forward to continuing success.

It can also be helpful to envision culture as the hub that holds the spokes of the wheel together. Strong cultures are those where people share a high level of commitment to the same clearly defined set of prioritized business values required for the ongoing success of their organization, and united to achieve their organization's vision and related strategies or goals. The reason is not just because it's their job, but because they believe in the company's mission and values, and believe their company believes in them as well.

In such cultures, where everyone feels like a respected, valued member in such a productive and spirited teamwork environment, many of the everyday problems that slow other organizations are readily overcome by finding ways to do so through the power of their shared capabilities and commitment. People will-

ingly share their knowledge; they help each other when problems arise; they provide moral and emotional support; they cooperate and motivate each other, especially in difficult, stressful and adverse situations unlike how most people and most organizations respond to these increasing challenges in our contemporary work lives. The result is a meaningful, enjoyable and successful work experience—for both themselves and their organization!

By contrast, in weak cultures, the days tend to be devoured by many, repeated irritating situations that snowball into larger aggravations, sapping energy, morale and productivity from everyone involved. Cooperation is minimal, an “us” (employees or departments, locations, personnel levels) against “them” (management or other departments, locations, personnel levels) mentality sets in, and pretty soon the collective capacity of all is being minimized by the sub-cultures that direct the daily decision-making and work practices/processes. Such self-defeating cycles of



dysfunction are a logical, though unintended consequence of management's focuses on strategies and processes, rather than both its people and culture.

Dr. Michael O'Connor is a recognized thought leader, executive coach and founder of Life Associates, Inc. Michael is the co-author of "The Leadership Bridge Program (Situational Leadership II & DISC)" and the book, "The Leader Within." E-mail Michael at droconnor@lifeassociatesinc.com.