5 ways to build a high-performance culture

We've seen companies try to create a culture that will attract and retain top talent by doing everything from offering free veggie trays to yoga classes, to flogging free beer, having a Puppytorium and everything in between.

But, do perks really create a high-performing culture? The answer is no.

Researchers from the Human Resources Management Association found that high-performing organizations focus more on nurturing and developing employees on an ongoing basis rather than focusing on perks. The result? Employees who are engaged, motivated, productive and committed to results.

Here are some key practices that have worked for me to help create a high-performance culture.

1. Understand that culture is intentional. A high-performing culture is developed intentionally. So, write your expectations, attributes and values right into your company's core competencies. Ensure every leader not only understands them but also lives by them because leaders set the tone for company culture.

2. Use continuous feedback. Great leaders make a commitment to getting to know their employees as individuals. Communicate in a way that makes sense for each person. Also, the most effective feedback is conversational: a connection between two people, delivered in the moment—not down the road.

3. Make feedback specific. Let employees know why their actions mattered, the impact, and what the result was. Explaining how their positive efforts had an impact on the business means they're more likely to do the same thing in a similar situation.

4. Encourage two-way dialogue. Feedback shouldn't just go in one direction. Encourage back-and-forth conversation. Take time to listen and invite employees to share their ideas, thoughts and concerns about you, the organization itself, and even how things can be better within your team. This will provide better insight into how to coach them and have meaningful performance conversations down the road.

5. Be human and allow your employees to be. Set the bar high, but don't create an environment where perfection is expected. This can discourage innovation for fear of failure. Instead, encourage your people to be their best, and understand mistakes lead to learning opportunities.

Of course, perks are important. But, they don't support everything it takes to build a great company culture. If you truly want a sustainable high-performing culture, provide your employees with the ongoing feedback, coaching and development they need.

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