

5 questions to test your culture



Trying to motivate employees with games, incentives and pizza parties might work to some extent. But lasting results only come from fully engaged staffers who believe in the organizational culture.

How can you tell if people buy into the culture? Ask them.

Richard Hagberg, a Langley, Wash.-based consultant, recommends that leaders conduct regular assessments to gauge workplace morale. He suggests posing these five questions to employees:

- 1. What 10 words would you use to describe this organization?*
- 2. Around here, what's really important?*
- 3. Around here, who gets promoted?*
- 4. Around here, what behaviors get rewarded?*
- 5. Around here, who fits in? Who doesn't?*

Provide anonymity if you think that will set the stage for more revealing responses. You want brutal honesty, so encourage people to open up and assure them that you welcome constructive criticism.

The answers will help you understand how employees perceive the culture. They may characterize the environment in ways that surprise or disturb you; if so, collaborate with your team to address shortcomings, improve transparency and customize motivational strategies to maximize their appeal to staffers.

And here's a question for you: What do you and your senior leaders pay attention to?

Hagberg notes that employees take their cue from their managers. If higher-ups emphasize certain incentives, such as boosting sales volume at all cost, then they might cut corners to do so. And if you repeatedly reward certain individuals while ignoring other worthy contributors, it sends a message that you play favorites.

— Adapted from ["Improving work culture,"](#) Harvey Mackay, [www.pbn.com](#).