

The workplace culture checklist: 8 steps to recruit & retain the best

Workplace culture matters. A great one produces happy, engaged employees who give their best efforts, meet their goals and delight customers. A toxic culture will create miserable, unmotivated clock-watchers and job-board checkers.

In fact, a recent Glassdoor survey found that 56% of workers ranked a “strong workplace culture” as more important than salary—and three-fourths said they’d consider a company’s culture before applying there.

In this current strong economy, employees have options to jump to greener pastures. That’s why it’s even more vital for managers to do their part in creating a workplace that attracts—rather than repels—the best workers.

Deb Boelkes, author of *The WOW Factor Workplace*, suggests managers look at these eight factors to measure their role in creating a great workplace.

__ 1. Do you “hire slow and fire fast”? When an organization is made up of talented, enthusiastic, hardworking people, employees won’t want to leave. That’s why you should hire only people who will fit in with the culture you’re creating—and be quick to get rid of bullies and others who create a toxic culture.

__ 2. Are you willing (and quick) to make adjustments? Adjustments are made all the time in strong-culture workplaces to make things even better than they already are. The adage “*If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it*” is NOT productive if you want employees to grow. For example, you may need to move an employee from one position to another. If someone is just surviving (not thriving), you owe it to him or her *and* to the company to make a change.

__ 3. Do you “mentor in the moment”? Mentoring should happen every single day, not just a few times a year and during performance reviews. With more frequent contact, it’s much easier to help workers develop at their own pace—and to develop the trust needed to build engagement.

__ 4. Do you hold people to high expectations? Do you have a well-documented set of behavioral standards and performance expectations? When someone isn’t meeting these expectations, collaborate with that person to develop an improvement plan that spells out SMART goals (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Reasonable and Time-bound). Each party is responsible for holding the other accountable to his or her end of the bargain.

__ 5. Do you refuse to tolerate excuses? Some people hold themselves back with their own excuses. Don’t let this happen. Tell employees you want them to do their best work with what they have right now. No excuses. They’ll be amazed at what they can achieve with their talent and initiative.

__ 6. Do you help employees connect to purpose and meaning? Studies show that when employees can see how their job duties fit into the organization’s big-picture success, they’re much more likely to give a full, engaged effort. It’s up to managers to help workers see that big picture and help them find that core meaning in their jobs.

__ 7. Do you nudge people out of their comfort zones? Strong leaders look for the potential in employees and push them out of their comfort zones. They show employees that they have faith in them. They mentor them along the way. When you do this, employees are inspired to make the best use of their talents and push past their perceived limitations.

__ 8. Do you help them feel like they belong? Employees know when managers play favorites or pick sides. It's always best to make every employee feel included and part of the team, both in the department and entire organization.

Don't worry if you don't check off all of these boxes. Even small steps moving in a positive direction will help build a culture of excellence.