



10 SMALL STEPS TO SHOW UP

How Leaders can Create a Thriving and Resilient Company Culture

By: Moe Carrick

As a leader, you know you need to Show Up for your workforce. But it's hard, isn't it?

Creating a company culture is no easy feat, and can often feel like you're on a raft - heading warp-speed down a raging river with no end in sight. It requires discipline, planning and conscious effort.

A strong, positive company culture is the backbone of a thriving workforce that truly brings the best out of everyone.

In my 30-plus years of experience consulting with companies in a wide variety of industries, here are the top ten small steps you can take to cultivate a great culture

1. ADOPT A PEOPLE-CENTERED MINDSET. The greatness of your company depends on the people in it. A “people-centered” approach means doesn’t mean your company exists so that your people can be happy; it means designing your workspace – the physical and felt environment of your organization – to encourage people to thrive. Thriving people bring all their talents to benefit your company.

2. BE FLEXIBLE WITH YOUR APPROACH. There’s no one “right way” to show up and create a thriving company culture. Every company is unique, and the culture will depend on the nature of your business, your style of leading, and the unique alchemy of your workforce. Be flexible with what others have tried, and don’t be afraid to customize your approach based on your values and priorities.

3. INVOLVE OTHERS. The best leaders take the necessary time and effort to get input and ideas from everyone who works there. This doesn’t mean crowdsourcing your decisions, which can grind productivity to a crawl. It means that leaders at all levels should make it a priority to ask people what they think, listen to their responses, and communicate openly and freely in both directions. A culture that welcomes open involvement and feedback loops increases buy-in, which increases participation, which then increases ownership. Open involvement makes everyone at your organization accountable, not just you.

4. SEE THE BENEFIT BEYOND “PROFIT” While your main priority as a leader is efficacy and performance, your company’s profit depends on its overall health. The communities in which you operate should be enhanced by the presence of your organization, the environment in which you operate and the resources you use should be responsibly cared for, and the people who work for you should feel that they’re better people as a result of working for your organization. Consciously choose to see beyond profit to other indicators that your company is doing well.

5. ADDRESS LEADERS FIRST. Every employee at every level knows the company through their direct manager. Period. This means that even if you’re the best CEO, general manager, executive director, or business owner in the history of the world, if one of your leaders is a tyrant, an abuser, or just a negative influence - your employees will not thrive. Showing up as a leader means investing time, energy, resources, and conversation. Leadership is not for the faint of heart, and advanced degrees and years of experience don’t necessarily make a great leader. Know when you have a great leader on your team - one who inspires loyalty, fosters esteem, and brings out the best in your people. Develop those leaders and keep them.

6. REMEMBER THAT “LIFE” IS WORK. We work for many reasons, but no matter what our motivations are, our work is part of our lives. It matters to us and it impacts our human development, our view of the world, and our ability to thrive at home and in our communities. The life that your employees live outside of work shapes and defines the life they bring to work, so don’t pretend that there’s a wall between the two. The people, activities, and circumstances your employees encounter away from your workplace are essential to what they bring into the workspace, so talk to them about those things.

7. START WITH SMALL CHANGES. Showing Up doesn't mean radical change. There's no need for a wholesale makeover or herculean consulting resources. Start somewhere, anywhere, and keep at it. Small, positive, effective changes are far preferable to big, romantic, programmatic changes that often fail for lack of bandwidth.

8. LISTEN TO UNDERSTAND. When you listen to your leaders, to front-line employees, and to customers - you add nuance, detail, and clarity to the ideas you have about what to do. Go out and talk to people in your organization about your ideas and hear what they think. Really listen. As the owner, CEO, general manager, or executive director, it's often difficult for you to see your organization in a neutral way. Your position limits your perspective. When you listen to your leaders, to front-line employees, and to customers - you add nuance, detail, and clarity to the ideas you have about what to do.

9. ALIGN HEAD AND HEART. Remember that emotion is part of your brain, too, and that your emotional states are a powerful source of information to help you and others make decisions and lead. Whether you have an MBA, 30 years in your industry, or just a killer technology to bring to market - focus on your heart skills. Doing so will grow your capacity to engage with others, to create meaningful connection, and to inspire followership more than anything else you might try. We are drawn to vulnerability in others, so Show Up with heart.

10. WALK YOUR TALK. People who work for you will read the memos, come to the all-hands meetings, and adhere to the policies. But more than anything else, they'll watch and absorb what you, and the leaders you hire, do day-in and day-out. Everything, from how you run a meeting to what hours you work, communicates information to your employees about what you value. This, in turn, shapes their point of view about whether your company is one in which they can learn, grow, and thrive. Make your actions conscious, ask about the impact you have, and do what you say you will do. Your employees are watching.

REMEMBER: You don't need grand, sweeping changes to Show Up and make an impact. Using these small steps, it's possible to transform your workplace into a culture that brings out the absolute best in people—emboldening and enlivening each and every person on your team.

Want more guidance and support on Showing Up and creating a thriving, inclusive company culture? Get in touch at: <https://moecarrick.com/>

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