

Create a modern culture to attract and retain talent

Establishing a dynamic and creative culture is essential to attract and retain talent. John Hazelton says don't wait to do this, there is no time – act now!

In today's modern workplace establishing a dynamic and creative culture is more important than ever to attract and retain talent. Over the last few years the explosion of technology has delivered a paradigm shift changing the workplace forever.

The digital age has transformed behaviours and communications, and the younger generations needs and wants at work are radically different to what the workplace has ever seen before. Businesses need to act now to ensure they have a strong and positive culture that communicates their vision and values to attract the Millennials and Gen Z.

Digital skills gap

Attracting and retaining talent in the tech space is challenging and will be even more difficult going forward. The UK has a digital skills gap, estimated to cost the economy £63 billion a year. We will need to fill more than 750,000 new digital jobs by 2020 and train approximately 2.3 million people in digital skills (Recruitment and Employment Confederation).

The digital skills gap is a major challenge to the UK and one solution to plugging the gap is to set a modern culture in your workplace to attract and retain talent. Setting and establishing a new improved culture means letting go of traditional mindsets and recruitment processes, and approaching it with an open mind to discover new ways of working and re-shaping the workforce.

Collaborating and sharing

The younger demographic are used to communicating by conference video calls, sending instant messages over social media platforms to groups of people, and sharing and working on live documents at the same time. They want to collaborate with each other when and wherever they are, on whatever device they can. They are the

generation of sharing, therefore at work they want to share knowledge and ideas in an open environment that isn't restricted by barriers and red tape.

They are not scared to speak their mind, and are not intimidated by senior managers as they believe in a more flatter open management structure rather than a traditional hierarchy. Along with the infiltration of technology and big data the silos that separated departments are diminishing and revealing a more transparent way of working and sharing.

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Get flexible

It is important for the younger demographic to work with companies with a strong culture and set of values, and ethics they believe in. They want to be trusted from the offset and given autonomy to do their jobs; working on exciting and important projects that make a difference.

They are not scared to try new methods and discover new services and propositions, but at the same time they must be given the freedom and flexibility to so.

The expectation is that increasingly the younger demographic want to work from any location and also have flexible hours outside the traditional office hours. They are not familiar with the having to be seen in the office culture and expect managers to trust them to work remotely within reasonable hours that fit with their lifestyle.

They have been given bad press and called the 'spoilt, snowflake generation' but this is far from true. They have just been brought up with digital technology and the internet, and are used to communicating and working in a different way than all of the previous generations.

From the top

Implementing a new or improved culture is as important as your business strategy, your culture underpins everything you do. Culture is the heart of your people and is responsible for creating a happy workforce – if your employees are happy then they will be more productive. They will be more likely to stay and word will get out that your company is a great place to work at, enabling you to attract top talent.

A culture does not just appear naturally, you have to set it, live and breathe it on a daily basis. It is ongoing and will evolve just as your business does. You need to develop a strong mission statement and values that are important to your business.

This is the first step to building a culture as your values will reflect your company identify - who you are, what is important to you, what makes you different, why are you a great company to work for, what do you give back etc.

This must be communicated by the CEO or Managing Director and the senior management team to champion your culture so it becomes part of the business's fabric.

Happy employees = happy business

If you don't get culture right you risk ending up with miserable workforce and you will lose the talent you have recruited. Your reputation will follow you limiting your recruitment pool as no one will want to work for you.

However, if you create a strong, dynamic and creative culture in your company employees will be happy to work for you and enjoy their jobs. This will result in a strong team dynamic where employees will work together more effectively. This will be reflected in your retention levels and an increase in productivity and efficiencies.

Your happy employees will then become advocates of your brand, and you will find that more talent will want to work with you because your strong culture precedes you. Many companies forget about employee brand and just focus on customer branding but it is your people that make your business – don't forget it!

In this competitive market of finding top talent having a strong employee brand puts you ahead of the competition when talent are deciding who they want to work for. Especially if your values and objectives parallel theirs. Gallup (2018) recently discovered that strong company cultures attract the top 20% of candidates.

It's all about the trust

Trusting and letting go of control is a big element in creating an open and flexible culture where employees are given autonomy to do their jobs. This can be difficult for managers especially for those who are not from the younger demographic, as they are use to adhering to strict processes and policies, and working in an hierarchal structure.

Now, it is time to let go and trust your employees, after all they are adults and not children and should be more than capable of doing their jobs. You recruited them so empower them by providing remote and flexible working that fits with their personal life, demonstrating that you trust them. Give them challenging and interesting projects to work on. Trust after all should be given and not earned.

Employees thrive on results based environment and people require clear expectations of what is expected of them. Everyone needs clear direction of where they need to get to and how they will get there. By providing clarity you bring energy to the company to succeed.

Learning from your mistakes

The workplace shouldn't be an environment where staff are scared to fail and make mistakes, the best creative ideas and improvements are made from learning from our failures. Businesses need to cultivate a culture by adopting a 'growth mindset' so employees are open to feedback, place high value on learning and grow ideas as a business without the fear of failing.

Employees should be given the autonomy to do their jobs completely with managers stepping aside to let them make mistakes and learn from them. This environment creates a transparent and sharing culture where creativity will flourish, similar to that of a start up company who are agile and dynamic. The challenge is for the established businesses to act the same, if they don't they will lose out.

Recruiting for culture

Companies should be mindful of recruiting people with similar values and ethics of your company to ensure that the culture is not affected and the chemistry remains. If you just hire for skills then you maybe threatening the culture that you have cultivated. You can also develop people's skills but it is more difficult to change their values and ethics.

This can be approached in the recruitment process by using tailored questions appropriately. Companies must be aware when using the cultural fit in the recruitment process to still be aware of employing a diverse mix of people from different ages, ethic and educational backgrounds.

Don't wait – act now

Building a company culture is an evolutionary journey that you need to support to ensure it becomes the heart and the soul of the company. If you want to recruit and retain top talent then it is essential, so start viewing the workplace with a new lenses and be open and flexible to a new improved workplace by establishing a modern culture. Don't wait to do this, there is no time – act now! ■

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