

# Company identity and your start-up: how to cultivate a winning culture

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Culture - it can make or break an otherwise viable business. It's that personality that drives performance, that special something that draws people to want to be part of an organisation. And yet culture is something that's often overlooked at the start-up stage of a business.

How many entrepreneurs have set out to create their own businesses precisely because they've found themselves stifled by a smothering corporate culture? It's an irony that many of today's most creative entrepreneurs don't give a thought to the culture they are cultivating in their own business.



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According to a Bain & Company Survey, 81% believe that a company lacking a high-performance culture is doomed to mediocrity. And no one wants to work for an organisation with a grim future.

For the dynamic, hungry workforces of today, it's the seemingly softer stuff – culture and values – that really matters. Money might get them to sign on, but culture is what will motivate them to excel and take the business to the next level.

How can business owners build a cohesive culture that attracts and retains the best and brightest? Here are some tips to help infuse a charismatic corporate culture from the word go:

## Define what is important

This is where business owners need to decide what matters to them. A corporate culture will eventually rule the way people work, the way they interact with customers and the way the brand develops in the business sector. This means that it is crucial for owners to ensure that the company's culture is synonymous with their own. If they're passionate about innovative thinking, their workforce should be too.

## Recruit people who compliment business goals

It might be tempting for owners to recruit people who are carbon copies of themselves, but this is a mistake. Start-ups need

variety and hiring individuals who have diverse experiences and knowledge will ensure different cultures are accounted for from day one.

## **Align business culture with the work environment**

In this day and age, a great work environment is just as important as an empowering corporate culture. Owners should always try to find ways to improve the business workspace. After all, employees spend a huge amount of time there and need to be happy and comfortable. Consider things like pause areas, meeting rooms and creative spaces to encourage innovation.

## **Marry marketing and HR efforts**

Companies need to focus on ways to bring culture into every aspect of their operational systems. Getting the marketing and HR teams around a table to nail down the corporate culture and ensure that it is woven into the job descriptions for recruitment drives is crucial, for example. Interviews should focus on candidates' values and passions to ensure they're in line with those of the business.

## **Work as a team to constantly evolve your culture**

It's extremely important to understand that cultivating a sustainable culture won't happen overnight. Employees will not always agree with what that culture should be. Changes and exceptions will need to be made. Working together as owner and workforce is the best way to come up with a corporate culture that supports every aspect of a business. Being transparent and open to other opinions is something that a workforce will appreciate too.

Richard Branson once said, "*There is no magic formula to a great company culture, the key is just to treat your staff how you would like to be treated.*" Providing a well-rounded and empowering work environment that encourages personal and career growth will keep employees satisfied, productive, and committed to building a respected brand name.

## **ABOUT HARRY WELBY-COOKE**

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