



GOOD COMPANY CULTURE (TWO-PART SERIES)

Whether we are in person, meeting virtually or on our own, company culture and what drives it to progress is often a topic of productive conversation and thought. However, too often those valuable sharings can be lost or left behind as time moves on. Random Threads is proud to deliver two well-articulated articles written from the viewpoints of members within Pac-West.

Please read (and re-read) and enjoy!

GOOD COMPANY CULTURE | BY: CHRIS MCCAFFREY - SALES MANAGER OF ATLANTA ROD & MFG CO., INC.

When the call came requesting me to write about good company culture, my first thought was "What do I know about good culture?"

For most of my career, my culture was to show up, put in the work, and take care of customers, doing my best not to overpromise and to be a good teammate to my co-workers. As I took a good hard look in the mirror, I realized I'd gotten it wrong for so long. I've largely been working from a place of selfishness, eager for what I want instead of what's best for others. I've made the mistake of valuing production over people. This strategy might work for a while, but this is lethal if you manage people or are in leadership.

Looking to create a good company culture? Company ownership and leadership must be committed to a good culture. What flows from the top is what creates culture, good or bad. This is where it starts: leadership.

During my travels to sales meetings, association events, and tradeshow, I get asked often about the Birmingham Fastener Challenge Coin. Our coin was created by our leadership team for a very important and specific goal: to create a company culture of safety. Our team spent the better part of a year crafting core values and practicing behavioral principles that promote what we call "The Birmingham Way." Our governing challenge is to become the world's safest fastener company.

Good company culture is not easy, but it is not rocket science. Know your company's "why." Have clear goals. Create leaders that put others first. As a manager it's not for my direct reports to make me look good, rather I'm here to help my teammates reach their goals and become successful in their professions and lives. If leaders and managers can accomplish this, everything else will fall in line, and in turn we will look good. We will create a good company culture that seems elusive for so many.

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND SAFETY (EHS) = SEE SOMETHING, SAY SOMETHING

Maintaining teammate health and safety is our most important objective. We are committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for all teammates, customers, contractors, and visitors. EHS performance continuously will be improved by leadership support to develop and achieve complete teammate ownership of all aspects of environmental health and safety.

Birmingham Fastener will become the world's safest fastener company by leveraging the strength of our team at all levels of the organization, to develop and maintain an injury-free culture. Our injury-free culture is characterized by the world class EHS performance excellence in all aspects of EHS leadership, ownership, behavior-based safety, and hazard recognition/resolution. There is absolutely nothing more important than ensuring every single teammate goes home to their families safe and healthy every day. "I will never sacrifice your best interests (safety) for my own comfort or for your approval." – Dr Ken Chapman, Ph.D.

LEADERSHIP = WALK THE TALK

We based the principle on the statement that all team members have the ability to lead the way at Birmingham Fastener. Our leadership team displays a commitment to excellence. We understand that our words and actions carry meaning. Our leadership goal is to establish an environment that fosters a culture that creates leaders for tomorrow. "Have a vision of your best self. It is not intent, but direction that determines destination." – Dr Ken Chapman, Ph.D.

COMMUNICATE = OPEN, HONEST, AND DIRECT

The success of our business depends on the transparent exchange of information. Communication is the fuel for progress and the glue that links our success. How we communicate is crucial. We strive to be open, honest, and direct. Swift, clear, and precise communication is the foundation to help our organization increase our sphere of influence and improve our efficiency with our employees, vendors, and customers.

GRIT = WINNERS FIND A WAY

Grit starts with our team having the courage to be successful in the face of adversity and obstacles that were not part of the plan. Grit is the driver for team success and our customer's success. Our team will remain focused, cohesive, and courageous. We will learn from our failures and move forward with our mission to be the world's safest fastener company.

SERVICE = WHATEVER IT TAKES

Supplying outrageous service to our customers and going the extra mile is what we do. We will achieve this by providing accurate detailed information, stocking the right products, or manufacturing them in a timely fashion. We cut waste and run as efficiently as possible to deliver a competitive cost product to our customers.

ACCOUNTABILITY = FIRST THE MIRROR, THEN THE WINDOW

We are responsible people doing responsible work. Accountability builds self-respect, creates pride of association, and is essential to achieve high levels of safe and efficient productivity. We expect team members to own their decisions and outcomes while we exercise fairness in evaluating results.

CHARACTER = ALWAYS HUMBLE, LOYAL, AND KIND

We continuously strive to be the very best version of ourselves. Character is the culmination of all those efforts. In our industry, we can teach a lot of different things. We can teach a person to package a box, to sell goods, and even to create a product from raw materials. The one thing that cannot be taught and that we expect each person must bring to the table, however, is the desire to be a good human. Being humble, loyal, and kind in all interactions is the very foundation of being a good human and embodies what we envision when we think about character as a core value. "Remember this: there's a right way to treat me; and therefore, there is a right way for me to treat you. Whether we call this natural law or fair play, the law has a claim on every human community, including the workplace." – Dr Ken Chapman, Ph.D.

TEAMWORK = ONE TEAM, ONE GOAL, NO EXCUSES

Teamwork requires being a team player: dependable and consistent, showing up on time, and ready to participate. Working together in different roles and responsibilities to overcome any challenge or obstacle. Working together brings improved decision-making and service our customer can enjoy. This creates a shared sense of accomplishment and a positive team dynamic. "Culture is little more than the thousands of individual actions and interactions layered carefully one atop another." – Dr Ken Chapman, Ph.D.

REDEFINING COMPANY CULTURE: A PERSPECTIVE BEYOND THE BELLS AND WHISTLES | BY: SHANE BEARLY - PRESIDENT/CEO OF INDEX INDUSTRIES

In recent years, the phrase "company culture" has garnered a somewhat controversial reputation, primarily due to its association with larger corporations. These entities often boast extravagant employee perks and high-profile initiatives, leading to a skewed representation of what company culture entails. This portrayal can alienate smaller companies, which may lack the resources for such grand gestures. However, this disparity has prompted a reevaluation of what company culture means, especially in the context of smaller organizations like Index Industries.

DEFINING COMPANY CULTURE

At its core, company culture is not about a pool table and fully stocked fridge or headline-grabbing policies. It's the ethos that guides how a company operates and how its employees interact. For smaller companies, this often translates to a more intimate and closely-knit work environment. In such settings, company culture is less about material perks and more about the values, attitudes, and practices that collectively shape the work experience.

PILLARS OF A HEALTHY COMPANY CULTURE IN SMALLER ORGANIZATIONS

1. **Mutual Respect and Support:** In smaller firms, relationships are often more personal. A culture of mutual respect and support is vital, where every team member feels valued and heard.
2. **Flexibility and Adaptability:** Unlike their larger counterparts, smaller companies often benefit from being able to adapt to changes quickly. A culture that embraces flexibility can be a significant asset.
3. **Purpose and Passion:** Smaller companies often have a clear, shared purpose, and fostering a culture that aligns with this purpose can drive engagement and satisfaction.

COMMONALITIES IN COMPANIES WITH STRONG CULTURES

Regardless of size, companies with strong cultures often share certain traits:

- **Clear Vision and Values:** These companies have a clear sense of purpose and a set of core values that guide their decisions and actions.
- **Employee Empowerment:** Employees in these organizations typically feel empowered and are encouraged to take initiative.
- **Effective Communication:** Strong cultures are marked by open and honest communication, fostering a sense of transparency and trust.

UNCONVENTIONAL APPROACHES TO ENHANCING COMPANY CULTURE

In my experience, redefining company culture, especially in smaller firms, often requires thinking outside the box. For example, implementing regular team-building activities that focus on personal growth and community involvement can create a more meaningful work environment. These activities don't have to be grandiose; even simple, thoughtful gestures can have a significant impact on employee morale and team cohesion.

In conclusion, company culture in smaller companies should not be viewed through the lens of Google, Amazon, or Microsoft's practices. Instead, it's about cultivating an environment where employees feel connected, valued, and part of something bigger than themselves. It's about creating a space where work is not just a means to an end but a place where passion, purpose, and personal growth coexist harmoniously.



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