

*Employees today feel less connected to their employer than ever before. Most companies are falling short in translating company information and vision into something meaningful and relevant to its workers. Clarity and commitment to a company mission and culture has the power to change the role of employees from spectators to active participants.*

Companies' external identities are defined by numerous characteristics - service, quality and reputation to name a few. But internally, employees identify with their employer through its corporate culture.

*Entrepreneur* defines corporate culture as "whether written as a mission statement, spoken or merely understood, corporate culture describes and governs the ways a company's owners and employees think, feel and act." But more than that, corporate culture is part of a company's fabric. It's what molds employees' perceptions of their employer, and also how they identify themselves as employees. Without fully understanding what the corporate culture is, employees may find themselves questioning whether or not they fit into the company's work environment, which can quickly erode employee loyalty and retention.

For some companies, corporate culture is clearly defined, and according to Spherion's 2009 Emerging Workforce data, now more than ever, workers are choosing employers based on reputation, ethics, and culture. From day one when an employee walks through the door, they should know their employer's mission, values and identity as an employer. However, it shouldn't stop there. Culture needs to be regularly communicated and defined in order for employees to truly embrace it.

To begin with, communicate with simple messaging and create a mission that speaks to employees at all levels. Beware of creating a "top down" culture whereby focus is primarily aimed towards executives and managers. This will leave lower level employees feeling left out, and can often result in a "revolving door" at those levels.

Next, the culture should be defined not only by words, but by actions. This year's Emerging Workforce data reveals that 92 percent of workers report their job satisfaction as excellent/very good/good when the corporate mission is clear and employers follow through on that mission. That number drops to 51 percent when a mission is clear, but follow through is lacking. Be sure to implement actionable policies and programs that support and drive the mission and values of the organization. For example, if part of your company's mission is to foster work/life balance, consider launching a formal telecommuting or job-sharing program.

Today, many companies are utilizing social networking sites to develop a community with internal employees, and potential candidates. Social networks are wonderful tools to share a corporate culture. But, it is imperative that you choose a network that fits the character of the company. To do this, conduct an audit of where online conversations are naturally occurring about your company. If it is a site that embodies the company's character and fits the culture, that is where you should have a presence. Don't try to be something you're not, otherwise you lose your authenticity and deliver mixed messages regarding its culture.

The impact of corporate culture, missions and values has become a huge factor in recruitment and retention. Eighty-five percent of those surveyed for the latest Emerging Workforce survey stated that they are more likely to stay with an employer with a clear mission and follow through. Factors such as these, along with treating workers with fairness and respect, and communicating corporate goals, missions and values are keys to building employee productivity, retention and satisfaction.

