



The Power of Nonprofits

Analyzing the Organization's Culture

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There are reasons why employees join a nonprofit, but often, it is the culture of the organization that makes them stay and thrive. Taking a look at your organization's culture gives you clues as to why you are either thriving or struggling. To help your organization develop, retain and maintain a positive, healthy and thriving workplace, a review of your organization's culture may be necessary.

Does your current culture impact staff retention, client satisfaction and the organization's overall effectiveness and success? It's important to note that there is not necessarily one culture for every organization, but rather each organization should take the issues at hand, the constituents involved and the employees into consideration when creating a culture that best enhances the organization's successes.

Organizational culture is defined as having a system of shared values, understandings and perspectives that are held in common by all the employees. An organization's culture can distinguish it by fostering a collective behavior that encourages employees to determine which things get done, how they get done and who does them in the most productive way. It is an agreement

that the vision and mission of the organization drives the commitment of all individuals involved with the day-to-day activities. Culture can create a passion that is instilled in each employee to provide a common ground toward productivity, innovation and creativity.

Communications in the organization is the number one cultural issue that nonprofits need to review. Communication should be a dialogue where an employee can be honest and free to express how they are feeling without retribution. Leaders of nonprofits should meet with their employees on a regular basis. Taking an interest in employee's thoughts and ideas fosters an inclusive culture. By doing this, the trust value is exhibited and helps to make individuals feel included in the decision processes.

With financial constraints for monetary rewards, how do you recognize your staff for creative, innovative ideas,

accomplishments or exemplary practices? Many employees say that a simple "thank-you" for a job well done is worth \$1,000,000. Those who work in the nonprofit sector are usually there for the passion of the mission versus the money in the pocket. Nonprofit organizations have a community focus that provides individuals with a commitment to cooperate. Although there is a stability of purpose, there is also an orientation that drives people to work together for the greater good.

A culture that supports full inclusion and diversity will thrive. Today, the workforce and customer bases consist of a variety of people beyond race and gender. The more diverse an organization's workforce, the more they can identify with the needs of the community they support. Assessing the culture of your organization and developing and implementing policies and procedures that support a diverse, inclusive and healthy culture can benefit

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all. It is a way to provide better services and be more effective and efficient.

Do your internal policies and procedures support a positive culture? Be sure there is no discrimination in those policies. They should solicit and value employee input and contributions along with a flexibility to meet the needs of the employee.

A positive culture enhances organizational commitment and increases the consistency of employee behavior. Individuals who join nonprofit organizations are usually there to be physically and emotionally enriched in the knowledge that what they are doing is making a difference in someone's life and in the community.

Nonprofits can sustain their organizational culture by selecting leaders who encompass the mission and values honored by the organization. A leader's actions set the tone and establish the conduct and tenor of the organization. Nonprofits are proud of their brand, and what they provide to the community. The language of the organization provides

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a sense of team work where each individual comprehends the values, focus and mission to succeed.

To sum up, a positive nonprofit culture gives individuals a strong sense of purpose focusing on individual development and maturity. When there is honesty in communication, a trust develops that supports an employee's positive belief in doing their jobs, tasks and duties to forward the organization's mission. Openness in communication, allows the freedom of individual expression that provides employees with strength of purpose to achieve optimum results while dealing with financial constraints. Maintaining a positive culture in a nonprofit organization greatly insures the employee's productivity and retention. ■



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