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Who Creates Your Company Culture? Why should you care? By Ann Golden Eglé

For years I've heard a certain company advertise their unparalleled quality, service and prices. As the ads were convincing, I made a mental note to contact them when in need of their service.

I was surprised when calling them as the voice on the other end of the phone in no way matched the image this company intended to create though their expensive ads.

In a matter of seconds, the money this company spent on marketing was crushed by the rudeness of the individual answering their phone. I went elsewhere.

Wikipedia defines **Organizational Culture** as: *the behavior of humans who are part of an organization and the meanings that the people react to their actions. Organizational culture affects the way people and groups interact with each other, with clients, and with stakeholders.*

Culture includes the organization values, visions, norms, working language, systems, symbols, beliefs, and habits. It is also the pattern of such collective behaviors and assumptions that are taught to new organizational members as a way of perceiving, and even thinking and feeling.

Too often, leaders are far removed from the individuals who define their culture. Instead they either:

- 1) have an image ingrained in their minds that in no way reflects reality, or
- 2) chose to ignore obvious insults to their culture.

No matter where you are in your organization, your thoughts, words, body language, choices and behavior reflects your company culture. The good news: you have the opportunity to change it for the better, meaning that everyone wins.

Here are my **Top '7' Tips** to become more aware of and create a culture where everyone thrives.

- 1) **Ask employees.** Survey individuals how they would describe your culture. What is it now? What elements contribute to this culture? What would you like it to be?
- 2) **Ask clients.** Survey clients, customers, and vendors regarding your culture. Make this fun and rewarding to them. What's in it for them to provide you this feedback?

- 3) **Become a customer or client.** What is your experience when calling in for a service, or when walking into a business? What do you observe and feel? Are you enticed to do business or are you eager to leave? What brings about either reaction?
- 4) **Research leading companies in your field.** What is their culture? How do they demonstrate this? What do they gain from having a strong corporate culture?
- 5) **Define company values.** Even if you've defined them in the past, take another look with the information gained from the above tips. What truly are your values today? What do you want them to be? How are they reflected in your actions, and those actions of your employees or marketing.
- 6) **Assess problem areas.** What consequences exist for those who do not represent your culture? A common challenge for my clients is that *one employee* who does more damage than good. Ask yourself if this individual is worth saving or do they need to leave?
- 7) **Appoint Culture Committee.** OK, no one wants another meeting or committee. However, this is a fun assignment. Gather all of the above information; create a company culture statement; get buy-in from all current employees; make it a part of new employee packet; reward individuals who most represent your culture; revisit your culture statement at least twice each year.

Walk into any retail store or place of business and you'll feel their culture before a word is spoken. As proven through the above example, one rude person greeting a prospective customer can cost your company clients, referrals and business. The employee who is aware of and happily demonstrates your culture will lead you to success.

I challenge you to take steps this week to insure that your company culture reflects what's in your heart and in the heart of all those who represent you. Create a win/win for all involved.

Master Executive & Leadership Coach Ann Golden Eglé, MCC, has steered highly-successful leaders & individuals to greater results since 1998. President of Golden Visions & Associates, LLC, Eglé is also President Elect for the City Club of Central Oregon. Ann can be reached at 541-385-8887 or www.GVAsuccess.com.