

Achieving Results

A Black Diamond Associates Publication

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Is Your Company's Culture a Beautiful Garden?

It has been a long, cold winter but the buds of new growth are now visible on trees and flowers are beginning to bloom. I love the signs of new birth and the hint of the potential that lies within.

I begin each spring with a great hope of having a beautiful garden. I prune the remnants of winter's death and plant flowers to add color and life. My garden begins as a sketch of the potential I envision.

Within a week, the weeds spring up here and there and I attentively pull them out. About a month later, the flowers need water, but the weeds are flourishing. What happened? I am always full of good intentions but the results are wanting.

Many company leaders are a lot like me when it comes to cultivating their company culture. They have a vision of success for their organization and spend time planting the seeds of shared core values that will define the winning culture that will drive their success. For a period of time, they reinforce the shared vision and values and they feel good about the fact that they've set the process in motion.

However, left unattended, a company's culture can be overtaken by weeds just like my garden. The organization's leadership may realize that things aren't the way they should be and they head back into a strategic planning process and start all over again. Only to find that without real change, they'll be back in the same place again.

That is what happens in my garden. I end up spending a weekend pulling the dead flowers, spraying weed killer and buying a whole



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Black Diamond
A S S O C I A T E S

From time to time we are asked to work with an organization because poor morale is impacting results. More often than not, the root cause of the problem is a lack of core values. Sometimes the organization hasn't defined their core values. Other times they have, but they aren't being lived.

If your organization is failing to achieve its goals and morale is at an all time low, Black Diamond Associates can help. We work with organizations to get back on track by not only defining "the what" (vision and goals), but "the how" (core values). In doing so, you can achieve sustainable improved results.

It is time to transform your potential into reality. Give Black Diamond Associates a call.

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*"You cannot escape the responsibility of tomorrow by evading it today."
— Abraham Lincoln*

new set of plants that I hope will grow. And they do for a period of time until neglect once again turns my garden into an ugly mess.

If you can relate to this wasteful cycle of good intentions, there is hope. There are four principles that successful companies live by that create their winning culture.

Define Core Values – Believe it or not, many companies miss this point. They never bother to clearly define a set of non-negotiable values that are shared by everyone in the organization. The core values of the organization define how each person is going to conduct themselves to achieve organizational goals. They define the experience employees, customers and suppliers will have when interacting with the company. To be effective, the definition must include the behaviors that reflect living the values every day. Choose them carefully because you're going to have to live by them. Values that are "nice to have" but not a fit for the organization won't be honored and like many of the plants I select for my garden. They won't grow where they are planted.

Communicate Core Values – The process of communicating the core values is much more than putting the words on a paper or plaque or website. They must be communicated often and in every way possible. The best form of communication is participation. When decisions are made, core values should be consulted and then the "why" of the decision communicated back to employees. The process of communication is like fertilizing your garden. You are giving your values the opportunity to take root, grow and flourish.

Honor Core Values – Not walking the talk when it comes to company core values is worse than not defining them at all. Giving lip service to shared values weakens trust and hurts morale. On the other hand, companies that view their core values as non-negotiable realize the

benefits of owning them. Even when tough decisions must be made, decisions that negatively impact the bottom line in the short term, core values must not be violated. Just as I must follow the instructions for watering my garden and caring for my plants, successful leaders cultivate their organization's culture by careful attention to their values.

Institutionalize Core Values – From time to time we've all experienced the clerk who's wanted to provide good services complain that "the system won't let me..." This reflects a failure to provide employees with systems and processes to provide great customer service. Winning companies invest in their infrastructure in a way that supports living company core values. Their hiring process includes screening for a fit with core values. Their employee training and development programs instill core values. Their information systems are designed to facilitate living core values. Even their business's economic model is based on living their core values. Just as my garden might flourish if my sprinkler system was set to water appropriately and if I scheduled regular "weed and feed" treatments, companies that support their values through their processes and systems are more likely to see the rewards from their investment.

Perhaps this year I'll take more care with my garden and not repeat expensive past mistakes. You can make the same choice for your organization. The cost of ignoring your organization's values is great. The benefits of investing in cultivating your organization's culture by living your core values are reflected in your profits. And, just as a beautiful garden may take your breath away, some of the benefits are priceless.

*By Lisa Huetteman, Author of the forthcoming book **The Value of Core Values: 5 Principles to Achieving Organizational Success through Values-Centered Leadership.***

Unlocking the Potential

Women leaders bring unique talents and face unique challenges in the workplace. Unlocking the potential of a significant pool of talent in your organization requires an investment in the development of their unique skills and talents. The 21st Century Women's Leadership program addresses the diversity of the leadership team and develops the strengths unique to women leaders in business.

Program Objectives include:

- Increase the profitability and productivity of the women in your company
- Recognize women leaders within the corporation
- Leverage diversity

Program Dates:

- March 23 - Tampa, FL
- April 7 - Lakeland, FL

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