

## VIEWPOINT

## Keys to Creating a Great Company Culture



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**DHR Leadership Consulting** advises clients on their most important leadership and talent management challenges.

*Maryanne Wanca-Thibault has more than 30 years of experience as a consultant and advisor in the areas of leadership assessment, organizational development and executive coaching. As a partner of DHR Leadership Consulting, she helps clients assess fit for executive, C-suite and board positions.*

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*The three talent experts recently sat down with Hunt Scanlon Media to discuss the keys for creating a great company culture and how search firms can assist.*

### What are some aspects of company culture that are working?

**Wanca-Thibault:** Sharing core values that guide how we work together and treat each other whether others are around or not. Also making people feel like they belong and are part of something bigger than what any one individual contributes to an effort. In addition, culture makes work purpose-driven so that people understand how their role fits into the larger picture.

**Clayton:** A great company culture is more than diverse. It starts with an inclusive approach to workforce, workplace, and marketplace strategies. As the composition of workforces are constantly changing, a great company culture has a growth mindset that is intentionally inclusive.

**Hoyt:** The most important single thing to know about company culture is that culture is the direct result of the actions and behaviors of the CEO and other key leaders. These leaders hold the keys to strengthening company cultures. Without visible leadership from

the top, cultures do not change. Culture means “how we do things around here” and is a reflection of the beliefs employees hold. If we want to contribute to a great company culture, CEOs and other key leaders need to understand the underlying beliefs that employees have and shape them in the right way with powerful experiences and stories.

### How does a company culture fuel business growth?

**Wanca-Thibault:** Culture generally includes the formal and informal interactions that govern the dynamics of social behavior at work. A strong culture sets expectations for employees and provides a “roadmap” of what the company values. The more explicit the shared values and norms of the organization the greater the chance that people aspire to/identify with a common purpose and approach to tasks.

**Hoyt:** When it comes to performance, culture is everything. Culture explains how employees work together, how they solve problems and how they respond to customers. The best thing a CEO can do to enhance performance is to develop an understanding of the company’s current culture, and identify the ways in which they can enhance that culture and align it with the company’s mission, purpose, and strategy.

### Where do search firms come into play?

**Wanca-Thibault:** Search firms can help recruit candidates with the best potential to succeed in a role. This means candidates have the right competencies and “fit” the current culture. Search firms can also help identify potential change agents who can identify and influence change in an organization’s culture. This is especially important in settings where “what we have been doing” no longer works. The Great Resignation signaled that many cultural norms that worked in the past no longer apply because employees are demanding things that they value (rather than the organization telling them what they should value). We have a proprietary tool, LEAP, that our search partners use to measure “culture fit” using nine discreet dimensions most researched around culture.

**Clayton:** Creating a ‘better company culture’ would include having a mindset that values the input of all its people. In today’s competitive environment search firms must be seen as strategic partners and trusted advisors. When asked to help identify diverse candidates, as strategic advisors, we must ensure our clients understand the importance of having an organizational culture that will welcome the diverse candidates, vs. making them feel tolerated. Best-in-class approaches to search include being willing to have the tough conversations for the betterment of the clients. These discussions go beyond the traditional role of a search partner. These are the types of conversations that elevate us to being trusted advisors.

**Hoyt:** At DHR, executive search consultants play an underappreciated yet powerful role in shaping the culture of client companies. Executive search consultants (cont'd. to page 9)

often intuitively understand where a company's culture needs to go, and assess executives in terms of their ability to push the client company's culture in the right direction. DHR search teams seek out insight on client companies' current ideal future cultures, and assess candidates against that standard using LEAP (our proprietary assessment) and their interviews.

#### What are some keys for organizations retaining their best employees?

**Wanca-Thibault:** One of the significant drivers for the great resignation deals with how people are treated in the workplace. Several articles and studies published by internationally recognized organizations have documented the prevalence of disrespectful behaviors including bullying, incivilities, and other forms of demeaning behaviors. There are many tactical steps that can be deployed to create an organizational culture that could mitigate the level of resignations that we are currently experiencing. These steps must be linked to an overarching human capital strategy that demonstrates an appreciation for the value of people.

**Clayton:** For too many years organizations wouldn't entertain the thought of quality of life for their people because their perspective was that it came with an additional cost that could have an impact on their margins and profitability. Today many organizations understand they need to become proactive in creating environments where people feel valued, respected, and an overriding sense of belonging. Among the things that can be done include but are not limited to:

- Being more engaged and keeping people connected (especially if remote work is involved).
- Employees want more work/life balance – how can organizations provide that?
- Make sure employees have the technology, training, and tools to be successful.
- Provide career paths and development opportunities to retain the strongest employees.
- Empower employees/teams but make sure there is accountability.
- Manage uncertainty and ambiguity; make people feel as safe as possible.
- Behave with intention.
- Encourage innovation.
- Create visibility and accessibility to leaders.
- Act with transparency.
- Find ways to increase social capital – Encourage social networks. Connect people across departments and provide cross-functional learning and social opportunities.

**Hoyt:** Our CEO clients are increasingly turning to DHR to help address talent challenges related to the Great Resignation. And in every case, those issues do require attention to culture. Long-standing policies and practices related to leadership and management may need to change to address the new reality of employee expectations.

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