

The tribe has spoken

We have watched the many episodes of Survivor where the winner, voted for by other contestants, gets to take home a million dollars. Have you ever considered the parallels between Survivor and what happens in your workplace?

Belonging

Think back to the time when you went for the job interview for your current role. When you walked into the office you would have surveyed the building, taken note of the reception area, how people behaved and engaged with the person conducting the interview. When you walked out you would have made a decision as to whether you wanted to work there or not.

Leader of the pack

The leader of an organisation is often the one who sets the standards of accepted behaviour and performance that becomes part of your culture. They will create drive and change culture; how they behave and manage their people and business affects everyone.

Change needs to be lead from the top. If, for example, our leaders are not interested in training or learning, then neither will the employees. People look to their leaders not so much for what they say but more for what they do.

Creating the right culture

When you open your doors for business on the first day you will have a vision and goals that you wish to achieve. Making a profit is probably at the top of the list and there is a parallel between creating the right culture and your bottom line.

As your business grows and you employ people you will set in place systems and processes that work and you value. Examples of these are Monday morning sales meetings, Tuesday morning training sessions, caravans, monthly group meetings, professional development days, customer service standards, performance driven teams who celebrate success, where opinions are valued which then become part of your business and culture.

However poor performance, back stabbing, bitchiness, poor decision making can also become part of a culture.

Remember culture is very much about the way we chose to do things and what we value and the messages we send out and receive. Leaders and managers in an organisation impact directly upon this.

Eviction

Recruiting the right people to fit into your culture is important. Induction programs, buddy systems, training programs are various ways to do this. It is human nature to want to belong to a tribe and when we are invited in we make changes to our behaviour to fit in otherwise we get ejected or we choose to leave.

When recruiting from other organisations be aware that what you have created can be changed or diluted and it is imperative that new members of your tribe understand why you do things the way you do.

If an employee does not fit into your culture they will often choose to leave and move elsewhere. Be aware of those that don't and manage them out before they have a negative impact on the group.

Values

Each one of us has value sets that we take through life and these can have an impact on what we chose to do on a daily basis. We spend our life making choices on what is important, vital, and necessary or a luxury.

As managers and leaders we need to recognise that everyone in the work place has different values and sometimes it may lead to issues or influence decisions that we are making.

There will be lines that people are simply not prepared to step over, recognise this and work with them to find a middle ground.

In a large organisation there are many leaders, they impact and create their own culture within their business units. There is no such thing as one culture in these businesses but as many as the number of managers, directors and leaders you have. How do you build a culture that is strong and evolving – you hold people accountable for the culture that they build in their businesses.

In smaller organisations that manager or director has a direct and immediate impact on the culture of the business. How they behave, the decisions that are made, systems and processes, all play a part.

Cultural change

Culture is taught, learned and shared, it is what we do, think and feel. It rules almost every aspect of our lives and more often than not we are completely unaware of it. Culture within an organisation is important as it sets boundaries on accepted behaviour and allows teams to work with each other.

When trying to change a culture in an organisation you will have people who will resist and form mini armies to fight the enemy, others will simply sit on the fence and may or may not choose to influence parties and those who will embrace changes with enthusiasm with the attitude of 'bring it on'.

Those who are against change will choose to move on or may need to be encouraged to leave and your fence sitters must make a choice either way.

Leaders and managers play an influential role dependant on their ability, rapport, communication and motivational skills.

Cultural change can be as simple as changing the format of a conference and as complicated as going from a single office to a franchise organisation.

Getting it right

The culture of your organisation can be a competitive advantage as are your people. Many businesses today don't fully understand the impact of culture and often will simply let it evolve. The issue with this is get it wrong and your business will suffer, get it right however and it will create an environment for your people to thrive in.

Stop and think about what messages you are sending out to your people, what is your culture, has it evolved or are you driving it?

Remember culture is a powerful tool that you can use to drive performance and productivity however if you choose to ignore it and hope for the best the chances are that the tribe will be voting to opt out and join up with your competitors.

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Sadhana is responsible for the professional development of over 400 employees across the 37 office network of Hocking Stuart. Drawing on her broad industry experience she has successfully established an internal accreditation training program for property managers, sales agents, administration and directors. As a trainer she is passionate about continuous professional development incorporating business systems, processes, technology and the development of human capital.

