

# How To Cultivate a Successful Culture

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Is the culture of your organization holding it back? Are you trying to create culture that's more innovative, agile, or digitally savvy but can't seem to get people to adopt a new mindset, much less a new skill set? Or are you struggling with attracting and retaining top talent...or increasing diversity and inclusion? Or perhaps your employees are among the 87% who [Gallup reports](#) are not engaged at work?

Cultivating a healthy, valuable, growth-oriented workplace culture isn't easy. If you're like most business leaders, you know your culture should produce a competitive advantage and improve your organization's performance, but you don't know how to cultivate and leverage the kind of culture you need to succeed.

In the research I did for my latest book, *FUSION: How Integrating Brand and Culture Powers the World's Greatest Companies*, I discovered the secret behind the leaders and companies that have unlocked their organization's potential for success: *brand-culture fusion* – the full integration and alignment of internal organizational culture and external brand identity.

In nuclear physics, fusion is the reaction that happens when two atomic nuclei come together. Nuclear fusion releases large amounts of energy - it's what powers the sun. When fused, the two nuclei create something entirely new. In the same way, you can unleash great power when you fuse together your organization's two nuclei: your culture -- the way the people in your organization behave and the attitudes and beliefs that inform them (i.e., "the way we do things around here") and your brand or brand identity, how your organization is understood by customers and other stakeholders.

With brand-culture fusion, you develop a culture that:

### **Is Unique**

Most of the most of the existing rhetoric on culture-building says that all company cultures must be warm and friendly and all managers must treat their colleagues like family by being nurturing, encouraging, and inclusive. That's just not true.

Every organization is different, so its culture should be too. A family-like culture might fuel one company's growth but might backfire completely at another which must be more competitive and driven by standards. Instead you need a *unique* culture.

When you fuse together your culture and your brand, your culture expresses your organization's unique purpose and core values, orients everyone to the specific challenges and opportunities of your competitive landscape, and develops the mindsets and behaviors that enable your employees to deliver on-brand customer experiences.

### **Creates Alignment**

By aligning and integrating your culture and brand, you get everyone thinking and talking about your business in the same way. You reduce uncertainty and confusion by establishing a single guide to action and people are less likely to function at cross-purposes when they're working toward a clear, common goal. This in turn increases the efficiency of your organization and the quality of its outcomes.

### **Cultivates Engagement**

The Gallup organization has found that only 41% of employees strongly agree that they know what their company stands for and what makes it different from competitors. It's no wonder that so many employees feel uninspired and unengaged.

But when you put a compelling brand promise at the center of your organization, you're more likely to attract and retain employees who understand and value the meaning behind their work. They feel an emotional connection to your company and brand, so they work hard to fulfill their commitments. Not only are they more engaged with customers, they also feel more connected to other employees because everyone is united by a collective identity and common goals.

### **Produces Authenticity**

Customers are very savvy these days. They see advertising rhetoric for what it is, and they no longer accept brands at face value. They are skeptical about the claims companies make. They want authenticity -- brands that live up to their promises and stated ideals.

While most companies simply slap “authenticity” on their list of brand attributes and try to engage customers superficially via social media to appear more humane or relatable, these efforts to create a more authentic brand image rarely convince customers. People don’t want brands to appear authentic, they want brands to actually be authentic in the way they operate and the customer experiences they deliver.

By aligning and integrating your culture and brand, what you say you are on the outside is truly what you are on the inside, so you pass the test of brand authenticity.

### **Improves Results**

It’s widely known that increased employee engagement results in greater productivity, improved quality, and higher customer satisfaction. Fusing your brand and culture can improve your business results even further.

For one, with brand-culture fusion, you increase your competitive advantage because it enables you to produce intangible value that is difficult to copy. Competitors may be able to match what you offer to customers and employees, but it’s much harder for them to embody the unique why and how of what you do.

Also people increasingly make decisions about which companies to work for or to buy from based on meaning and shared values, so deliberately linking your brand to your culture can increase your organization’s perceived relevance, differentiation, and appeal.

Independently, culture and brand are powerful, often unsung, business drivers. But when you fuse the two - when you create an interdependent and mutually reinforcing relationship between how your organization thinks and acts on the inside and how it is perceived and experienced on the outside - you create the ultimate solution for the culture problems that constrain most businesses today.

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