

***Fire Up! Your Employees and Smoke your Competition;
How to Invite, Incite, and Ignite Employee Performance***

By Jay Forte



Section 1: INVITE Performance

***Millennial managers INVITE performance when they create strong employee-focused cultures, understand talents, and hire the right employees.
This connects employees intellectually to their work.***

Chapter 1: INVITE the Best – Create an Employee-Focused Workplace Culture

“Human capital will go where it is wanted, and it will stay where it is well treated. It cannot be driven... it can only be attracted.”

Walter Wriston – former chairman Citicorp/Citibank

Note: Before starting this chapter, go to www.FireUpYourEmployees.com, click on “Beyond the Book” and print the supporting exercises and worksheets for chapter 1. This text includes the information you need; the website gives you access to the exercises, worksheets, and activities that will help you more fully complete this chapter and advance your learning through practice.

Organizational culture – it can create a disengaged employee or it can douse the performance passion of an engaged employee. It has the ability to attract great performers or send them running to the competition. It can inspire greatness or encourage mediocrity. It can encourage creative thinking or turn employees into compliant drones. Culture is the least common denominator of all performance and must be addressed as a critical first step of the Fire Up ProcessSM.

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According to author Jerome Want in his book *Corporate Culture: Illuminating the Black Hole*, culture is: “The collective belief systems that people within the organization have about their ability to compete in the marketplace – and how they act on those belief systems to bring value-added services and products to the customer in return for financial reward. Corporate culture is revealed through the attitudes, belief systems, dreams, behaviors, values, rites, and rituals of the company, especially through the conduct and performance of its employees and management.”

Organizations can't succeed with an underperforming organizational culture. It is critical to, therefore, define the components of culture, create them, and support them daily. Once in place, they drive the creative, flexible, nimble, and engaging organizational attributes that all employees want to be part of.

Culture is at the very fundamental level of employee ownership. Culture is the spark that activates the employee to use what he/she knows and how he/she feels to perform. The right culture can invite the right employees. In this intellectual economy, it is the employee who determines the quality of his/her work. But it is the quality of the workplace (culture) in attitude and in presence that INVITES the best employees to consider your organization, and once hired, fully contribute and perform. To attract and retain the best employees, your culture must be employee-focused.

When I speak of an *employee-focused* culture, I speak of the beliefs, attitudes, and policies that concentrate on and celebrate the value of the employee. A more current way to consider this is the *employment brand*. Employee-focused brands create strong work environments that continually put the employee first – their thinking, their contribution, their inventing, and their performing. Putting the employee first actually allows for the organization to ultimately put the customer first. Employees who work in a powerfully supportive workplace offer their best work and are significantly more engaged. This quality of employee is capable of hearing and implementing a message of extraordinary customer service. Without the supportive and dynamic workplace, the employee is not challenged and not fired up about service or performance.

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Performance is really about a fair exchange. You want the best from your employees, and in exchange for that effort, employees want things back from the organization. When an organization knows and provides what employees want and need, employees naturally provide a greater level of commitment and performance. Employees, who do not get the things they want and need from their workplace, are not fired up and, therefore, choose to limit their contributions. So the culture or workplace brand becomes the response to the employee question, “If I do this for you, what will you do for me?”

Think for a minute about a workplace that does not give back to its employees. If the culture components that matter to an employee are missing, the employee starts to search for these components elsewhere. Many organizations have not fully understood the culture components and the power the employment brand has on attracting and keeping (great) employees. The lack of a cohesive and employee-focused workplace brand triggers the great churning of employees who change organizations every eighteen to thirty-six months. This employee movement is due partly to a non-responsive workplace culture and partly to outdated management. The good news is that both can be easily corrected.

When discussing culture, first think foundation and structure. I’ll refer to the components of culture as *core architecture*. Each, on its own, does not create culture; in the aggregate, however, these core architecture components create a workplace brand (culture) that responds to the needs, values, and interests of today’s employees. The best way to review culture is through its components.

Review the core architecture components below (adapted and edited from *Performance Consulting* by Dana Gaines Robinson and James C. Robinson). As I develop each core architecture component, think of your current approach and how it may be developed into something more significant. The stronger these core architecture components are, the more they respond to your employees’ needs. The more the components respond, the more candidates notice you; this encourages more candidates to apply, which offers you a greater choice to be able to hire the right employee. Once in place, a powerful employee-focused culture retains the best employees because it provides what great employees want

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and need each day. You will be prompted to access your supporting exercises and worksheets at various points in this discussion of culture and core architecture. To get the full benefit of this approach, complete each exercise before moving on.

Core Architecture (Culture) Components

Components with a focus on the organization

1. Clearly defined mission (and values), supported by objectives and goals.
2. Clearly defined ethical standards and expectations.

Components with a focus on the employee

3. A competent, talent-based, and bias-free employee selection process.
4. A dynamic on-boarding and inclusionary process.
5. A fair and attainable reward and incentive process.
6. A fair and recurring performance review and feedback process.
7. Regular and recurring skill development (education).
8. Regular and recurring career counseling and development.
9. Dynamic succession planning and mentoring.
10. Inclusive and diverse environment that encourages a free exchange of ideas, employee accountability, and performance ownership.

Components with a focus on the organization

1. Clearly defined mission (and values), supported by objectives and goals.

Critical to a strong culture is a clearly defined and pervasively understood mission and values statement; it, therefore, must be a component of core architecture. Employees want to know the mission and values of an organization to determine that the organization has gone through the process to clearly define what it does, why it does it, and what its goals are. This frequently indicates a more stable organization that has well-defined directions and purpose. Once defined, employees can assess whether the mission and goals as presented make sense for whom the employees are and their career directions. Without this information, employees do not know if what they believe, and what the organization believes, are the same or similar enough to create a great working relationship. This uncertainty can lead to performance challenges later in their careers.

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In *The Mission Statement Book* by Jeffrey Abrahams, TRINOVA Corporation has the following definition of a mission statement: “A mission statement is an enduring statement of purpose for an organization that identifies the scope of its operations in product and market terms, and reflects its values and priorities.” The mission statement is not simply a motto or slogan, but rather a clear statement of the reason for the business that also reflects the personality, ethics, values, and behaviors of the organization. Review the following mission statements, noting that many add their corporate values to their mission statement.

- ***At Microsoft***
“Our mission and values are to help people and businesses throughout the world realize their full potential.”
- ***At Pool Corporation***
“We provide exceptional value for customers and suppliers, an exceptional return for stockholders, and exceptional opportunities for our employees.”
- ***At Cingular***
“To be the most highly regarded wireless company in the world, with a driving focus around best-in-class sales and service.”
- ***At E*Trade***
“To create long-term shareholder value through superior financial performance driven by the delivery of a diversified range of innovative, customer-focused financial products and services and supported by an operating culture based on the highest levels of teamwork, efficiency, and integrity.”
- ***At Caterpillar***
“Caterpillar will be the leader in providing the best value in machines, engines, and support services for customers dedicated to building the world’s infrastructure and developing and transporting its resources.

Caterpillar people will increase shareholder value by aggressively pursuing growth and profit opportunities that leverage our engineering, manufacturing, distribution, information management, and financial service expertise. We grow profitably.

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Caterpillar will provide its worldwide workforce with an environment that stimulates diversity, innovation, teamwork, continuous learning, and improve and rewards individual performance. We develop and reward people.

Caterpillar is dedicated to improving the quality of life while sustaining the quality of our earth. We encourage social responsibility.”

- ***At American Greeting:***

“We create

- Innovative products and services to meet our customers’ needs to connect, express, and celebrate.
- Superior value for our retail partners, customers, and shareholders.
- An environment for our associates to excel.
- Collaborative and reliable relationships with suppliers.
- A responsive community presence through leadership and stability.”

- ***At Walgreens:***

“We believe in the goods we merchandise, in ourselves, and in our ability to render satisfaction.

We believe that honest goods can be sold to honest people by honest methods. We believe in working, not waiting; in laughing, not weeping; in boasting, not knocking; and in the pleasure of selling our products.

We believe that we can get what we go after, and that we are not down and out until we have lost faith in ourselves.

We believe in today and the work we are doing, in tomorrow and the work we hope to do, and in the sure reward the future holds.”

- ***At Southwest Airlines:***

“The mission of Southwest Airlines is dedication to the highest quality of Customer Service delivered with a sense of warmth, friendliness, individual pride, and Company Spirit.

To Our Employees: We are committed to provide our Employees a stable work environment with equal opportunity for learning and personal growth. Creativity and innovation are encouraged for improving the effectiveness of Southwest Airlines. Above all, Employees will be provided the same concern, respect, and

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caring attitude within the organization that they are expected to share externally with every Southwest Customer.”

You can see by these examples of mission and value statements that each reflects the core beliefs and personality of the organization. Though my personal perspective is that most are too long to be easily understood, learned, and lived, they do clearly define the focus and values of each organization. The clearer this statement is, the more the organization can connect to like-minded candidates and employees. The more direct and brief the statement is, the easier it is to learn, live, and support.

As the mission and values are the *what* of the organization, the objectives and goals are the *how*. Objectives are more broadly and organizationally designed; goals are narrower and define how strategies will be implemented at a department or other business unit level. It is critical that an organization be explicit about both its identity and its process to process to achieve their identity on a daily basis. This mission clarity encourages a positive employment brand and customer connection since both employees and customers want to know what an organization stands before they will consider working for or buying from it.

To be effective in hiring the right employee, organizations must have a choice of employment candidates. If the employee culture is not attractive enough to INVITE the best (right) employees, then the organization will be frequently forced to hire those who show up to the interviews instead of hiring employees who are well suited to the roles. A clear mission and values statement clearly defines the organization’s beliefs and purpose which starts to set your organization apart from others. The more clearly you can separate yourself from other organizations, the more your organization will stand out and attract the kind of employees who believe in your mission and values. The more a candidate sees the fit between the person and the organization, the more connected he/she becomes. In a period of workplace uncertainty, low employee skill levels, and retiring older workers, creating ways to attract the attention of your ideal candidates will be critical to your survival.

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Things to Consider

- What are your organization's clearly defined objectives and goals that support the implementation of the mission?
- How are the goals and objectives published to the organization?
- How do your employees know their roles and responsibilities in the goals and objectives?
- What input do employees have in the process of achieving the mission or vision?
- How does having a mission statement, supported by goals and objectives INVITE the best candidates?

2. Clearly defined ethical standards and expectations.

Success in any organization is based on the standards of behavior and performance that are set both publicly and privately. Because of the significant number of businesses that have failed or needed outside bailout assistance due to poor decisions or ethical violations (World Com, Enron, Lehman Bros, AIG, and others), the ethical perspectives of an organization are now more visible and more openly assessed by applicants and employees. Organizations that openly commit to ethical standards in the treatment of the planet, their employees, their customers, and their compliance to accounting standards and business practices significantly attract applicants from those organizations that do not publicly define their ethical focus. Though organizations are presumed to run their affairs, workplaces, and relationships in an ethical manner, organizations that clearly define their standards, train their employees in the expected behaviors, and act as model citizens significantly attract more ethical employees.

Consider for minute the focus on green or environmentally-friendly organizations. It is becoming more prevalent for strong employee candidates to do their research to locate organizations that are environmentally-responsible and commit to low carbon impact performance. Ethical responses are now a more significant component of fit used by employees.

This purpose of an ethical statement is much the same as a mission and values statement – to publicly state the ethical standards supported in the organization. This is to ensure

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that future or potential employees have enough information to know if the organization offers the right environment and fit. Additionally, positive ethical practices actively attract quality employment candidates.

In today's world, success is in customization. We want our food cooked our way; we want our music play lists to reflect our tastes. We want our car to have the options on it that make sense for us, and we want to customize our MySpace site to reflect what we think, like, and believe. Employees want choices and they want to be connected to organizations that reflect their values and interests. Organizations that publicly offer their mission, values, goals, and ethical standards put themselves out to review with the hopes that those prospective employees with like thinking will find them and relate to them. Strong cultures attract those employees who believe what the organizations believe. Without a statement of belief, there is a significant chance that the organization will attract the wrong type of employee and, therefore, negatively affect his/her engagement and performance. Clearly defined organizational perspectives start the process of defining the workplace culture to the rest of the world.

Things to Consider

- What are your organization's ethical standards statements?
- How are these ethical standards publicized internally and externally?
- What do employees think of the ethical standards and how are these standards lived in the workplace?
- If your organization does not have a statement of ethical standards, what would be involved in its creation?
- How does the creation and publication of ethical standards INVITE the best candidates?

Components with a focus on the employee

Earlier, I said that the best way to create a customer-focused workplace is to first create an employee-focused workplace. Fired up employees provide consistently extraordinary service – the kind of service that creates loyal customers. Now that I have presented a culture focus on the organization, it is time to move on to a culture focus on the

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employee. Your focus must be to create a culture that empowers, celebrates, supports, and develops each employee to fire them up. Let's review the employee components of core architecture:

3. A competent, talent-based, and bias-free employee selection process.

Employees want to work in organizations that hire for talents and properly match the right employee with the right role. This improves performance, engagement and competence. An organization that creates a hiring culture that is competent, talent-based and bias-free, attracts and retains the best employees.

Organizations that commit to hiring employees based on how they think instead of what they look like, the skills they have, or their existing work experience send a message the organization is serious about performance. It commits the effort to invest in its people (treats them like assets, not expenses) by completing significant assessment work upfront to ensure the right employee is matched to the right role. Organizations that hire for talent, indirectly welcome a diverse workforce. By limiting the hiring decisions to talent fit, organizations disregard gender, age, ethnicity, race, religion, and the other biases that often enter into hiring decisions. Hiring the right talent not only puts the right thinking in the right role, it allows diverse perspectives to enter the workplace because of the great variety of backgrounds accompanying the talents hired in. I will develop this more in the next chapter, but for now, see the impact on candidates and employees when the organization commits the extra work to putting the right employee in the right role. This attracts the best, and once on board, retains the best. Employees want to work in areas that match their talents and strengths and to work with those who are also in their strength areas.

Things to Consider

- What is your organization's current hiring process? How effective is it?
- Is your organization's hiring process based on matching employee talents or using work experience as a reason to hire?
- How will you ensure the business community knows you hire the *right* employees and give them every opportunity to excel?

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- Would your organization's current hiring process INVITE the best candidates to your organization? Why or why not?

4. A dynamic on-boarding and inclusionary process.

It is critical for all new employees to be included quickly and completely into the culture of the organization. Studies show that employees who are not actively included in their new organization within their first week consider leaving the organization within their first six months. Imagine having a successful employee selection process – one that takes the time to match employees' talents with their roles – and then does not prepare and support the new employee from the first moment. When asked, employees state that they need to feel part of the organization right from the start to help them feel confident they chose the right organization. Remember, it is critical that both the newly hired employee and the organization believe they have chosen wisely for the employee-organization relationship to be maximized.

Information about organizations that have powerful on-boarding programs is quickly disseminated to the business community. Again, successful hiring practices and an on-boarding program that explains the role's responsibilities, organization's policies, business practices, and introduces the workplace community are all part of the brand of an employee-focused workplace.

On-boarding programs involve the employee from his/her first moment of employment and link the employee personally and professionally with other employees. This link creates an emotional and functional connection so the new employee develops a personal and immediate commitment to the organization. This also helps the employee's connection to his/her role and builds a sense of *owner thinking*. The on-boarding process will be specifically addressed in chapter 7, as the process is critical in retaining the best employees.

Things to Consider

- What is your organization's on-boarding process?
- What do employees say about this process? If it is not effective, why not?

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- Does your organization's on-boarding process have the employee at the center?
- Is your organization's on-boarding process dynamic or "on-boring"?
- How does your organization's on-boarding process INVITE the best candidates?

5. A fair and attainable reward and incentive process.

It is critical for employees to see the possibility for reward and incentives as achievable and contingent on their personal performance. It is also fair to have high expectations of employees in today's highly competitive and changing economy; few employees contest the extreme expectations. What they look for is the balance of expectations with rewards. Successful employees are connected to their work and want to be fired up about performance, targets, and goals. However, there are times where extra performance is needed, and in exchange for a strong month-end push on sales or the launching of a new product, employees will look to see that the success of the organization is shared with them. The critical words in this component of the dynamic workplace brand are *fair* and *attainable*.

We are in the age of the free agent; employees see that the greatest rewards go to the best performers. So employees who work at extraordinary levels will expect to be applauded and rewarded based on the extreme work. Do the fired up rewards match the performance? If not, employees will commit to less performance. This does not mean the employee is not committed; rather, today's employees see (and demand) more of a connection between performance and pay. All in all, this is actually a great thing for management because employees hold themselves more accountable for performance. To reward the performance, employees will look for the commensurate rewards and incentives that go with the performance. This information is, again, part of an employee-focused workplace brand.

Things to Consider

- What are your organization's reward and incentive programs? Are they effective? Why or why not?
- What do employees know and think about your reward and incentive programs?

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- Would your employees assess your organization's reward and incentive programs as fair and attainable or would they assess them as intentionally unachievable?
- How does your reward and incentive program INVITE the best candidates?

6. A fair and recurring performance review and feedback process.

It is critical for all employees to be part of a recurring feedback process that regularly discusses all aspects of their performance. Performance done well must be noticed and applauded; performance needing improvement must be corrected. All employees want to know how they are doing. In fact, realize that employees work for more than the money; they work for manager approval. Dialog from a manager about performance is a critical component of all high performing cultures. And for many employees, feedback and praise is the incentive to constantly work harder and improve.

The best way to fire up an employee is to work closely with him/her in areas that he/she is already talented to help him/her become great. Regular feedback, that both applauds success and teaches when performance is not at expectation, is what creates a sound feedback and performance review process. This helps employees who are already good at what they do, become great. Historically, managers have felt the only time they should provide feedback is when an employee is underperforming. In fact, it has been said that many managers believe it is their job to catch employees doing something wrong. If the goal is to create a highly supportive employee-focused culture, then all feedback should applaud successes, and coach and counsel failures with the explicit purpose of helping good performance become great.

Employees should always know how they are doing and performance feedback should not be limited to once a year. It is a great practice, at least annually, to conduct a complete performance review that includes a robust review of employee performance from all areas. However, regular and recurring performance conversations inform employees of performance successes and areas needing improvement. This level of personal and relationship connection – you and the employee – is core to millennial management. The more opportunities you have to provide supportive performance feedback and coaching, the more connected you and the employee become. This fires up

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the employee to perform at even greater levels and drives personal and professional results.

Things to Consider

- What is your organization's performance review and feedback process?
- What do your employees think about this process?
- Is your organization's feedback process fair, recurring, and have an equal focus on commenting on the good as well as the bad? If not, how can you improve the process?
- How does your performance review and feedback process INVITE the best candidates?

7. Regular and recurring skill development (education).

It is critical for all employees to continually learn and to be included in a culture of thinking and high performance. This is the age of intellectual capital; it means employees need to constantly augment what they know to help both themselves and the organization stay competitive. Organizations that commit to regular education and hold employees accountable for using what they learn to drive performance attract the best and retain the best. This creates greater employee loyalty, and in recessionary periods, the organization still performs at strong levels because their employees' base of skills is up to date and competitive.

Today's intellectual-age economy also hosts what is called the *emergent worker*. The emergent worker is one who takes greater control in advancing his/her career and controlling his/her education. He/she realizes that employees are paid based on their ability to create value for customers and the organization. The more employees know, the greater their value. And the things they need to succeed are now not limited to the technical or hard skills. Today, employees are looking for proficiency with emotional intelligence and soft skills, including communication, relationship building, and collaboration.

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We are truly in an idea economy. The best way to encourage idea thinking is to encourage organizational learning and thinking. Employees do not learn unless the learning process is both meaningful and easy to use. Courses should be hosted in areas that directly relate to improving skills and ensuring that employees feel more competent in their roles. Employees should see a direct relationship between what they learn and its application in the workplace. Employees should also be encouraged to continually learn in a variety of areas, including areas that are not in their current role, to determine if they have additional opportunities to contribute. Word gets out very quickly about organizations that help their employees constantly learn, grow, and take on new responsibilities. These are the same organizations that actively involve all levels of management in teaching, sharing what they know, coaching employees in new skill areas, and mentoring employees to accelerate the learning process by blending learning with application.

With the advance of electronic learning (DVD, audio, MP3, and Web seminars), employees have the ability of gathering critical learning in a variety of methods. These new opportunities offer employees flexibility in learning and a method that encourages their personal learning style.

Things to Consider

- What is your organization's focus on learning and is it available to every employee?
- Is it easy for all employees to participate and are topics practical and useful?
- What do employees think about the training and skill development they receive?
- Do employees have the tools they need to be constantly learning and consistently improving?
- How does this INVITE the best candidates?

8. Regular and recurring career counseling and development.

It is critical for all employees to be involved in a regular conversation about their professional development and to see that their development process is important to the organization. All employees want to not only know, but also have a voice in determining,

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where they are headed in their careers. Organizations that host this conversation on a regular basis encourage employees to reach for greater performance in areas that make sense for both the employee and the organization. This encourages greater personal connection between the employee and the management of the organization, which encourages greater employee loyalty.

Notice that I use the term *conversation*; in this service or intellectual economy, you do not make decisions about employees without employee input. So your discussion about short- and long-term career development must be an interactive dialog or a conversation. In it, the discussions must relate to the short-term role and what is called “job sculpting” – the process of customizing each job around the talents, interests, and values of each employee. This process uses a standard job description as a basis to define tasks and then adds or modifies components to create a more customized role by employees. The goal is to create a more dynamic and more customized fit for each employee so employees come to work excited by what the work allows/needs them to do. This process will be discussed in greater detail in chapters 8 and 10 and will include examples of how to sculpt the ideal job for each employee.

In addition to a conversation about the short term, development also involves a conversation about the long-term role of the employee. Helping employees see the long-term vision encourages employees to commit to the organization, work on skills to achieve the development vision, and see that the employee is valued and respected. Again, all of this encourages employee loyalty. Organizations that host this conversation attract greater candidates since most organizations do not do this and employees want it. As you can see, an organization that commits this time to defining the current role and the conversation (mutual dialog) about the future responds well to what employees want and need from their organization.

Things to Consider

- What is your organization’s approach to developing each employee?
- How often is a *Career Conversation* hosted and what kind of action plan is created?
- What do your employees think about the idea of staying with the organization?

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- Are there clear routes for your employees to progress in areas that match their strengths and talents? Is there a plan to keep your employees interested in what they do?
- How do hosting career development discussions INVITE the best candidates?

9. Dynamic succession planning and mentoring.

Baby Boomers, seventy-six million born between 1946 and 1964, make up 28 percent of the most skilled workplace roles. The generation behind it, Generation X, hosts only forty-one million, creating an impending supply and talent shortage as the Boomer generation retires. Even if many of the Boomer generation decide to remain in the workplace in a reduced capacity, their departures are a clear and present threat to most organization's workforces, staffing, and intellectual capital. As these senior employees retire, they take with them the knowledge and wisdom of their contributions for the organization. This loss of intellectual capital is the basis for the term "brain drain." Brain drain creates two significant problems: first, there are employment vacancies in the organization if the position is not filled, and second, the replacement employee will not know as much about the role as the retiring party. Both put the organization at a significant competitive risk in an intellectual (service) economy because this economy relies on using what it knows to drive success.

Brain drain can happen as every generation matures, starts to retire, and leaves a younger generation in charge. Organizations can fight the dangers of brain drain by creating succession planning programs. In succession planning programs, employees are selected, trained and matched with more senior employees to quickly advance not only what they know, but more importantly, how to use what they know. Matching these younger employees with more senior employees through mentoring programs facilitates the process of passing on what the more senior employees know and helps the younger employees to be ready to take over when retirements or departures start.

Having a strong succession planning process tells an employee the organization is thinking and planning for the advancement of its employees, is aware of the retirement process, and is proactive to ensure the organization survives and remains competitive. An

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organization without a robust succession planning process will quickly lose its competitive edge as those with the knowledge retire or move on. Today's success in business is in what employees (young and old) know. Wisdom (how to use what you know) is built from years of decision-making and is more frequently resident in older employees because of the time and experience in their roles. The goal is to pass this wisdom on to younger employees who may have the knowledge but lack the time and experience (wisdom) to know how to use it effectively. Succession planning ensures that what is important is passed on and that a supply of future management is always being trained to take over and to keep the organization's intellectual capital safe and useful on a daily basis.

Organizations that have a publicized succession planning mindset help current and future employees feel confident the organization will remain, will be competitive, and employees have the room and the direction to grow.

Things to Consider

- What is your organization's succession planning process?
- How are younger employees selected to advance to more senior roles?
- Is there a sense of urgency in the advancement? If not, should there be?
- How does a succession planning process INVITE the best candidates?

10. An inclusive and diverse environment that encourages a free exchange of ideas, employee accountability, and performance ownership.

Employees' greatest millennial value is in their intellectual capital – their thinking. This thinking comes in the form of men and women, old and young, varied nationalities, and many religions; this thinking comes in the great diversity of today's workplace. The performance power of current employees is in their combined talents, diverse backgrounds, and a collaborative approach. The more variety in ethnicity, age, gender, and backgrounds, the greater experiences are brought to discussions, projects, products, and teams. This diversity creates great opportunity for non-standard responses, which are consistently proven to be the source of organizational success.

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Historically, companies are guilty of “homosocial reproduction.” This phrase, coined by Dr. Robert Rodriguez, an assistant dean at Kaplan University, refers to the predisposition of organizations to hire, associate, and work with those who are like them. Organizations that hire employees based on experiences or because of a look or image, miss out on a key component of a thinking and innovating workplace. Homosocial reproduction ensures that employees constantly see the world the same way; the organization clones itself. In the process, it suffers from stale ideas and standard thinking.

Organizations that hire based on talent (not homosocial reproduction) allow for great diversity; these benefit the organization with their histories and colorful traditions that encourage greater innovation, connection, and creativity. Diversity is a bottom line issue and organizations that allow and encourage it consistently outperform those who require their workforce continue to look and act as it always has.

Organizations that support homosocial reproduction also historically are known to tell employees what to do and do not actively encourage or allow employees to freely think, invent, offer ideas, develop new approaches, or try things that are different or unusual. The more management thinks for employees, the more the employees become *idiots* – accustomed to letting management do all of the thinking. Soon, management finds itself handing more and more of the employees’ responsibilities. Employees become bored and leave.

Organizations should demand thinking, innovation, and creative suggestions from all of its employees. Employees see and hear things; they have perspectives and they have talents and ideas. Each time you exclude an employee from contributing, you help him/her believe that his/her contributions are not required, accepted, or necessary. Each time this happens, the employee contributes a little less until one day he/she feels there is no reason to stay, or you, as the manager, look at how little he/she is contributing and ask him/her to leave.

Employee-focused cultures allow for employee contribution and participation in all areas. These cultures solicit ideas from every employee and hold employees accountable for

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generating ideas and problem-solving. Employee thinking is what you pay for when you pay employees; you pay for their ability to think through the best response at each moment of their day. The more the culture expects and encourages employees to contribute, the more they connect to their roles and to the organization. This encourages loyalty and owner thinking.

Organizations that are known to be diverse, open, inventive, creative, and expressive are talent magnets. Employees want to be fired up about their roles; they want to make a significant difference. The outdated command-and-control approach to managing defines employees' contributions and allows very little innovation, spontaneity, and creativity. This process of dictating and demanding alienates employees because they don't like to be told what to do or what to think. Organizations that encourage employee contribution in all areas of the business get noticed. Organizations that encourage ideas and information movement, employee accountability and full performance ownership INVITE high performing employees because this is the type of culture the high performer wants to work in.

Things to Consider

- How diverse is your organization?
- Does the organization value diverse backgrounds, experience, and culture?
- How well does your organization include all employees in decision-making, information sharing, and idea solicitation?
- What level of thinking do you expect from your employees?
- What level of thinking do your employees know you expect of them?
- How can an inclusive and diverse environment help to INVITE the best candidates?

Core architecture represents the components of a successful employee-focused organizational culture, or think of it as the Fire Up! brand that attracts and retains the best employees. Employees want to work in a workplace that celebrates who they are and allows them to be great at what they do. Employees want to be treated fairly, given the opportunity to excel; see a long-term path, and asked what they think. Employees want to be passionate and fired up about what they do and how they make a difference. And

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when they find this level of energy and focus in the workplace, they step up and *stand out*; they invent the best responses each day for customers, products, policies, and events.

A fired up employee is the key to performance success and results in every organization. These employees control their intellectual capital; they control how hard they work, how committed they are, and how long they stay. Your role as management is to understand this and offer back to them a powerful culture that supports, appreciates, and inspires them to be their best. This type of organization will attract the best candidates for future roles and retains quality employees as the employment market tightens.

Culture is the most fundamental level of performance, as it is capable of attracting the best and retaining the best. Now that you have seen the components that employees (when polled) stated they want and need to see in the workplace, how well do you respond? Does your response provide an indication why the best or the average applicants apply to your organization? Moreover, do the great employees stay with your organization? I will review core architecture components in greater detail as I share more of the INVITE component and introduce INCITE and IGNITE.

Time for Practice

From the worksheets you printed for this chapter from the website, access the worksheet that lists the ten components of core architecture (culture). This exercise will ask you to rank these ten components from your employees' perspective. Once ranked, select the top four components and assess what you currently do and what you could do to make the component more inviting. Create your action plan for this chapter. Remember, as you achieve each of your culture action items, replace it with another to continually improve your employee-focused culture.

Fan the embers – A summary and review

1. Core architecture refers to the ten components of cultures. When assembled, they create a powerful culture.

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2. The first two components of culture refer to the organization and to its guiding mission, values, goals, objectives, and ethics. These two components must be in place before all other components can be implemented.
3. The third through the tenth components of culture are employee-focused. These are things that are done in the organization that continually celebrate, appreciate, and focus on the value of the employee.
4. Each component may have a different value for your environment. The goal is to consistently work on all components, starting with the components that are most in demand by your organization.
5. It is important to always work on developing or enhancing the culture of the organization. Include employees in the discussion to be sure the workplace and culture continually respond to employee needs, values, and issues.
6. All progress on performance expectations should be summarized regularly; successes must be applauded and poor performance must be coached and counseled. Regular feedback is critical for all successful implementation of performance expectations.
7. Whatever combination of these ten components of culture you create becomes your employment brand. Is your current brand (word on the street) the brand you want? If not, develop your plan to make the required changes.