

CREATING HIGH-PERFORMANCE WORK ENVIRONMENTS

Are you interested in creating a differentiating advantage in your business that your competitors cannot match?

Then, teach your employees to out-behave your competition!

What is it that truly distinguishes one business from another?

Most companies use tangible factors (e.g., lowest price, newest technology, etc.) to set themselves apart from competitors. However, tangible factors are susceptible to the competitor who comes along with lower prices, more technology, larger inventory, more locations, etc.

Smart businesses realize that it is the intangible factors such as employee engagement and commitment that competitors cannot match.

But how does a company utilize employee engagement and commitment to its competitive advantage?

The reality of most businesses today is that they contain patterns of behavior, incentives, and internal systems that fail to fully execute the company strategy and its marketing brand promises made to customers.

These patterns of behavior and internal systems set up an invisible barrier to performance. In other words, over time the established work environment settles into a state of equilibrium, which in effect acts as a barrier to “above and beyond” levels of performance. This is one of those “We have met the enemy and it is us” situations.

The solution is to engage employees in the creation of a high-performance work environment where the organizational strategy and brand promises to customers drive the profitability of the business and eliminate the invisible barriers to performance.

The key to creating a high-performance work environment is the establishment of the How Factors of the business.

The How Factors are the behavior and performance expectations that employees are trained to execute and that management will monitor and recognize accordingly.

The methodology for creating the How Factors is a process of aligning who we say we are and what we say we do, with the actual experiences of customers in an effort to meet and exceed expectations.

This methodology consists of the following broad steps:

1. Identify the values (e.g., respect, teamwork, transparency, etc.) that guide the business and the themes (e.g., operational excellence, quality, contributions to society, etc.) that the company wants to be known by.

2. Brainstorm planned experiences/customer touch points (PE/CTP) that make the values and themes come “alive” for customers in the areas of (a) pre-purchase activities, (b) purchase functions, and (c) post-purchase relationship building.
3. Indoctrinate employees to gain their buy-in and have employees participate in brainstorming the PE/CTP.
4. Incorporate the PE/CTP as behavior and performance expectations for employees in their job descriptions.
5. Regularly monitor employee behaviors and performance results to ensure compliance with the PE/CTP.
6. Establish internal systems that engage, compensate, recognize, and reward employees.
7. Create specific financial and customer service metrics by which to monitor results.

Companies have spent millions of dollars creating intricate strategies, complicated marketing programs, and elaborate advertising campaigns without fully engaging the very people who are responsible for operationalizing these plans – the workforce. A properly established high-performance work environment will resolve this issue and ensure alignment of people and processes for profitability.

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