'Simon Says'

The new monthly editorial column from Edward George.

A warm hello from the team at Edward George!

Did you know that lost productivity from under performing and disengaged Australian employees carries estimated costs of around $32 billion every year? With the rapid growth of social media and 'Gen Y' changing jobs almost as often as they change their mobile phones, a strong and positive corporate culture can be the main driver that encourages your valuable employees to stay engaged, highly effective and choose to stay with you.

Workforce culture: the invisible force with visible impacts.

A good company culture takes effort. Sadly it is not based on meeting monthly sales targets or successfully reaching the completion of a team project.

Culture is the curious mix of ingredients (shared corporate values, employee satisfaction, team work, loyalty, positive energy, passion…) that can't really be seen. But you can be sure that if the ingredients are not quite right, their impacts will be felt by the whole team; most likely affecting your productivity, your staff retention rates and even your bottom line.

So how can we create and maintain a corporate environment that nurtures staff and fosters excellence and competitive advantage? Here are 6 tips that are worth considering:

1. **Company values need to be articulated and meaningful.** An effective work culture is driven by sound values which are aligned with, and consistently applied across every aspect of the organisation. Embedding company values in policies and procedures and linking them to positive performance management strategies will help employees to clearly understand expectations.

2. **Work culture needs to look ahead.** A quick lunch thrown on to appease overworked staff could be seen as exactly that and is only going to provide a short term gain at best. A planned approach to recognising and rewarding outstanding performance will promote employee loyalty and be evident in meeting and exceeding business targets.

3. **Recruit the right people.** Build a passionate and diverse workforce where the balance of personalities, skills and experience support your professional needs and complement your culture. A person with the right qualifications is not nearly as hard to find as a person with the right personal qualities, commitment and cultural fit.

4. **Listen and learn.** You can gain so much insight into what you are doing well and what you could do better just by encouraging team input in decision making. Provide regular opportunities for feedback and take the same care to review and evaluate your corporate values and workplace culture as you would to review your strategic plan and annual budgets. Some structured ways to gain useful information from your employees include facilitating regular small team meetings, providing annual staff satisfaction surveys and including exit interviews for all employees who leave the organisation.

5. **Get rid of the bad eggs.** It sounds harsh, but sometimes an employee just doesn't fit within your work culture. Perhaps a high achiever who has lost their passion for their role and the organisation? Underlying negativity can be really damaging to your work culture. This person presents a risk and probably needs to take on a new challenge.

6. **Be prepared to change.** A culturally negative work environment is not a quick fix and may have been some time in the making before it is recognised. Creating an environment for change is worth the investment. In the words of Aristotle; "Pleasure in the job puts perfection in the work."