



A company is the product *of its Culture*



"When ancient opinions and rules of life are taken away, the loss cannot possibly be estimated. From that moment we have no compass to govern us, nor can we know distinctly to what port to steer."

- Edmund Burke

Culture: A particular form of civilization, esp. the beliefs, customs, arts, and institutions of a society at a given time.


When was the last time you went downtown to a comedy club to enjoy a really funny stand-up French comedian. Hmm. Think really hard. I think the last time that happened was...never.

The French have a zest for life. They're known for the Dionysian interests of food, wine and romance. Heck, they even have a kiss named after their "joie de vivre", but they typically aren't funny people.

If you grew up in France, you would be speaking French, eating dinner later, taking two-hour lunches and would consider Jerry Lewis to be the king of comedy, but whether you're in another country or right here in the U.S., culture shapes your every being.

From the time you're born, you are inundated with concepts, theories, philosophies and actions that shape who you are. These concepts, theories, philosophies and actions are derived from the culture in which you were raised; therefore you are a part of that culture. As a child you grow and define yourself using culture as a backdrop, and eventually as an adult you will be come a part of this culture.



 To illustrate this point further let's compare the US Army with another well-known culture, Disney. Both companies are well-known, have rules, and a specific feel. Take a look at how both companies have a specific guideline for each area of their culture. Please note, both companies have a detailed description of each guideline, as well as behaviors and specific data to support them.



DISNEY

Dress Code:

Costume and all accessories based on part. For example: Snow White, Prince Charming, and Goofy. Mandatory name tag policy

Grooming Hostess:

Lipstick should be applied lightly and should complement your appearance. Wear a true or natural color of lipstick.

Grooming Host:

Clean, presentable fingernails are a must. Fingernail tips should not extend past the tip of the finger.

Policies:

Extensive, Traditions program

Job Description:

Disney Leader

What they call their Customers:

Guests

What they call their Employees:

Cast members, Hosts, Hostesses

Training Program:

Initial Disney University and on-going training based on area of emphasis. Mouster and Ducktorate Degrees.

End Product:

A fun fantasy-like experience for family



U.S. ARMY

Dress Code:

Uniform based on function. BDUs (Battle Dress Uniform)

Grooming male soldiers:

Army buzz cut "high and tight", clean shaven

Grooming female soldiers:

Hair short or secured in hat while on duty, natural make-up.

Policies:

Army Regulations

Job Description:

Military Occupational Specialty (MOS)

What they call their Customers:

Civilians

What they call their Employees:

Recognized by rank, i.e., Capt., soldier

Training:

9-week boot camp and on-going training based on rank and specialty

End Product:

Efficient army force to defend America.



Now, let's take a look at your company. How do you get your team to *live* your culture?

You can dream, create, design and build the most wonderful place in the world....but it takes people to make the dream a reality.

- Walt Disney

Dress Code:

Grooming:

Policies:

Job Description:

What you call your clients:

What you call your employees:

Training:

End Product:



STANDARDS

The best way to support a culture is to establish standards, then hold your staff accountable to the standards set.

When speaking of a concept such as standards, the conversation can get quite existential. Are one person's standards the same as another's? Can standards change with the situation? Are standards negotiable? If Stan fell in the woods and no one was around would he make a sound? Does posing these questions make your mind drift causing you to wonder when the next break is?

The answers to these questions can get quite complicated because while standards do play an important role in our own society, the terms of these standards can change from situation to situation. For example: a college student may have a lower standard of what's an acceptable meal (three day old pizza reheated on a radiator is perfectly edible for most college freshman), while a seasoned restaurant reviewer will hopefully have a different set of palatable standards.

In a way, standards help us socially tell right from wrong. For example, cutting in line at the market, leaving no tip at a restaurant, or wearing flip-flops to a job interview are not jailable offenses, but they are not acceptable standards for our society either.

But the above actions may be deemed appropriate in other cultures. In some Asian cultures lines are not a part of a market. Tips are not part of the culture in most of Europe, and flip-flops may be perfectly acceptable when applying for a job at a surf shop. Of course other levels of standards, both smaller and grander, also exist.

List three things that your staff could do to cause clients to look at your company in a negative way.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____



BUSINESS STANDARDS

All businesses, from members of the Fortune 500 to the corner lemonade stand, have standards that help keep them operating and prospering. Without standards in areas such as productivity, performance, service, safety and professionalism, they simply could not survive in a competitive marketplace.

When you look at your company and its standards, they tend to fall into three major categories:

1. Operational Standards
2. Sales Standards
3. Delivery Standards

"Right now. Tailored for me. Served up the way I like it. If the new consumer's expectations were spelled out on a billboard, that is how they would read. Top managers monotonously repeat, as if intoning mantras, that this is the age of customer service or the age of the consumer. Yet few managers realize what they must do for that customer to earn his or her complete approval."

- Real Time: Preparing for the Age of the Never Satisfied Customer by Regis McKenna

These standards must be enforced on every employee, from the guy with the green hair in the stockroom to the CEO. The three different categories of standards are shown above in the order of level of difficulty to implement. First, you inform your employees on how to dress, then you demonstrate how a product should look when delivered, and finally you train them how to sell. There will be different standard categories for each department, such as marketing, the warehouse, and accounting. For now, let's focus on the three major categories utilized in Sales Management.

How do you decide which standards to implement?

The standards you put into place should be based on the type of Culture you want to put out into the universe. In fact there may be things that are beyond your control (such as the product) so how are you guiding your sales team?

When searching for applicable standards for the sales team ask yourself the following questions:

- What do your clients expect?
- How can we differentiate ourselves from the competition?
- What would give us a sales increase?
- Will this standard be seen as a customer service?



IMPLEMENTING STANDARDS

A standard is a level of service distributed by an individual or entity, and there are certain axioms that are universal, or non-negotiable. In simple terms, it might be said that the manager is the gatekeeper of the standards. Forget about personality, skills, charisma or the ability to motivate people.

The moment someone e-mails their resume to a potential employer, that person is stating that they are willing to dedicate forty hours a week in exchange for money. Once hired, a Rep has not entered into an employment agreement, but a rental agreement for their time. Just as a landlord hands over the keys to a unit and the tenant writes a monthly check, the Rep is handing over his/her life five days a week and in return, the company hands over a monthly check.

When you begin to think of standards as rules rather than suggestions, it's easier to grasp the importance of holding high standards.

INTRODUCING STANDARDS

After you've decided which standards to implement, it's time to inform your staff of those standards. Before you do so, you must be willing to introduce a concept to yourself:

If you will not write-up salespeople and eventually terminate those that violate standards, then don't call them non-negotiable standards or even universal axioms. Call it fluff.

The following steps will help managers make the adjustment successfully:

1. **During your weekly meeting** introduce them to the new standards and goals.
2. **Implement only one standard at a time.** Throwing too much at them could cause a panic.
3. **Don't give them arbitrary rules.** Explain everything and discuss how these new standards will help them perform at higher levels.
4. **Be specific about each standard and answer any questions that may arise.** After the explanation have the staff give you examples of each standard so that you know they have full comprehension.
5. **Explain that from now on there will be consequences for their actions.** Good performance will receive praise, while breaking a universal axiom will bring about the reaper.
6. **Be their safety net.** Always be the coach. Establish a trial period in which they will practice. After competence and ability has been shown, consequences can be implemented.



HOW OFTEN DO YOU MEASURE?

The true test for the company's success is to measure standards in all employees, evaluate the corresponding results and create action plans for the out points. Employees need feedback on how they perform to the standards. Reward your employees for above set standard achievements. Implement coaching as needed for less than standard performance. The only true test is to take many one time snap-shots with many employees to get an idea of what the "moving picture" of your standard achievement is.

**High standards generate high quality;
high quality that is consistent generates an outstanding reputation.**

The following are possible ways to measure performance to standards:

- Mystery Shopping - person to person and over the phone models
- Service Evaluations with services delivered
- Ride Alongs with supervisors
- Client Surveys

How are you going to measure to ensure that your standards are in place with your team?



"Just coming here practicing and going home is not going to get it done. They pay you to do that. It's the extra stuff, attention to detail, that we're going to have to do to get over the top."

Shannon Sharp, Denver Broncos

MEETING VS. EXCEEDING

So if high standards are needed for high quality, why do so many companies with high standards end-up in Chapter 11? It's because standards only set minimum requirements.

There is a big difference between meeting a standard of behavior and exceeding it.

Think of two different dining experiences in the same restaurant. While each restaurant requires prompt and attentive service:

- One server smells of vodka and has her thumbs in the salad.
- The other server lingers of lilac and offers freshly grated Parmesan cheese with the entrée.

They both met a standard of service. Each set of customers received the correct hot meal in a satisfactory amount of time, but the experience made a difference between a 10% and 20% tip. One person chose to provide the basic level of compliance, while the other raised the bar a notch and enhanced service by surpassing standards.

The same types of choices are being made every day in your company. Just as a server might meet only basic standards, those on your team may also be complying at the lowest level because having high standards in place does not always ensure that your team will consistently provide top-quality customer service. It's an unfortunate fact that some staff members treat selling standards as though they were chores to complete as quickly as possible.

HOW GOOD DO YOU WANT TO BE?



A CULTURE IS IMPOSSIBLE WITHOUT STANDARDS

You can't get to your destination without looking at a map and deciding which way you're going take to get there. When clients view your company, they are actually looking at the company standards through a microscope. They can see if the Reps are following universal standards on a regular basis or only when someone's watching. They can see how you feel about your product and the attitude of those that are hired to represent your company. Your clients are doing research on your company based on a perception of who you are, and if they don't have a positive feeling about your company, they won't sign on the dotted line.

Just remember, "you've only got one chance at a first impression."