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The importance of your core values in the workplace - by Kathleen Cloud

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You have probably been in an organization, school or business that had their mission statement and core values posted on the wall somewhere. No attempt, however, was made to make these values part of the daily fabric of the group and share with customers.

Broadcasting your core values to all and using them to guide you can be a powerful tool for personal and business success. Businesses like Zappos, Whole Foods and Netflix have seen an enormous benefit in using their Core Values to steer their respective ships. (1) Company morale improves, and customers increase their trust in you when the core values are relevant.

Developing Your Core Values

Look at this list of core values: communication, respect, integrity, excellence. Sound good, right? These were Enron's core values...certainly empty of meaning. So just how do you come up with a meaningful set of your core values? What image do you want to convey? Get your leadership team together and brainstorm a list of characteristics of those you admire and respect. Copy these on a whiteboard for all to see. Include your business and personal philosophies and values.

When our team did this activity, we constructed the following:

Honesty and integrity, enthusiastic, energetic, tenacious, services the customer, understands the value of reputation, encourages teamwork, pride in work, ability to adapt, do whatever it takes, commitment to excellence, competitive drive, passionate.

Next, narrow down and refine the list to come up with ones you believe as a team are "core" to your business success. The goal is for your list to consist of 3 to 7 key core values that really define who you are. We decided to come up with an acronym that might work and be easier to remember. (see acronym below) Regardless of the format, "define what your brand stands for, its core values and tone of voice, and then communicate consistently in those terms." (2) Simon Mainwaring

Living your Core Values

When you hire new employees, your core values should be present and discussed as part of the interview process. This lets your potential new hire know about your beliefs and their importance. It also can help you weed out those who do not exemplify what your company stands for. Make sure

your office employees know the significance of your core values. “Catch” someone exemplifying a core value and highlight it for all to see. When our project administrative team worked exceptionally well with our estimation team on a difficult submittal recently, we noted that teamwork was one of our core values that was clearly demonstrated. It can help improve the morale in the office all around. In the event you have to terminate an employee, these same core values can make that process a bit smoother, making it clear that there was an egregious break from what we value as a company. This becomes an important tool to utilize. Check in with your team regularly on your core values to see if they need to be tweaked. Perhaps there is a better way to broadcast your message that is even more meaningful. Regardless of the method, use your core values to help your business shine.

Join the Construction Institute for the AEC Leadership Conference: How to be an AEC Leader in the 21st Century. This program will be held on November 15, 2018 at the Eversource Conference Center in Berlin, CT.

1. Gino Wickman, Traction: Get a Grip on Your Business (Dallas, TX: BenBella Books Inc., 2011)
2. Simon Mainwaring, We First: How Brands and Consumers Use Social Media to Renew Capitalism and Build a Better World.

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Services the customer

Espirit de corps; teamwork

Respect all

Vivacity; passion

Integrity; trustworthiness

Cares about our reputation

Exhibits competitive drive

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