

Intentional Culture Creation in Management

Sarah Sawyer: Welcome to this week's OK at Work with myself, Sarah Sawyer, and my colleague Russell Burger, who is attorneys at Offit Kurman. And today we are talking about management on culture. So obviously we talk a lot about documenting things when you're managing people, performance improvement, quality control, policies, enforcing policies.

So managers have a lot on their plate when they're managing people, and a lot to consider when they're having to manage those various items I just mentioned. But obviously every time a manager is managing someone or interacting with an employee they are serving essentially as an ambassador for the company, and they are the face of the company in many circumstances.

So what should managers and companies be keeping in mind, Russell, as it relates to how they manage in addition to all the compliance pieces that we often talk about? [00:01:00]

Russell Berger: Yeah. I think, the key word to me is to be intentional. As you mentioned, we say it about a lot of substantive things, a lot of operational things.

Be clear, be direct, give feedback. You'll get what you coach to. And all those things are true. And I think they apply to, culture or what you want your organization to be like day to day, and what you want it to feel like working in your organization.

And even if you have that idea at the executive level or, among the managers you've gotta explain that to managers so that managers can then embody that. 'Cause as you said, if you're the CEO of an organization, how much daily contact do you have with everyone in your organization in a meaningful, substantive way?

Obviously as your organization grows, less and less. You need other people to kinda carry that weight as well. That's what a culture is, is everyone's kinda bought in on it. I think it pays to be intentional about that, to be clear about how you want certain, behavioral type issues handled how [00:02:00] you wanna message things to employees, how you want your managers to message things to employees and then to live that yourself, right?

You can't just say, "Hey, this is how I want you to handle everything. I don't have the time for that, so I'm gonna be the exception here." That's not really gonna work and set the right tone either. That's gonna create a culture. And we're always creating a culture. Are you intentional about creating the culture that you wanna have?

Sarah Sawyer: Yeah, and I think a lot of these pieces will go hand in hand with ensuring that you have compliance and with policies and consistency. It's not usually feasible or wise necessarily to have someone who's in a CEO or chief, some type of, a high-level executive role in the daily weeds and day-to-day.

But if you're able to empower your people and help them understand what the culture, what the values are, the culture is, and what's important to the company, then that means that everything is clearer for them. It's more likely that they're gonna be able to handle those meetings in a way that [00:03:00] is consistent with what the company's trying to do overall.

And so it all goes hand-in-hand with making sure that everything's consistent and that the employees can be as productive as possible. Also happy to be there, right? So retention, compliance with those policies and procedures that we talk about all the time. So it all goes hand-in-hand.

Managers are gonna come to their employees at all different types of, in all different types of way. Good conversations, praising people for good work talking about the weekend and then those conversations that might be tougher to have. And if you are having nice, consistent messaging and good knowing your people and having good communications in all of those buckets, then when you have to have the tougher conversations or you need to affect change with your people, you're gonna be able to do that more easily.

Russell Berger: Yeah. Yeah. Having good, and we've talked about it here before, opening up good lines of communication is really important to be able to message what you need to message. And again, that can be part of your intentional culture. And like I said before, that's what I think this really comes down to is, whether [00:04:00] you're aware of it or not, you have a culture.

Sarah Sawyer: Mm-hmm.

Russell Berger: And so what steps can you take to, make it the culture that you want, to bring others into the fold to help, foster that, and even have some ownership over the direction you move. Because as you point out, that will make your organization run better. It will make it easier to manage.

It will create less legal risk, more efficiencies. There's a lot of benefits to having engaged, bought in employees that, are buying into a clear, well-defined culture.

Sarah Sawyer: Yeah. No, great advice. Thanks, Russell. We'll see you next time.

Russell Berger: Thanks Sarah.