



## THE ABC OF IMPLEMENTING RIGHT TALENT AND STRONG CULTURE IN YOUR BUSINESS

Leon Kraig, Partner at IGNIA Partners LLC

In the many years I have been lucky to have spent building profitable businesses, I discovered that the most important factors for success is having the right talent working in a well-defined culture.

What is TALENT?

- A capacity or ability for achievement or success. Especially good at something.

What is CULTURE?

- The set of shared values, attributes, goals and practices that characterize an organization.

In my experience, the biggest challenge is having in place the two pillars of any successful organization:

- A. Having the ability to identify, attract, retain and develop **talented people**.
- B. Having a **well-defined culture** – purpose, values, beliefs, behaviors – in order to empower the talent, so that they can make the right informed decisions in an agile way, aligned with the organization, as close as possible to the client and consumer.



So how to go about it in a few simple steps:

1. Establish the WHY (Purpose) of the organization (read Simon Sinek's book "Start with Why").
2. Define the VISION (a snapshot of the future), the MISSION and the VALUES. The values are the framework to make decisions, so they need to be clear, short and memorable – eg. use acronyms. Leaders need to visibly live and demonstrate that they use these values to make everyday decisions, and they need to behave in line with behaviors implied by these values.
3. INSPECT IN CULTURE WHAT YOU EXPECT. There are tools to measure where your organization stands in terms of culture (call it "Best Place to Work", "Happiness at Work", "Engagement", etc.). You cannot improve what you don't measure! The one I really prefer using is Gallup's Q12 Engagement survey, which focuses on elements such as:
  - a. Frequency of recognition
  - b. Do you really care about your people
  - c. Setting clear expectations
  - d. Providing the right material and equipment
  - e. Matching individual skills and passions with business needs
  - f. Having Organizational Development processes, such as goal setting, formal feedback, growth pathways
  - g. All positions with defined leadership competences and technical skills
  - h. Development plans for 100% of the population
  - i. Genuinely listening to all opinions
  - j. Spaces and mechanisms where people can informally get to know each other
4. ESTABLISH STRONG ACCOUNTABILITY & RESPONSIBILITY, essential to have a winning culture, which values accountability, and pays back the organization with trust and development.
5. Create an atmosphere of INNOVATION and CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT, encouraged by having the senior management walking the offices, factories and streets, touching the employees (at all levels), clients and consumers, obtaining inputs which cannot be generated when surrounded by the same four walls, the same screen and the same people.



6. ESTABLISH BEHAVIORS, where people are listened to, where risk taking is encouraged (within the boundaries of the values), failure is not punished, and where people can develop.
7. Pay well above the median, which can be done, when you apply LEAN ENTERPRISE principles, in order to do more with less.
8. FOCUS, be selective of what to be doing and what not, eliminate activities, assets et al that do not add value. Use formal tools, such as Bain's "Strategy in a Page" or P&G's "OGSM" to communicate and measure progress.
9. Communicate, communicate and communicate. BE TRANSPARENT about the results, clear about the actions that need to be taken, no matter how difficult they are. Recognize with high frequency for specific achievements.
10. TAKE RISKS WHEN DEVELOPING PEOPLE. Utilize assessments when deciding about their development. Create succession planning for critical positions.
11. ORGANIZATION FOLLOWS STRATEGY, not the other way around. Push for few layers, wider spans of control.
12. Implement a CULTURE OF GOVERNANCE, where everyone understands their role and responsibilities, what can and cannot be done, and clearly identify interdependences between people and work groups.
13. EMPOWER decision making to the lowest possible level in the organization. Encourage people to overcome difficulties.
14. When hiring, look for the people with the right skills, the right leadership competences, and the right cultural fit. Value diversity and inclusion. HIRE SLOW AND FIRE FAST.

*An organization with very talented people but an ill-defined culture becomes inefficient. An organization with a strong culture but without talented people becomes ineffective. In order to create a winning organization you need both, TALENT and CULTURE.*