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It's Contagious

BUSINESS INSIGHTS

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If you would be so kind as to indulge me, I'm going to spend a few moments bragging about Clientek and our company culture (apologies ahead of time). We work in a place that is very collaborative. It's a place where it's okay to make mistakes and learn. It's okay to ask for help. It's okay to say "I messed up" without fear of retribution. Each team member is valued and makes a significant, measurable contribution to our success. We have the courage and integrity to be open and honest with each other and our clients. We work very hard for our customers and do whatever it takes to make them successful because it's just the right thing to do. These cultural aspects are important, they are serious, and they can be somewhat stressful. Knowing that, we balance the seriousness with some levity. In my opinion, the one aspect that ties everything together is our ability to laugh together.

I've mentioned this before, but when I started working here, I was somewhat skeptical of the culture because I thought

it was too good to be true. Personal doubt would always creep into my decision making. For example, is it okay if I email the CEO a funny meme, or would that be considered "unprofessional"? Is it truly okay if I shoot our Chief Delivery Officer with a Nerf gun, or is that a one-way ticket to getting fired? (Just for the record, I have never shot Craig with a Nerf gun. He's a highly trained Army veteran who's very evasive.) I had not experienced a culture where the executive leadership team would go out of their way to laugh, joke, and most importantly, meaningfully bond with every team member. Not only was it a refreshing change of pace, but it made it enjoyable to come to work. Clientek is a rewarding place to be, and the people are fun to be around. This is something that didn't happen by chance, it happened by choice.

Defining company culture can be somewhat easy, but it can be difficult to put into practice. It's okay to write down a list of well-intentioned talking points, but can you name

specific situations where you demonstrated the culture through everyday interactions? You have to look for those opportunities to walk the talk. If someone seems stressed, simply asking them how they are doing or if a little bit of help would make a world of difference. Finding opportunities to insert a joke or to lighten the mood when tensions are high can get people to smile or laugh, and it completely changes the tone of a meeting. If issues arise, do you respond with frustration and blame, or do you respond with helpful advice and encouragement? When building your teams, do you look just at the number of years of experience an individual has, or do you also test to see if they have a good sense of humor? Are your team members empowered to try (and potentially fail), or do they need to ask for permission first? All these situations are opportunities to demonstrate your company culture. You have a choice to take advantage of them or not. The actions you take, not a document, are what truly define company culture. Just know that the example you set, good or bad, becomes contagious.

One last brag before I finish... As I was writing this, the following events occurred (this really happened): I was nearly hit with a Nerf dart by our COO, I heard our Chief Delivery Officer singing the lyrics to "867-5309/Jenny" from his office and our CEO was walking around the third floor of our building blowing a ram horn like a trumpet. Man, do I love Clientek!

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