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Company Culture

PART 2: A TRUE STORY

Written by: Kirk Hoaglund, Chief Executive Officer

A true story. Quite a few years ago Clientek was renting office space on the north bank of the Mississippi River in downtown Minneapolis. Our office suite featured a great, sunroom-type extension, framed in glass, with double-doors leading to a walled garden. Complete with a large gazebo, permanent benches and tables, well-maintained greenery, and a nice vibe, we loved this part of the office. During the summers, we would host monthly BBQ get-togethers for staff, clients, and vendors. We would cater in a backyard-grill-out themed meals with an open bar for an informal and fun time. Come as you are, no RSVP needed.

We later moved to an office downtown near the Target Center. On the eighth floor, there was no sunroom and no walled garden. But the building featured a friendly sports bar with an alley space nicely outfitted for food and drink. We continued our summer BBQ series by reserving the entire alleyway and catering through that bar.

In time, we bought our own building. We searched for just the right location and setting, but none offered gazebos nor

outdoor space. We bought and moved to a wonderful facility that lacked just that one feature we had come to rely on for our Summer BBQ's. What to do? Stop offering that gathering. Too difficult, maybe too expensive, nobody would show up, not worth it, no ROI.

I repeat, this is a true story. While boarding a plane bound on a business trip, I was trudging down the narrow aisle. Someone grabbed my arm. I looked down: one of our long-time clients. She greeted me. Then, without preamble, said "I haven't seen an invitation for a summer BBQ yet this year. When is that coming out?" How could she know we had just decided it was too difficult and too expensive to find a way to offer the BBQ? I quickly replied with, "Don't worry, you'll see that invitation within the next week."

Upon returning from that trip, we scrambled to evaluate options and got an invitation out to our usual mailing list within a week or two. That year we had some of our best attendance ever. We've continued to offer the Clientek Monthly Summer BBQ's, rain or shine, ever since.

Therefore, I ask you: **What is your company culture worth?** How much attention do you pay to the things you might just take for granted? All your clients need your best efforts, your best prices, and for you to do your job: delivering value to them. Of course they do. Just like every other vendor or supplier. To set yourself apart means lots of things and *company culture* is very high on the list. It might just be at the top.

I've written before about my favorite quote from a client "You have people for clients, not companies." And I've observed how the year of 2020 reinforced that within us. Others within Clientek have also pointed out the importance of company culture. I've had discussions with my peers and with my staff: do you plan for that, spend money on that, and pay attention to that? Darn right you do. Every day.

You should do the same.

Interested in an invitation to the 2021 Clientek Summer BBQs? [Send me an email](#). After a 2020 pause, we plan to resume this May.

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