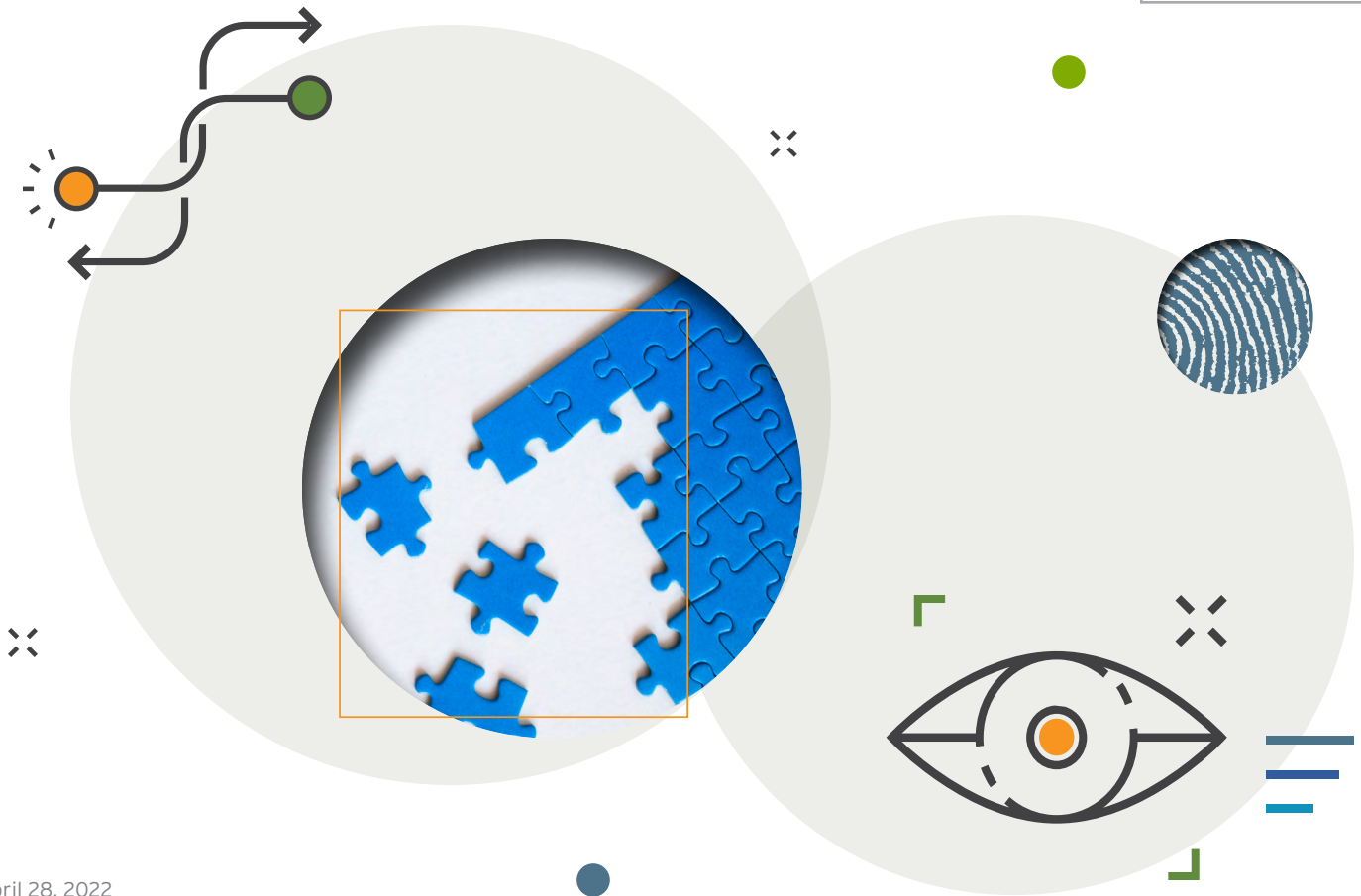




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Culture

FEATURE ARTICLE

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A pivotal piece of the puzzle.

Growing up, I regularly joined my mother in assembling jigsaw puzzles. Hunkered over a folding-table in the middle of the family room, we would spend hours upon hours placing piece after piece. Whenever we would set forth on constructing a new puzzle, the first order of business was simple: locate and separate all the edge pieces, and most importantly, the corners.

When putting together a puzzle the corner pieces are critical for success. While they are among the easiest to identify and place correctly, without them the puzzle is ungrounded and difficult to parse. To me, organizational culture is like the corner pieces of a business, it provides the grounding for which the company is built on.

If you have spent any time with the Clientek team or within the walls of our headquarters, you'll have noticed our passion for company culture. As I near my 7th anniversary here, I

have come to learn three key lessons for developing a truly remarkable organizational culture:

1. It starts with you.

Like any other intangible organizational trait, culture is evaluated on an individual basis. Each person has a unique perspective and will experience culture in their own distinct way. Because of this, we first must pay closer attention to ourselves. The age-old saying 'you can't help others until you've helped yourself' couldn't be more accurate. If you are looking to develop a company culture that people want to be a part of, you first must create a culture that YOU want to be a part of.

2. It can't be forced.

While redesigning the office or throwing a company-wide party may provide temporary value, organizational culture is not something you can just throw money at. The natural process of cultural evolution is a far more complicated than

just environment and activity. A cohesive workplace that supports motivated teams is an invaluable asset, but when we force the issue, culture can go from warm and inviting to cold and coerced.

3. It goes beyond the office.

Culture is powered by individuals. Many of us look to create a work-life balance of black and white. Culture nests itself comfortably in the gray area. How we carry ourselves outside of the office will undoubtedly affect the culture within it. I'm not suggesting that companies manage employee lives outside of work but would like to shed light to the fact that not all aspects of culture are within our control.

A simple Google search requesting guidance on company culture will net you countless publications presenting steps and approaches for changing/improving culture. That's not to say that these articles have no value or merit, but I feel that if we are to simply review the three lessons outlined above on a regular basis, we will spend less time worrying about culture and more time enjoying it.

Start with the corners.

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