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# Financial Post

Entrepreneur

## How to influence your company's culture



What does your corporate culture look like?

Qilai Shen/Bloomberg News

**Rick Spence** Jun 17, 2011 – 4:30 PM ET | Last Updated: Jun 19, 2011 3:44 PM ET

Longtime executive and consultant [Jim Stewart](#) of Toronto-based ProfitPath blogs regularly about growth and strategic planning. In two recent posts, he mused about the link between a company's strategy and its culture.

All companies, small and large, have their own unique culture, says Stewart. The culture is a product of the values and management styles of the owners/executives, and the morale and commitment of the rest of the team. "If the owner and other leaders have a relatively open style; hold positive values; and behave consistently, in line with those values," writes Stewart, "the culture will support the development and execution of great strategies, which get great results.

"If the leaders don't have or do all of those things, then the quality of the strategy and the results achieved will be reduced, perhaps severely."

How do you influence the culture of your organization to make sure it best supports your objective and strategy? Stewart offers six tactics:

**Communicate and publish the company's values, vision and mission.** "Repeat and discuss them at every opportunity; put them on mugs, t-shirts, mouse pads and baseball caps; reward everyone who can not only remember them – but who also knows what they mean."

**Be a role model for your values.** Inconsistencies between leaders' day-to-day action and your organization's purported values erode the culture you're trying to build. For instance, many companies say innovation is one of their key values, then punish employees who try to innovate. What kind of risk-taking culture does that build?

**Tell stories and create legends** about your people. "Stories are a great way to reinforce the desired behaviour and culture," says Stewart. When an employee goes out of his or her way to help a customer, the management team must learn the story, and repeat it (and encourage others to do so) at every opportunity. That's how legends are born, and cultures created.

**Ensure the org chart supports the culture.** Your organizational structure may be sending inconsistent signals about company culture. If the stated aim is to foster collaboration, for instance, "a flatter organizational structure will be much more effective than a very hierarchical one."

**Design work spaces appropriately.** The physical layout of your office, plant or warehouse can affect company culture. Consider the cultural difference between an open office with no walls, and one in which everyone has an office and floor-to-ceiling walls. "Neither approach is wrong, but both can be really inappropriate," notes Stewart, depending on your culture.

**Use rewards and status symbols.** Everyone in your business is important, but some people (usually those in sales) get recognized and rewarded for performance more often. "This difference in approach to pay can damage the culture by creating divisiveness," says Stewart. Look for ways to recognize and reward all staff for contributing to the organization's culture and success.

You can read Jim Stewart's original post here:

<http://www.profitpath.com/6-ways-a-business-owner-can-influence-culture/>

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