

Want to Hire Top Talent? Create an Irresistible Culture



By Joanna Bradley

Your organization's culture defines the kind of staff you can recruit and retain. Use these ideas to design an alluring culture.

Organizations that have dialed up their cultures have an easier time recruiting talented staff. They've built a work environment and value proposition that creates engaged, committed team players.

“Productivity plummets after two to three hours of work.”

Organizations take different approaches to building an attractive workplace and work culture. What works for one may not work for another. What's important is to define a culture that appeals to the people you want to attract. These are some of the things that work best in terms of creating a beneficial culture:

GIVE 'EM FOOD

Who doesn't like free food? Doughnuts, cookies, and pizza for some, for others organic, vegan, macrobiotic, paleo, or trend food. Offering fresh, healthy snacks or meals, free or at a subsidized rate, is the essence of “win-win.” It's one of the best ways to make employees happy, and there's nothing like healthy fuel to feed the minds of your most precious human resources.

GIVE 'EM DRINKS

If people like free food, boy do they love free drinks. Offering morning coffee and afternoon tea is a good place to start, but don't stop there. Make things special with sparkling lemonade on hot summer days, hot chocolate on winter afternoons, and fruit punch during the

holiday season. Cold beer Fridays, Starbucks Mondays, a monthly office party – these are easy ways to celebrate accomplishments, thank the team, allow employees to mix it up, and reinforce bonds.

GIVE 'EM FLEXIBILITY

Flextime, work-from home, virtual offices, self-policed hours, ski days – there are any number of ways to offer flexibility. One of the fastest growing trends is ROWE – the Results-Only Work Environment. In these organizations, people are evaluated on their performance, not their presence in the office. Workplace flexibility reduces greenhouse gases, cuts traffic and transit time, and provides better work-life balance.

ENCOURAGE FITNESS

Many organizations provide free or subsidized gyms, on-site or off. Some offer cool perks like ski passes, golf memberships, and shared bicycles. Many help facilitate walking/hiking clubs and other recreational activities that promote health and fitness. Healthy bodies make for healthy minds.

BUILD THE TEAM

Think of activities that will motivate your employees, help them bond as a team, and reward them for their dedication. Some examples:

- **Sponsor** a race.
- **Form** a sports team to play in the local league.
- **Provide** time for employees to coach others.
- **Organize** a group recreational outing.
- **Take** employees out to a comedy show.

OFFER PLENTY OF BREAKS

Studies show that people's productivity plummets after two hours of work. You can keep morale and energy high by offering extensive breaks throughout the day. Each break time should be long enough so that staff can use it to exercise, meditate, meet friends for a snack, or check items off the "to do" list of life so that their post-work life is freed up for quality personal time. It's a great way to make people happy by allowing some endorphin release in the middle of work, and it keeps people in a productive mode.

INCLUDE GREEN INITIATIVES

There are many proactive steps you can take to become a green organization, create fun and awareness, and play a role in greening our world:

- **Organize** car-pooling.
- **Provide** public transit passes.
- **Create** a paperless office.
- **Reduce**, reuse, recycle.
- **Arrange** contests or participate in local promotions like national bike-to-work day.

LET THEM GIVE BACK TO THE COMMUNITY

Giving to the local community is rewarding and engaging. Encourage volunteering by giving flex time or time off, celebrating employee contributions, and providing time for people to inform colleagues about the community organizations dear to their hearts. Participating in fundraisers can be as simple as encouraging the sale of Girl Scout cookies in the office or as elaborate as donating to a designated charity each time the team meets a goal.

HELP THEM BLOW OFF STEAM

Some nonprofits have game rooms, offer impromptu fun time, and organize competitive gaming sessions. Some have a music room and coordinate on-site jams during the day to get creative juices flowing. Others provide an in-house masseuse to help employees relax and refocus.

PROVIDE FLORA AND FAUNA


Domestic animals provide comfort – from the utility of seeing-eye dogs to the soothing presence of canine companions for treating trauma and stress. Why not allow pets at the office, or organize a visit to/from the local animal shelter?

You can also beautify the surroundings and get some fresh air made in-house by bringing in plants. Natural vegetation has been proven to lower stress. Why not have a green-thumb contest on the desks? Bring in a neutral panel of judges to choose the desks with the most impressive plant arrangements.

ASK YOUR STAFF

If what is going to motivate your team hasn't been mentioned, or just isn't evident, ask your staff. Get input directly from your

workforce about what would make your organization an even better place to work. Encourage employees to design programs, goals, and celebrations that motivate them. You may be surprised by what they come up with!

The key to creating a great culture is understanding the types of personalities that make your organization productive and unique. Once you have this knowledge, continue to look for creative, fun ways to nurture the people who work at your organization. Doing so will build excitement, loyalty, and engagement, which means a more committed and productive staff. 

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Lock in Cultural Energy

For further ways to use your culture to hire, retain, and motivate your employees, take a look at these articles at www.NonprofitWorld.org/members:

Organizational Culture: It's in the Walk, Not Just the Talk (Vol. 29, No. 6)

Keeping Your Best and Brightest Workers (Vol. 28, No. 6)

How to Change the World by Changing Your Culture (Vol. 31, No. 2)

The Organizational Personality and Employee Performance (Vol. 21, No. 1)

Easing Stress in the Workplace (Vol. 25, No. 4)

Using Your Organization's Culture to Build Productivity and Reputation (Vol. 11, No. 6)

Avoid Headaches: Engage Your Employees (Vol. 27, No. 2)

How to Use Your Organizational Culture as a Competitive Tool (Vol. 20, No. 2)