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The 4 Ways To Keep Developing Leaders Aligned With Company Goals and Culture

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Have you ever seen a car with a bent frame traveling down the road? It looks like a crab.

The front axle veers off in one direction as the rear-end struggles to stay in line. Out of alignment, the vehicle bumps along toward its destination. It's still moving forward, but its performance is gravely compromised.

When companies and their leaders are not aligned, their performance and potential is jeopardized in a very similar way. Executives work toward one goal, managers another, and individual employees a third.

First and foremost, leaders need to be aligned with company goals, values, vision, and culture. Shockingly, these vehicles of company success are often not in sync. As a result, failure becomes a real possibility.

By looking at important leadership situations, organizations can learn where there are gaps in leadership alignment.

Here are four critical opportunities to reinforce and align leaders' focus and behaviors with company culture, values, and objectives:

Hiring & Onboarding

True alignment begins before an employee is hired. The moment a person reads a job ad, they start processing information about the organization to determine if it's the right fit for them. If the company culture and values aren't clear in a job listing, it will attract the wrong people or send a conflicting message to viable candidates. This initial perception then transitions into the interview process with the hiring manager / leader.

Ensuring potential hires understand the values, culture, and mission of their prospective employer requires that leaders understand -- and are connected to -- the company's values, culture, and mission. Unfortunately, a 2017 Officevibe survey found that 25 percent of employees are indifferent to or don't know about their company's mission.

When one of these employees is a leader, they'll be unable to accurately identify which candidates fit with the organization and the open role. This leads to costly bad hires.

Never assume developing leaders remember all the details of the company vision or mission. If the organization rarely reinforces these ideals, things will slip through the cracks. However, if your actions and communications always reflect the company vision and mission, there will be no doubt about what the company stands for.

Make sure employees see examples of company values every day. Some ways to do this include:

- Align company goals to mission and values
- Align rewards and performance plans / reviews to company values, mission, and goals
- When communicating with employees, use words that match the company values.
- Include the mission statement in your signature of all your emails.

Once developing leaders are better equipped to find and hire the right people, they also need to know how to properly onboard them. New employees have a lot of information thrown at them in their first few weeks on the job. If discussing the company's mission and values aren't a priority, new employees won't fully align with the company goals.

During the onboarding process, make sure developing leaders approach every aspect with the mission, culture, values, and goals in mind.

For example, when reviewing the finer details of the new employee's role, have the leader explain how those responsibilities contribute to the overall company and team. This way, at some level, the focus is always on what truly defines the organization.

Running & Managing Meetings

Many employees consider meetings an interruption to their workday. They merely show up, listen, and take part as necessary. But from a leadership standpoint, there's a lot more preparation and legwork involved. Unfortunately, many developing leaders aren't ready to run meetings effectively.

In fact, a 2016 Post-It [survey](#) found that 63 percent of employees feel leaders frequently lose control of meetings. This quickly leads to confusion.

Ultimately, meetings are how work gets done. They are the critical intersection where company processes, productivity, accountability, and goals meet. When there is a breakdown in a meeting, individual time is wasted, and the potential of the company is undermined.

Meetings should never be held without a purpose. However, new leaders often struggle to tie their agenda to business goals. Teach developing leaders to hold productive and effective meetings by setting a positive example when you meet with them. Make it clear why you called the meeting, what the goal is, and how the discussion will impact the company.

Also, be aware of meeting mistakes you may be making yourself. These missteps teach developing leaders bad habits, such as:

- Answering irrelevant questions - If an employee has a question or concern that doesn't relate to the topic at hand, ask them to talk to you after the meeting.
- Not passing out an agenda beforehand - When employees know what's on the docket, they can organize their thoughts and productively contribute.
- Never following up - Everyone should walk away from a meeting knowing what their next steps are. If a leader doesn't check back in, tasks can fall through the cracks.

Performance Management

When managing employee performance, feedback has to align with the company values. For example, if a company values honesty but rewards employees who pass the buck, it undermines that value. This will lead to more employees behaving dishonestly, taking the team farther and farther from its core beliefs.

If leaders don't understand what the company values, they aren't able to recognize the right work. Avoid mistakenly rewarding work ethics and performance that will lead the team astray by basing promotion to leadership roles on the company's values.

When you give an employee more leadership responsibility, tell them which actions qualified them for the role. Tie what they've done to the values and goals of the company. This will show them what they should recognize in their own employees.

Be careful that developing leaders aren't overly investing in employees like themselves. Everyone has their own strengths that allow them to contribute to the team. Developing leaders need to recognize these traits in others and acknowledge them.

For example, if a leader is a great communicator, but not creative, they need to recognize those who think outside the box and are creative. Help them [understand other's strengths](#) by providing examples of people who embody them. Publically acknowledge employees who have excelled in a range of important areas.

Here are some other ways to help developing leaders align employee performance to company objectives and culture:

- Create clear expectation rubrics for each position. If these are based on the company mission and values, developing leaders can provide the right feedback.
- Have them schedule regular meetings with employees. Leaders are less likely to overlook great work if they're discussing performance more than once a year.
- Provide ongoing feedback on employee performance and how that performance is aligned with company values, culture, and objectives.

Managing Remote Workers

Remote workers pose distinct challenges for leaders. Since these people are not physically in the workplace, it's harder to communicate with them and to assess their performance. However, telecommuting is becoming more and more prevalent so developing leaders must be able to adapt to these situations.

One of the biggest challenges leaders need to overcome is remote-worker isolation. Employees who don't work in the office often feel disconnected from the company, its culture, and its values. Leaders have to work extra hard to reinforce these pillars so remote workers stay engaged.

For example, if leaders only talk with remote workers via email, they will eventually feel isolated. There's a lack of immediacy and personality in email. An instant chat platform, however, let's all members of the team talk in-real time.

Video conferencing is also more engaging than phone calls. Remote employees can see their co-workers' faces and interact as they would if they worked at the same location.

Other ways developing leaders can engage remote workers include:

- Feature their accomplishments to other teams and leaders- This will show everyone their performance is valued.
- Keeping the focus on team building - Having regular calls that aren't just about business allows remote workers to get to know the rest of their co-workers.
- Having in-person get-togethers - If remote employees live close to their colleagues, have leaders organize events where everyone can meet up.

Also remember, if a developing leader works remotely, they need to be careful they don't become detached or begin to feel [disengaged](#). This will impact their own work satisfaction and make it harder to positively [influence their team](#).

Encourage remote leaders to have daily contact with their team. Even if they just reach out to say good morning, this will help them to feel more connected with each employee.

Company Communication

For a developing leader, communication is one of their most valuable tools. However, when misused, it's the root of most alignment problems. If leaders aren't clear, everything from [team goals](#) to employee feedback can be misunderstood.

Make sure that developing leaders are clear on the company's message. This way they can communicate important information in a way that aligns with the company. If necessary, give them a basic script for how to talk with employees about topics like:

- Employee benefits
- Team goals
- Company changes
- Company objectives

Until developing leaders are comfortable delivering this information, they'll look to you for guidance.

Let them know that people absorb more than the definitions of words when they're spoken to. The speaker's tone and body language can impact comprehension. If developing leaders aren't careful, this will undermine what the company stands for.

This is especially important when leaders are repeating something often. For example, when talking about the company mission, it's natural for someone to lose their enthusiasm given they've explained the mission hundreds of times before. However, for a new employee hearing the statement for the first time, they'll think leaders aren't passionate about it.

Developing leaders also need to pay attention to the connotation of the words they use. Choosing the wrong word can turn a motivational speech into a negative one. For some people, having a command of words comes easily. But if a developing leader isn't a natural communicator, it takes time to hone the skills.

Help them learn by providing feedback on how they speak. Have them record conversations with employees. By listening to these recordings, they'll be able to clearly hear areas for improvement in the way they communicate.

Conclusion

Developing leaders have a lot to focus on. Sometimes ensuring company alignment slips through the cracks. But by supporting leaders and reinforcing how they can both be better aligned and help align others with the company, they will learn to make a positive impact on everyone they lead.