

The Corporate Soul needs to be People-Oriented

The corporate soul is alive and well in the 21st Century – or is it?

The corporate culture or soul of a naked organization made it to number one challenge in the business community according to Global Human Capital Trends 2015, Deloitte University.

Edging out leadership as the number challenge (2014), it is clear that understanding your organization's culture or soul is key because of the direct impact it has on employee engagement and empowerment, both of which impact productivity and profitability.

What is business soul?

Some might argue that a business does not have or need a soul but that is not true. Every business has a soul, either by the leadership's choice or by default. What is your business's soul? If it was created by you, can you articulate it? Can you visually see your corporate soul as you walk through your business and how it relates to your employees, your customers?

Note – the company soul will not necessarily be the same as your mission statement. A mission statement is defined as what an organization is, why it exists and its reason for being. The definition of the business soul is “the moral and intentional guidance or ‘life’ of the company which *will* drive success, when executed with passion.” In other words, will employees, customers and you be better off in some way with your company's existence?

What are the signs of a business soul?

You can often tell if a business has a soul by observing a few things as you observe the business and its workplace. It will:

- Have an corporate environment that cares for the workforce and workplace as if it were a home and family
- Provide tools and benefits that increase employee morale and lower absenteeism
- Be the embodiment of mutual trust
- Be a sustainable profitable business run with human warmth

What are the steps for creating a business soul?

If the leadership doesn't already know what their business soul is, it will take some "soul searching" — no pun intended — to discover just exactly what is the passion or the driving force of the business.

What is the central or integral part, the vital core that gives the business life - the animating principle; the essential element to be part of something? Was or is there a founder who created the business because he or she could improve the lives of others? Was there a particular philosophy about truth, honesty, contributing to the well-being of employees, consumers or the ecosystem?

Form think-tank type groups using all aspects and levels of your organization to determine the soul of the company. Make sure everyone knows there is no "wrong" answer. You will find along the way that there are many improvements you can make to the workplace, the workforce and consumer benefits. Is your business part of the cure, a human benefit or is a small cog in a much larger wheel which could not function without you? Take into consideration the following. Do you:

- Engage your employees and foster independence
- Tap their learning styles to make greater progress
- Provide the support your employees need to achieve peak performance
- Give them feedback they can apply
- Customize your approach
- Create realistic but inspiring plans for growth (for the employee and the company)
- Match people's skills with your organization's needs

Now create a similar set of questions to determine how you relate to the consumer, your community and the environment. Now you should be ready to articulate your business soul.

As examples, Wells Fargo's soul statement is "A proud history, a strong future together – helping our customers succeed, helping our communities thrive and living our values every day." Levi Strauss & Company says it this way, "We are honored to have clothed generations of individuals, leaders, thinkers and doers. We're guided by **our values**: empathy, originality, integrity and courage. With them in mind, we constantly strive to build a culture just as inspiring as the people who wear our jeans."

Notice that these statements are not three to five words, which is what would be ideal for a mission statement so that everyone throughout the organization can be on the same page at a moment's notice. The soul, however, needs to exude feelings, values, integrity and be people-oriented.

The benefits about determining and articulating your company's soul are many, including increased employee buy-in, uplifting employee morale and increasing positive community visibility; but most importantly, the pride that employees and employer alike feel knowing that there is something greater than profits involved in going to work every day.

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