

Values and Culture – Are Yours Working Together?



SUMMARY OF CULTURE BITES EPISODE WITH DOMINIC GORLEY AND LIANA SANGSTER

- **What are values?**

Values are determining what behaviors or what values are important to the company.

They are chosen based on how a company wants their people to behave, what's essential for the company, for their brand. Working on values is a tool to be used as part of culture.

- **Employees are often unclear what the values are**

All organizations have values nowadays. Yet many employees would have to google their company's values if you asked them!

- **Values and Culture are often not working together**

Organizations say "these are our values...", but often that is not how they actually work.

A company may for example communicate that *innovation* is one of their core values. However, to approve the purchase of a new computer mouse, one needs to fill out a million forms! Employees become frustrated - they're being told to behave a certain way and then are faced with roadblocks.

- **Be clear about current state**

You need to know what your current state is in order to know where to put your effort and energy. What is it that we are actually currently encouraging from a behavioral point of view?

- **Be clear about ideal state (what behaviors do we want from our employees?)**

Be honest if the ideal state is aspirational, so that you don't cause frustration. Then make a commitment to finding a way to encourage the "ideal" behavior. What's the motivation for change or for creating these behaviors in real life? How do you create the systems, the processes, the role modeling that encourages more of the behavior you want and less of what you don't want?

- **Don't just create a list of values – state their meaning to the whole**

To elaborate on the example above, *innovation* as a value could be guided by the questions: *Are we exploring alternatives? Did we set up an innovation hub where we look at new ways of doing things?*

- **Explain to employees WHY we need values.**

Values are useful to navigate situations. Let's assume that my company encourages *authenticity*. If I'm in a meeting, and I'm jostling with whether to put my opinion forward or not, if I've got that value front of my mind, I might just be encouraged to push that little bit further and share my idea.

- **Remove values that are not relevant.**

If it's not what you want to encourage, then simply remove it as a value. In some companies, you have people being rewarded on individual contribution but they talk *collaboration* as an important value. If you really just want to push individual effort, that's fine, but don't list *collaboration* as a value if that's the case. On the other hand, you might want to keep *collaboration* on your list of values and explore rewarding teamwork as a way to give people motivation to collaborate.