

CORRECTIONS TODAY

MARCH/APRIL 2016

**Broadcasting Without
Boundaries: Ohio's
Reentry Television
Network Delivers Hope**

Page 30



10733737
*****CAR-RT LOT**C012
P 348
S
PLT 1
4247
GININE TRIM
30 W SPRING ST
COLUMBUS OH 43215-2216

- 24** Leading Into Tomorrow 2.0
- 38** Guided Self-Change
- 42** Substance-Abuse Treatment

ACA
FOUNDED 1870
www.aca.org



Changing Culture With Intention

By Amy L. Ast and Ginine M. Trim



Several studies have reported that the most frequently cited reason for failure within an organization is neglect of the culture. Culture within the workplace is made up of shared assumptions, values and beliefs, all of which have an influence on how people perform their jobs. In a profession like corrections, where change is evident and rapid, and the “status quo” is no longer acceptable or effective, how to change becomes the challenge many agencies face today.¹ When an agency identifies itself as experiencing mass problems related to its culture, leadership must be willing to take bold steps to redirect the workforce in a desired direction. Most often, the need is made evident when the agency becomes risk-averse, tolerant to mediocrity and aware of policy drift. Agencies that change culture with intention have to begin by assessing the members of their top leadership teams. Leaders who are not mindful of the mission at hand and not willing to take the difficult, but necessary, steps to be impactful cannot effectively influence change or convince the workforce of the need for change.

When leadership endeavors to change culture with intention, the following elements must exist:

- A clear and concise marketing strategy;

- A commitment to imbed data and technology into operational management;
- A commitment to allowing or affording the workforce to play an active role in policy development;
- An onboarding process in line with the agency’s mission, vision and core values; and
- A commitment to have a workforce trained in best practices.

Marketing

The marketing strategy must include a strong messaging component that informs all agency staff of the “why” — why the change is necessary and why now. Messaging must also appeal to staff in regard to how valuable and necessary they are to the change process. At Prosci — an organization based in Fort Collins, Colo., that researches change management and implements its programs — research team experts emphasize the importance of return on investment (ROI). Marketing strategies must illustrate the benefits staff will acquire throughout the culture change, as well as the ROI, which must be effectively communicated. The premise is that organizational change occurs one person at a time, emphasizing “a change initiative that is directly tied to

an employee’s adoption, utilization and proficiency in the tools and solutions intended to move the organization into the future state.”²

Data and Technology

For agencies to gain leverage, it is imperative that they are willing to embrace technology and committed to be data-driven. Utilizing data as a partner in change management can depersonalize decision-making and guide leaders in proactive strategies rather than reactive planning. By identifying indicators that impact agency culture and providing a mechanism for those indicators to be measured, leaders are afforded the necessary data to make reliable decisions. For example, in a correctional setting, assessing the time of day, day of the week and area of the facility where incidents of violence are occurring could help identify some indicators related to staff safety. At that point, leadership could survey staff on where they believe the most violence happens in their particular facility and then utilize data to compare staff perception against what the data uncovers. Typically, this comparison reveals a disconnect. Often, a barrier to change management is simply lacking knowledge of the facility’s current state. Having a true evaluation of the current state, partic-

ularly in those areas identified to have the most impact on culture, is essential. Without data driving the evaluation, agencies risk the deployment of resources to areas that will be ineffective in achieving the desired outcomes.

Policy Development

It is important for the changing agency to create opportunities for staff to be actively involved in the revision and creation of policies and procedures. This process will empower staff and build buy-in from those who are often responsible for policy implementation. When processes are embedded into a culture that extends further than the people, the agency can know it has achieved something of value; whereas, when people come and go, the expectations of policy and practice remain in place. Additionally, in an evolving field such as corrections, it is essential that agencies recognize how new and innovative policies will contribute to the workforce growing alongside leadership.

Onboarding

Agency managers in charge of onboarding must recognize the importance of taking the time and necessary steps to hire candidates with values in line with the agency. Often, the goal is to fill positions to eliminate vacancies, but this practice contributes to high turnover and a transient workforce. According to previous studies from the U.S. Department of Labor, it is estimated that billions of dollars are spent annually on hiring hourly employees, and of those employees, approximately half are gone within six months.³ Mel Kleiman, author of *Hire Tough, Manage Easy*, reminds employers, "Advertising is only the fourth best recruiting tool; the three best resources are former

employees, good current employees and every applicant who is interviewed." Ensuring interview questions are value-based gives the employer better opportunity to get to know the candidates and determine if their values are in line with the agency's. Additionally, having skilled interviewers who understand the agency's needs and have extensive knowledge of the agency is critical to the process. Outcomes of a successful onboarding process are shown through high retention, high morale and a well-trained and highly motivated workforce willing to carry out the agency's mission and vision.

Training

Finally, quality training is essential to workforce preparation and satisfaction. It is essential to ensure training is relevant to the duties of the workforce and is delivered in a way to help employees learn and retain information. Understanding the multigenerational staff will assist in developing training that is interactive and scenario-based, as well as inclusive of visual aids and an evaluation process. It is also critical to establish a commitment to professional development; to be prepared to lead effectively, leaders must pledge to also be students. Reading research, studying the population served and visiting facilities or agencies that are doing it better provide avenues for idea sharing and problem-solving; these actions also establish a foundation for progressive thinking in a rapidly changing field. Agency leaders must commit to creating a culture where training and professional development are a priority. Those responsible for training development must value research and imbed best practices into a continuous training model.

Summary

Changing culture with intention is a methodology that builds and connects operational processes through a systems approach. For it to become sustainable, the organization must identify and assess the current state of the culture and then identify and prioritize those critical areas that will most impact overall reform. Leaders must always be mindful that the system is made up of people. As such, the actions and reactions of employees must carefully be observed as the shift in culture unfolds. Subculture factors are often at play, too, and can promote or stifle an agency's efforts in becoming a high-performance enterprise workplace. Like any process that is driven by human emotions and behavior, the course of changing culture with intention will be multifaceted and dynamic each and every day.

ENDNOTES

¹ Cameron, Kim S., and Robert E. Quinn. 2011. *Diagnosing and changing organizational culture: Based on the competing values framework, 3rd edition*. San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons Inc.

² Hiatt, Jeffrey M., and Timothy J. Creasey. 2012. *Change management: The people side of change*. Loveland, Colo.: Prosci Learning Center Publications.

³ Kleiman, Mel. 1999. *Hire Tough, Manage Easy*. Houston: HTG Press.

Amy L. Ast, MSM, is bureau chief of facility operations at the Ohio Department of Youth Services. Ginine M. Trim, MBA, is deputy director of facility programs and operations at the Ohio Department of Youth Services.