Checklist

Checklist: Practical Steps to Building a High–Performing Culture

How to build a high-performing culture

High-performing company cultures are an incredible driver of growth, profit, and employee engagement. While it's easy to extol their virtues, it's a little bit harder to build one. After understanding exactly what makes a culture high-performing, you need to know exactly what to do to start creating that same kind of dynamic, innovative environment in your organization.

This is not a sprint to the finish—it's a well-paced marathon. Here are the concrete and actionable steps to take to build your own high-performance culture, starting today.

1. Outline a compelling company mission

A high-performing culture requires a common mission and purpose—and a compelling one. What, exactly, do you want your culture and talent to drive toward? A high-performing culture is how you get there, it's not the ultimate destination. Performance for the sake of performance, or even just profit, is not a particularly appealing goal for most employees and teams (and even leaders).

Outlining a compelling mission for your company helps everyone get on the same page about what you're ultimately working towards. This is a key step in increasing employee engagement too. Follow these steps:

- ☐ Write a more clearly defined [company mission statement](#)
- ☐ Imagine what the long-term future state of your company would be in an ideal world
- ☐ Communicate that mission and vision clearly and regularly to your managers and employees

2. Align everyone on your core values

Once your mission is clear, you need to get everyone aligned on the core values that will get you to that inspiring end state. This step matters because how you will achieve that goal matters as much as the goal itself.

This kind of clear alignment is missing from most companies. Only 23% of US employees strongly agree that they can apply their organization's values to their work every day, [according to Gallup research](#). High-performing cultures separate themselves from the rest with their commitment to defining and communicating these values.

The values outline your company culture. Help employees align with them by:

- ☐ Helping them see how their role fits into the larger organization
- ☐ Tying individual and team goals to larger organizational priorities and mission
- ☐ Developing a thoughtful internal communications strategy to tie all parts of the business together

☐ Explain changes and shifts in strategy as they come up with how they'll help the company achieve big-picture goals

There are many ways to connect your employees with your company's core values, so get clear on your specific ideal culture and the values that align with it and communicate them clearly and often.

3. Balance leadership with employee autonomy

You should also give employees as much autonomy as possible in where, how, and when they work. Autonomy is [one of the biggest drivers](#) of engagement and intrinsic motivation in the workplace. Employees who feel they're in control of how they work, and accountable for the results of their work, are more satisfied when they succeed.

Leadership is critical, of course. But instead of leaders dictating how and what employees should do their work, they should instead lead by example and by empowering employees as much as possible. This kind of leadership can look like:

☐ Modeling core values
☐ Communicating vision and priorities
☐ Developing policies that help guide outcomes instead of dictating how work gets done.

Show employees what good looks like, and then let them get there on their own using the drive and professional skills they already possess.

4. Encourage continuous learning and development

A great way to build employee autonomy and skills so you can have a higher-performing culture is investing in learning and development for your employees. It's not just a reward for their hard work (although it's a good one). It also helps motivate them to stay on top of their skills and develop new ones so they can continually improve.

Plus, having a robust learning and development program helps attract and retain employees who have a growth mindset and embrace learning—they'll be thrilled to be part of an organization that wants to help them grow.

There are many ways to create a culture of continuous learning and development, like:

- [ ] Giving employees development stipends
- [ ] Offering tuition reimbursement programs
- [ ] Allowing employees to take on rotations and lateral moves in other departments

Highly innovative cultures like Google and 3M also allow employees time in the workday to tackle side projects and wild ideas, encouraging everyone to experiment and learn.

5. Enable performance instead of managing it

Traditional performance management doesn't usually inspire exceptional performance—it's reactive and backward-looking. Plus that focus on managing performance goes against the autonomy employees crave.

Consider switching to a [performance enablement](#) mindset and system instead, one where employees take ownership of their growth, and managers coach and empower them to do so. The key element in performance enablement is giving employees timely, regular feedback instead of relying on that once-a-year review.

Your managers will be the key element here. Your leadership team needs to:

- [ ] Train them on how to coach and develop their teams instead of simply manage them
- [ ] Help employees connect their current work to their future career goals
- [ ] Prepare employees to take charge of their career development

6. Recognize and reward good work

Feedback is powerful—it lets employees know how they're doing at work, gives them the knowledge they need to build their soft and hard skills, and improves self-awareness (it does the same for leaders and managers too!).

But the most critical part of feedback is recognizing and appreciating great work. There's nothing more deflating for a dedicated employee who has put in lots of time, thoughtful effort, and creative problem-solving into a project than having it be unacknowledged by their manager, leadership, or team.

Take time to think through your current feedback culture and mechanisms:

- ☐ Do you provide managers with incentives to regularly recognize their employees and their teams?
- ☐ Does your leadership team model that behavior?
- ☐ Do you encourage and enable peer-to-peer recognition?

Timely, frequent recognition for small and large accomplishments is what fuels high-performing organizations. You may want to train managers on more effective recognition or adopt software like Bonusly that makes recognizing and rewarding employees for their excellent performance easier.

Want to build connected, motivated, high-performing teams? Schedule a free Bonusly demo today.

Learn why the platform has an average participation rate of 82% and is loved by 3,300+ companies in 75 countries.

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