

Why values-driven company culture holds the key to career success

These days, we're well versed in the concept of company culture. And while pool or ping-pong tables, fridges stocked full of snacks or hammocks in meeting rooms might have held sway pre-pandemic when the workplace was confined to an office building, in recent years company values, standards and beliefs are being brought into sharper focus as the barometer of what it's really like to work at an organisation.

In fact, the World Economic Forum's *Future of Work* report highlights that workers have become more "belief driven" post pandemic, with 60% admitting that they are no longer willing to work for a company where the ethos doesn't match their own.

Additionally, recent data compiled by Glassdoor found that 83% of jobseekers are likely to research company reviews and ratings when deciding where to apply for a job, so internal reputation and employee experience matter more than ever in attracting and retaining top talent.

"You can do all the lofty stuff but you need to have systems and processes in

place,” offers Denise Hayes, chief people officer at *DigitalWell*, a full-service IT and communications provider.

“Tech companies move at a very fast pace. You want to make changes and be fast and furious but what’s the knock-on effect? You can do things right 10 times but the one time you don’t do things right, it can bring you right back down.”

Moving beyond the “move fast and break things” model

Since coming on board as CPO in 2021—the same year DigitalWell acquired five of the seven companies it has bought to date—Hayes has found that adopting a more nurturing and collaborative attitude to implementing change has had a hugely positive effect on company culture.

“Instead of espousing culture and saying ‘this is what we are’, I went out and did workshops and observed and didn’t talk. I was there to learn and listen. This allowed us to hear what people had to say, take all the best bits and put that forward as our values. When we announced the values we felt really comfortable [with what they represented]”.

At the crux of the company’s core values is a three-pronged leadership standard: leading yourself, leading your team and leading the business, as Hayes explains.

“The point of this framework is everyone should have something they’re working on, we’re all learning. But there’s also an underlying principle that we all own our own destinies so we all have to be responsible. No manager is going to come to you and say you need to work on your presentation skills, we should be owning it ourselves.

“It’s been a bit of a slow burn because a lot of engineers and other techies want to be left alone and be individual contributors, but it’s trying to galvanise [employees] so that everyone knows we’re all in this together, and we have an ecosystem around how we develop.”

Paving the way for progression

One way DigitalWell does this is through its review system which includes an ongoing continued development model, whereby employees can raise issues outside of a mid-year or yearly review schedule.

“We want people to have those wider developmental conversations. When people talk about somewhere being a great place to work, you need to have building blocks to get there,” she adds.

These building blocks include a job capabilities framework that will facilitate growth within the company, either in an employee’s current department or a different side of the business.

“It’s really impactful for people to own their own review and self-assessment of their own skills, including their soft skills, so they can see where they want to go. But it’s also about looking at your wider talent pool and seeing who key performers are, and making sure they have that plan and that they’re being developed.

“You’re making sure that everyone has it to be fair, but you really want your star employees to know that there’s progression, and that they can start developing in their current job so when a role comes up they have an opportunity.”

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