

'Hire tough, manage easy' good recipe

The spotlight was on the essential role a CEO plays in creating the framework for success in an organization. But as John Cassaday, CEO of Corus Entertainment, emphasized, in defining a company's culture, the CEO must take the necessary steps to ensure the right conditions are in place for facilitating buy-in from every employee.



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His formula for doing so predictably echoed the message delivered by other well-respected CEOs who have taken the stage at Strategic Capability Network events. The mechanism for driving success at Corus, just as it is at Maple Leaf Foods, is an underpinning of core values that permeate every aspect of the organization — from hiring practices through performance appraisals and promotions.

At Corus, employees are measured every day not just on their effectiveness in getting their work done but on their ability to live up to the core values of accountability, knowledge, initiative, innovation and teamwork.

While the responsibility the CEO holds in establishing the conditions for success is pivotal, the foundation of any thriving organization is its people. One cannot overstate the importance of having clearly articulated values at play in defining what it means to be a good organizational "fit."

The degree to which this careful inculcation of values into every aspect of corporate life has been taken at Corus was made clear by its hiring process. The hiring philosophy put in place is one other companies would do well to follow and can best be summed up by that old adage: Hire for fit, train for skills.

All jobs are open to anyone who meets the basic qualifications, interviews are conducted by a panel and no one gets in simply by knowing somebody. The focus is first and foremost on alignment with values, and then on factors such as a burning desire to succeed, integrity (versus unbridled ambition) and, finally, skills. As Cassaday summed it up, if you make it a point to "hire tough" you're then in a position to "manage easy."

It would be interesting to see the results of exit interviews to find out how often this culture mismatch was a factor in decisions made by managers to let staff go and by individuals to leave Corus.

A quick check on Glassdoor.com to get a flavour for how employees past and present view the company revealed that while Corus has its share of people criticizing it for such things as poor management and restricted budgets, it also has numerous positive reviews referencing such things as the engaging work culture,

creative atmosphere and the inspiring CEO.

Once again, we heard from an esteemed leader championing a straightforward formula for organizational success, one that is easily transferrable to any organization no matter what business it is in — communicate a clear vision, infuse your corporate values into all aspects of your company so they truly come to life, embrace being a good corporate citizen and an environmental leader and, if you can, build a creative workspace with certification in Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED).

In doing so, not only will your organization be activating the value chain we've heard so much about (engaged employees lead to happy customers and an enhanced bottom line), it will also be putting in place an unbeatable generation-Y attraction strategy. After all, one of the primary things that generation — your company's future — is seeking is an organization with a conscience.

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