

company culture

Three experts give advice on creating the workplace you want.

Q: *“How do we create a culture that makes our dealership a place where people want to work?”*



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A culture is built around the worst behavior leaders allow. And “allow” can mean anything from reward to merely permit without consequence. Research tells us that allowing such behavior that is hurtful to others, regardless of individual contribution, has a cost. It has a detrimental effect on performance, on creativity, and leaves a lingering negativity. And it hurts your bottom line. So, how do you define what you want and begin leaving behind what you don’t?

Start with values. Your core values can shape the culture you want, but only if they are communicated, implemented, demonstrated, and all are held accountable to them. Selecting values is not simply listing words that sound good—they need to mean something. To experience their true value, leaders and employees must take time to intentionally create the values, use them as a decision-making lens, and, most importantly, live them.

Manage the change. One of the most important things to remember about any change is that the situation may “change,” such as when new values are defined, but the transition is a psychological process requiring an acceptance of letting go of something first and foremost. Only then are people ready to adapt behavior or attitudes to facilitate a new beginning. Unfortunately, letting go of the old is one of the most common points of resistance, oftentimes more so than to the change itself. Luckily, this can be addressed in large part with proactive and comprehensive communication.

Clearly, culture is more than just pingpong and free yogurt bars. It requires walking the talk from the top down and creating an environment where people want to come to work and do their best.



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“Rather than trying to get more out of employees, organizations are better served by investing more in them and meeting their multidimensional needs in order to fuel greater engagement and more sustainable high performance.”

Ali Payne

Culture is a feeling, not a thing, and is built team by team. Every interaction employees have with leaders reinforces their beliefs and feelings about the culture. What if you could build a culture and environment within your organization that empowers your employees? What if your employees brought their best selves to work every day and fully engaged with your organization’s purpose, ultimately creating the best opportunity for your most important asset, your people?

Imagine how that would impact attracting, retaining, and engaging top talent.

Imagine how that would impact business performance, customer satisfaction, and retention.

Rather than trying to get more out of employees, organizations are better served by investing more in them and meeting their multidimensional needs in order to fuel greater engagement and more sustainable high performance.

Today, high-performing organizations are realizing the benefits of building a culture that promotes the holistic well-being and engagement of their workforce. Organizational success is directly linked to employee engagement. Thriving, engaged employees:

- Have fewer health problems and lower health costs
- Produce sustainable high-performance work
- Achieve more business goals
- Drive the organization forward

Organizations also need to be mindful of the whole employee journey and consider the resources and initiatives they provide employees in areas like career, financial, social/emotional, community, and physical well-being. Unique people, your unique employees, have different needs from their employer.

Today’s workplace doesn’t look the same as it did 30, 20, or even 10 years ago. At this point it doesn’t look the same as 10 months ago. The multi-generational workplace of today presents new challenges for employers. In fact, for the first time, we have five generations in the workplace, creating unique challenges as you communicate and engage with your employees. The differences in your workforce are exponential, and it’s hard to juggle and support every employee. We get it. That’s why having an organizational engagement strategy is a must.

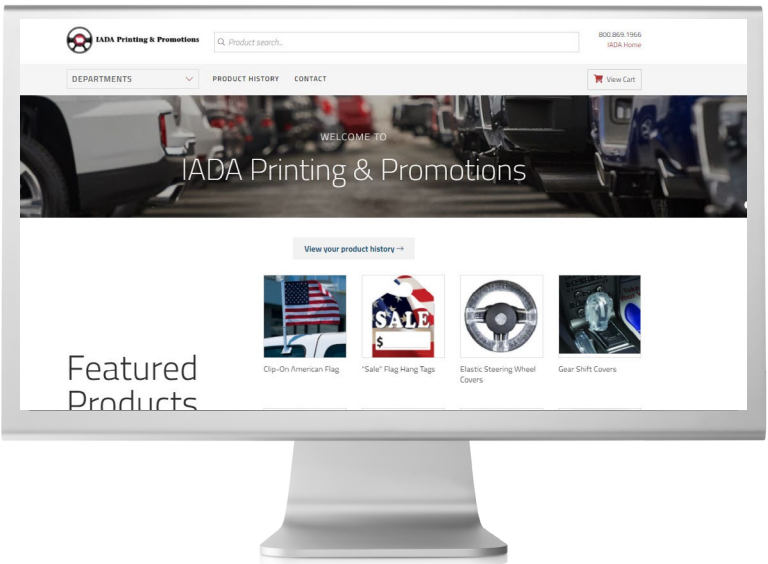
If you want a workplace culture that sets you apart, then you need to focus on what makes your people successful. Many people are surprised by that answer, as they associate culture with things like happy hours or the general mood in the dealership. In fact, culture is a web of systems and processes you have in place that make it clear to everyone what is valued in your organization. What’s valued is what drives behavior, so the equation is actually quite simple: Put in place a culture that values the behaviors that drive success for the dealership and the people within it, and you’ll have a winning culture that gives you a distinct edge in the competition for the best talent. And if your culture is getting in the way of your people’s success—generating what I call “culture friction”—then you could be in trouble.

For example, the need for accountability brings with it some hierarchy, where managers must approve certain decisions, all of which is fine. But if a rigid hierarchy becomes the default, you might have generated some internal processes that keep the customer waiting unnecessarily, which is guaranteed to show up in your online reviews and net promoter scores. You may not be seeing it, but that preference for a chain of command could be making it harder for your people to adequately serve their customers. And that can lead to frustration among both your employees and your customers—and that’s a bad combination. That’s culture friction.

So if you want to stand out, start treating your culture like the tangible business tool that it is, rather than just a vague vibe. Root out the areas of friction and then change the way you do things to be more aligned with success. When your people know you’re committed to a culture that makes them successful, you’re on your way to becoming a best place to work.



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