How to Define Your Organization's Culture to Attract and Retain Top Talent

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It's no secret that as the economy recovers and more executive and healthcare positions are created or vacated, professionals are on the move. In fact, a recent U.S. labor data study revealed that healthcare jobs turned over at 28% and the cost for replacing these healthcare professionals can be more than 20% of that person's annual salary. In addition, a recent report released by the Association of Staff Physician Recruiters disclosed that 45% of searches are to replace a departing provider. Healthcare professionals can afford to be mobile; jobs are plentiful and organizations are competing for top talent.

In addition to the increasing numbers of positions and decreasing numbers of qualified candidates, there is another reason for this market segment volatility. Cultural fit. According to a landmark survey conducted by Physician Wellness Services, more than three-quarters (77%) of physicians surveyed agreed that organizational culture influences job satisfaction. Cultural fit was identified as the top controllable cause of voluntary physician departures.

Because cultural fit is paramount to both landing and retaining the best candidates, assessing cultural integration aptitude during the recruitment process is a requirement. However, to do this effectively, you must have a comprehensive understanding of your organization's culture. After all, to know if a candidate will fit in with the culture that drives your organization, you must first be cognizant of it. Below are 10 ways to better identify and define the culture that exists at your organization.

1. Vision and Mission

Evaluate your vision and mission statements to determine the following:
- Are they more than just words?
- Are these statements driving your people and processes?
- Are they revealed in daily practices?
- Do your environment and communications reflect that vision and mission to a casual observer?

2. Values

Consider your organization's core values and ask:
- What core values do you see in your staff members?
- Do your employees' actions match your organizational values?
- Do the people in your organization do what they say they are going to do?
- Do they embody what is said about your organization in the marketplace?

3. Communication

Determine your organization's communication style:
- How do employees interact and communicate with patients, colleagues, and staff? Formal or informal? Service-oriented?
- Is there an interpersonal hierarchy or voluntary segmentation in place?
- What is the emotional atmosphere?
- Do they appear to be enjoying their work?
- Is there a sense of apparent conflict or tension?

4. Team vs. Individual Orientation

Assess how your organization thrives by considering:

- Do you have a compassionate team-oriented environment where everyone works together to get the job done?
- Or, does your organization foster and reward productivity at the individual level?
- Are personnel evaluations based on individual performance, team performance, or a combination?

5. Physical Environment

Surroundings are important in determining culture. Evaluate the following:

- Does your physical environment underscore your mission?
- Do your decorations, marketing materials, bulletin boards, and other office artifacts lend credibility to your organization's narrative?

6. Interpersonal

To get a sense for your company's interpersonal environment, consider:

- How do your employees get along?
- Do staff members know each other's families and spend time together outside of work?
- Does your organization provide multiple opportunities for employees to convene both formally and informally?

7. Priorities

It is imperative to evaluate your organization's priorities:

- What tops the value chain at your organization? Productivity? Work-life balance?
- Are hours flexible or strictly enforced?
- Is the company family-friendly or are employees encouraged to compartmentalize their professional and personal lives?

8. Accountability

Assess your methods of employee accountability:

- How are staff members held accountable?
- What is involved in employee reviews and evaluations?
- Is there a reward or compensation system that acknowledges good work, good deeds, service, or production?
- Are employees publicly or privately recognized for accomplishments?

9. Leadership Style

Because leadership style influences corporate culture, you should ask:

- Are administrators seen as micromanagers or do employees have autonomy?
- Is there an open-door policy in place or are scheduled meetings encouraged at regular intervals?
- Is the company driven by administrative mandates or is a more bottom-up approach supported?

10. Internal Audit

Go right to the source—your employees. Interview various levels of staff individually or in small groups (notice the interaction if in a group). Ask questions like:

- What would you tell a friend about working here?
- What is the one thing you would like to change about this organization?
- What kinds of people succeed or fail in this organization?
- What are the characteristics one must have to thrive in this organization?

Final Thoughts

Tactically recruiting and retaining top talent requires not only an understanding of organizational culture, but also an understanding of employee cultural fit and integration. You must be able to discover whether the attributes that your organization values—the ones that make employees and the organization more successful—are shared by those in the candidate pool. Through evaluation of the 10 areas mentioned above, you will be better able to gauge what makes your environment work well and what types of individuals and traits will work well within your environment. An ideal workforce will be diverse and contain a variety of personalities; the one characteristic each new hire should share, however, is the ability to integrate into, and thrive within, the prevailing corporate culture in order to drive the organization forward.

Kathy Jordan is the President of Jordan Search Consultants and Regina Levison is the organization's Vice President of Client Development. Founded in 2003, Jordan Search Consultants provides healthcare, executive, higher education, physician, and advanced practitioner recruitment services to clients throughout the nation. With services ranging from candidate sourcing to complete turnkey position fulfillment solutions, Jordan Search Consultants provides a customized level of recruitment support.

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