

A photograph of two men in a modern office setting. On the left, a man with dark hair and glasses is smiling broadly, resting his chin on his hand. On the right, another man with a beard is smiling and looking towards the first man. The background is softly blurred, showing office lights and greenery.

5 Step Guide

to Acquiring Employee
Buy-in for Better
Company Culture



ClearCompany



Introduction

How does a team or department in your company approach purchasing new technology? In most cases, the team or department will work to find all the ways in which that technology will benefit the organization, as well as unmask any unfit features. Together, they find statistics and references to support the desire to implement it, and once there is a solid case developed, they present it to leadership. The hope is executives with the power to purchase or act on the idea will see the merit and jump on the team's bandwagon. With that "buy-in", teams have the budget and support for seeing a successful implementation.

With this example in mind, how did your company or how does your company hope to develop an organizational culture that suits your current and desired workforce? Do you have a plan to gain the interest or buy-in of employees? If you're thinking of all the ways your leadership team has brainstormed initiatives, but can't name a way to trace those ideas back to your employees, there's a good chance you have experienced, or are in for, lackluster results. Or worse, you have no way of knowing if your initiative had any effect at all.

We often hear all the ways HR and recruiting should be cultivating company culture. If you've ever researched the topic, you can agree there are quite a few approaches out there. This guide will go into a few helpful hints, but more importantly, we'll address something many fail to cover: getting employee buy-in. Unfortunately, about **22% of HR professionals** say employee participation is the biggest hindrance to strengthening the company culture.

Pop Quiz!

Before answering the questions below, consider one initiative your organization implemented in hopes of influencing the development of positive company culture. This could be a corporate social responsibility project, a digital effort or even an office tradition. Now, before implementing the initiative, did your team...

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- ☐ Consider how your employees would benefit?
- ☐ Consider if your employees actually fit the initiative?
- ☐ Consider if your employees Understand why the initiative matched the values of your company? Of your workforce? actually fit the initiative?
- ☐ Trace the idea back to specific instances of employee interest?
- ☐ Provide talking points for hesitant individuals?
- ☐ Research potential outcomes of the plan?
- ☐ Align the initiative to the types of job seekers the company desires to hire?

If you couldn't answer any of these questions or failed to remember any strategic influence in your plan to cultivate company culture, don't worry. Gaining employee buy-in to your organizational culture is what this guide is all about.

No good plan begins without strategy. Before following this guide, gather:

- Your Mission
- Company Culture Initiatives/Ideas
- Your Values
- Things that make your organization unique



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Step 1

Find Your Purpose

Employees want purpose in their work. Today, that's more true than ever. When asked what the personal principal driver in their current job was, **73% of employees** reported it was the purpose and meaning their work had. As an organization, you have the power to **define the purpose of your work culture** as well as make it abundantly clear, internally and externally.

Establishing your purpose will help employees relate to the work they perform on a daily basis and unveil the reasons behind your **company culture initiatives**.

Without a clear purpose, your organization is simply accomplishing tasks with only a vague direction for the future. Meanwhile, your employees are just as directionless and unable to find their place within a long term strategy.





Make it Happen:

Finding your unique purpose requires a deep look at your organization. Connect the daily goals to a greater good and bigger meaning. Does your organization hope to provide exceptional service to a specific market in need? Is it your goal to provide a product that upholds integrity? Think about what it is your organization was created for and how it has helped your clients or customers. No matter what work you do, there is a purpose that will excite employees, candidates and clients. In fact, your mission statement might very well already hold the key.

NETFLIX

Company Spotlight: Netflix

Netflix is widely known for their unlimited vacation policy. While this does draw in a great deal of interest from job seekers, the perk wasn't created solely for employer branding. In fact, it's creation can be traced back to its values, purpose and company culture. Two of the Netflix's core values are devotion to employees' freedom to do good work and responsibility to drive success. Providing this perk allows the company to reward hard work, advocate for proper rest and push for optimal productivity when on the job.

In addition to guiding company culture, understanding the intricacies of your company purpose and values will help guide management and talent acquisition tactics. Of course, this is a popular perk with job seekers, so Netflix's talent acquisition team knows to look for candidates who share these values when making hiring decisions.





Step 2

Branch Out From Values

Your values explain how you accomplish tasks and overarching goals. Generally speaking, the employees who are most successful within your company are the ones who share those values. Making decisions for your organization can be difficult, but keeping your values at the core will ensure you act with your priorities in mind. Additionally, because your employees, new and tenured, should share those priorities, the decisions you make will probably be something they understand and support. This is everything from new hire decisions to policy adjustments and anything in between.

If you're at a loss of what your organization's values are or how to clearly establish them, think back to what your daily goals require. Are your teams always looking for answers to unprecedented problems? Innovation and original thinking are probably important to your company. How about your clients? Are you responsible for managing very personal parts of their lives? Integrity and dependability are probably key. Those necessary elements to drive success inside your walls are the deeply held values you want to always see in your workforce.

Actively choose initiatives that relate to those values and their practices. This underlines what your company holds near and dear, while pursuing opportunities to strengthen those beliefs in your workforce. It's a great practice that reminds tenured employees what they appreciate about their employer while introducing those values to new hires. This is also a way to **practice goal alignment**, something highly important to engaged employees and the overall success of company productivity. Again, if leadership is connecting values to culture-building initiatives, there's a greater chance of appealing to the employees who share those values.

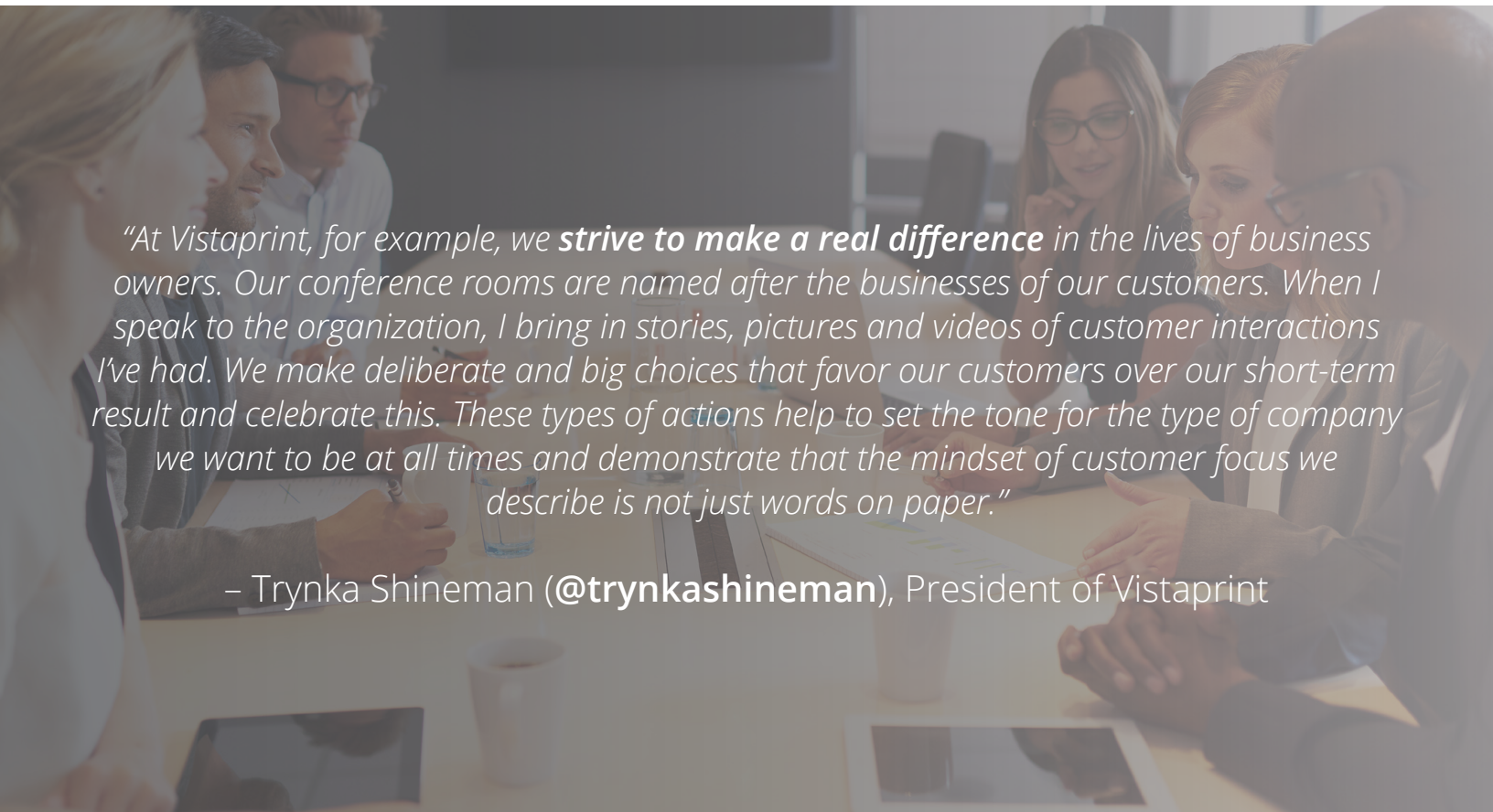




Make it Happen:

Finding activities that connect to your values can be a challenge, but remember, it's more about upholding, supporting and strengthening. For instance, maybe your organization is built around providing financial services with transparency and integrity. At first glance, it seems a bit impossible to build a company cultural practice that strengthens those values while exciting and engaging your employees. However, pro bono work for local nonprofits has a positive impact in your community, while tapping into your employees' skills to allow them to affect greater good alongside their coworkers.

Of course, not everything has to be a large, expensive movement or policy change. In fact, those everyday practices within your company walls are the ones that speak to your company culture the loudest. Maybe your clients and company depend on your employees' value of diligence and care. Try bringing in books to share with your employees that are motivational or can help someone reach a new goal in their career. Let the employees know how these will help them with their career advancement or to grow a specific skill. This provides your employees the chance to use their commitment to growing or advancing their career without a major expense for the employers. Remember, culture is in everything you do, so cultivating its direction should be a daily practice.



*"At Vistaprint, for example, we **strive to make a real difference** in the lives of business owners. Our conference rooms are named after the businesses of our customers. When I speak to the organization, I bring in stories, pictures and videos of customer interactions I've had. We make deliberate and big choices that favor our customers over our short-term result and celebrate this. These types of actions help to set the tone for the type of company we want to be at all times and demonstrate that the mindset of customer focus we describe is not just words on paper."*

– Trynka Shineman (@trynkashineman), President of Vistaprint

A high-angle, top-down view of two people sitting at a table, looking at papers and writing. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter.

Step 3

Keep it Analog

Analog in this case doesn't mean ditching digital watches and ignoring new technology. In fact, more often than not, technology will play a great role in cultivating company culture. You want your employees to have a lot of claim to your company culture, especially in the beginning stages of new initiatives. In order to keep their support, it's important you create touchpoints.

Touchpoints allow your employees to take ownership of the culture they work in. That ownership is what drives employee buy-in. It means they not only identify with and appreciate initiatives, but also actively pursue their development and cultivation. Meanwhile, they provide managers and leadership a clear pulse on the feelings of their workers. With consistent tracking, the company can pivot when initiatives no longer resonate with your employees and even give a good direction in which to move forward.





Make it Happen:

The trick to touchpoints is increasing communication opportunities and encouraging comfort while providing that communication. There are a few great ways to keep company culture cultivation highly communicative. First, create employee surveys to gather opinions and feelings on initiatives and changes within the organization. These surveys can occur annually, but increasing to quarterly surveys will allow you to ask questions specific to recent events or changes, allowing for more pivot points.

We've all heard the **value of continuous feedback** and more frequent performance reviews for employees. If your company has made an effort with either one of these, try to begin working feedback solicitation in as well. One-on-one or peer meetings with managers can be a great place to discuss satisfaction and collaborate on company bonding ideas.

Surveys and reviews are a great way to manage internal company culture, but when it comes to external representation, there should be multiple touch points for candidates as well. For example, find ways to represent your organizational culture on social media, in job descriptions, ads as well as in the community. A strong digital presence does a great deal for those who are already searching for you, but hosting or attending community events allows your organization the chance to connect with people who don't already know your brand.



Step 4

Build in Recognition

Your company culture should already have a method of **showing employees appreciation**. No matter what you value or who you hope to serve with your business, appreciation of your workforce will drive your people to work harder in their jobs. A remarkable **65% of working Americans** say they receive no praise or recognition on the job. However, **50% of employees** say simply being thanked by their manager would improve their relationship and build trust.

A renewed sense of trust and better employee-manager relationships will provide a framework for company culture initiatives. Part of **developing a healthy organizational culture** is building that sense of belonging. With inclusion present, your employees will be quick to offer insight and feel comfortable sharing similarities and interests with their coworkers and leadership. That information can be used to steer influential and exciting company culture initiatives.





Make it Happen:

Tying recognition to your mission and values is the absolute best way to cultivate a company culture your employees can stand behind. In fact, your recognition program doesn't even need to be high dollar prizes and big ticket items. Whether you write a note, call for a one-on-one or express thanks in front of their peers, take your praise a step further by connecting a value or purpose to the reason you're showing recognition.

"Devon, the way you took the time to explain that problem to our customer was remarkable. They were very agitated, but you remained calm and even found a great resolution for them and our company. Your work displayed amazing dedication to our values of being customer-led and respectful."

ClearCompany Culture in Action

We recently asked employees to collaborate on ideas they wanted to see become a reality. We brought employees from every department, from sales to development, to "hack" out some ideas with the goal of designing a new feature or redesigning an existing feature for our system. We wanted it to benefit our clients and contribute to our mission of helping others achieve theirs. It was called our **Hackathon Program**, and the team who provided a winning idea would see their creation implemented in the ClearCompany Talent Management platform.

We established a brainstorming session and then had seven teams discuss strategies with our users and markets in mind. At the center of the Hackathon were our company values. The event highlighted our dedication to innovative solutions but also tapped into the talent of our employees. The best part? Our employees worked together cross-departmentally, got creative, had some fun and produced some amazing ideas.



Step 5

Avoid Cruise Control

Never accept that your company culture journey is complete. Even if you're not currently hiring, employees get comfortable in their roles and the needle continues to move. Everything might be in a good place in the present, but company culture development is a safeguard for future challenges as well as for continued engagement. Allowing it to be placed on the back burner will break positive strides. Plus, culture should be reinforced in everything you do anyway.

Aspects of your company can be fairly permanent, but the people who support it are anything but. From personal goals to professional priorities, accept that you are always in a state of metamorphosis. This is especially true for the companies who value innovation or are always welcoming new faces. A company culture that is maintained is one that can scale to industry changes and business strategy. It's a win-win for employees and leadership.

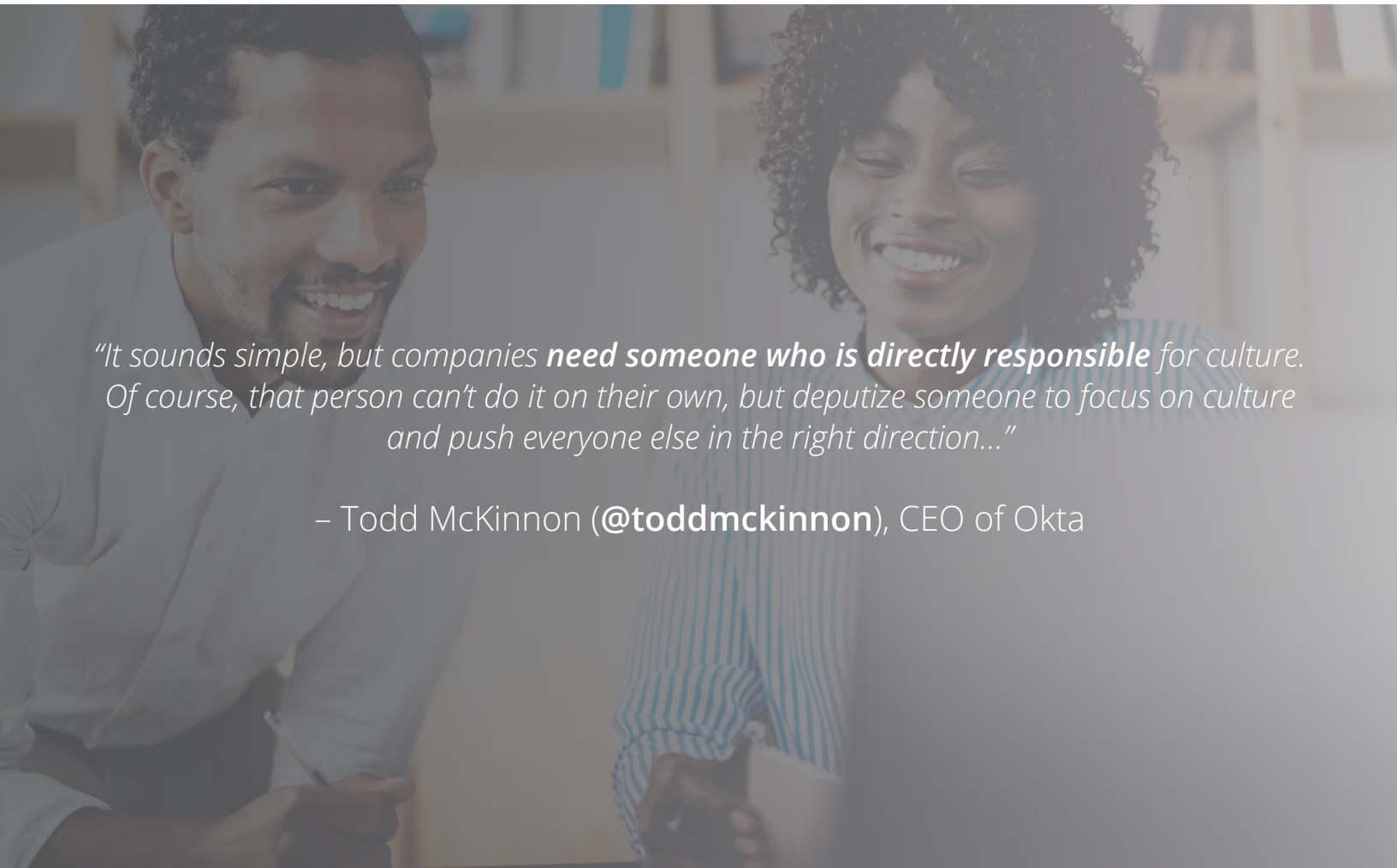


Make it Happen:

Surveys and the other touchpoints you develop will play a huge role in this step, especially if you administer them on a regular basis and always include questions about your **company culture initiatives**. Be sure to ask for feedback around specific practices and exercises as well as the individual's current satisfaction in other changes or policies. The more your employees are provided potential communication opportunities, the more willing they will be to provide insight.

Another important piece of keeping your company culture current is by assigning ownership. Employees and leadership have unique roles in maintaining and cultivating company culture. However, when a person or team specifically focus on culture development, you provide a strong bridge between both. Culture won't fall through the cracks or be left to suffer when times get busy.

Employees can go to the company culture point person or team to air grievances and provide ideas, while leadership can count on them to use that insight to the company's advantage. This individual or team will become a bit of a subject matter expert to tap into for hiring, management and day-to-day processes, so that no part of your organization loses sight of what sets it apart.



*"It sounds simple, but companies **need someone who is directly responsible** for culture. Of course, that person can't do it on their own, but deputize someone to focus on culture and push everyone else in the right direction..."*

– Todd McKinnon (@toddmckinnon), CEO of Okta

Once you've gone through these steps, you should have a tangible direction to include employees in the process of cultivating your unique company culture. With their guidance and contributions, your workforce will be more connected to its future efforts which means you will choose initiatives that actually resonate and garner participation.

Even better, with employee buy-in, your company culture will naturally develop employee brand ambassadors. This means your employees will begin advocating and sharing your company's culture with their networks. That reach will help attract talent that actually fits all your organizational values. Better fit means better hires, and better hires mean better engagement and productivity. Isn't that a healthy cycle to get into?