# 3 Proven Ways To Create
# A Winning Organizational Culture

*Author's Personal Note: For those satisfied with business as usual, you can skip this article and continue producing average results. For those desiring exceptionally successful teams, far better than the competition, please enjoy! All my best, John*

**Organizational culture is a key factor in sustainable profitably and unmatched long-term performance for nearly all successful companies. It's a tried and true fact that when an organization has a winning culture, it's reflected in its people and their performance**. Yet, as a leader dedicated to continuous improvement, building such a culture takes a commitment to fine-tuning your soft skills. These are the skills that will allow you to truly connect with the beliefs, hearts and minds of people who ultimately shape an organization's culture. While there is no single pathway to creating a winning culture, three key steps for any approach are:

1. **Treating people like teammates rather than employees**. No one wants to simply be a corporate drone. Viewing an individual by what they do fails to take into account many attributes and talents that an individual can contribute to creating a winning team. By engaging others as partners in the success of an organization shows that you value people for who they are and not just by the results that they produce. It also fosters a stronger sense of interdependency and encourages everyone to share new ideas.

   In fact, research even tells us that what people really want is to be appreciated. They want to know that they are an important part of a team and they want a team that they can be proud of. Your people need to know that that their ideas matter. Having a boss that knows and supports their personal career goals in business also means a lot. Companies that treat their people well and have happy team members are guaranteed to out-perform industry competitors.

2. **Creating opportunities for conversations**. Rather than announcing directives or emailing orders, take time to engage in meaningful conversations with all of your team members. Critical to these conversations should always be continuously gathering feedback by effectively listening for the needs and ideas of those you lead. In other words, develop the skill of listening in order to understand and learn. The skill of listening is the ability to hear what is *and* what is not being said.

   Take, for example, one of my clients, Lisa (not her real name). Although a very talented and capable executive, Lisa was known as a complainer by her colleagues and not very pleasant to work with. However, following a conversation with her CEO, people noticed a change in her attitude. They commented that she was now full of enthusiasm and a "we can do it" spirit.

Surprisingly, rather than receiving a reprimand from the CEO, Lisa shared with me that during the conversation he asked her questions about her goals and how she wanted to be received by others. She also mentioned that he listened with interest. It was obvious to her that he appreciated her work and cared about her as an individual. Eight months later, when Lisa was named senior vice president of marketing, the announcement was greeted with enthusiasm. Because of her previous attitude, Lisa's career could have easily stalled. However, it was a conversation with her boss that shifted her perspective and her career.

3. **Pay close attention.** When it comes to making a difference in the lives of the people you lead, little things mean a lot. Thanking people for their hard work, looking them in the eye, and remembering names can have a huge impact. It shows that you genuinely care. Furthermore, it creates a foundation of trust, which is a pre-requisite for people's willingness to go above and beyond.

   My client, the senior leadership team of a very successful company, sets a fine example of this principle. Every executive of the team truly understands that the real heroes of the company are the people who are servicing and delighting the customers every day. Therefore, despite their their busy schedules, each of them makes it a high priority to try to speak with their team members as often as possible, even if just briefly. They constantly ask for ideas and how they can help. Because of this, it's not surprising that this company has a loyal team and is bursting at the seams with energy, enthusiasm and commitment.

Remember, at the core of an organization's culture is its people -- all of them. Creating a culture that wins is about engaging people, who enjoy working with you and one another, and work as a community of individuals collectively vested in your organization's outstanding and long-term success.

My friends, please incorporate these three principles and I promise that you will see a marked difference in the spirit of your team. If you have people throughout your company who are fully engaged and happy, your company is positioned perfectly to achieve breakthrough results year after year.

**About The Author**

John Keyser is the founder and principal of Common Sense Leadership, www.commonsenseleadership.com. He works with executives helping them develop organizational cultures that will produce outstanding financial results year after year, and a striving for continuous improvement, theirs and their team's. His contact information is john@johnkeysercoach.com and 202-236-2800.