



...solve thorny business challenges in the time it takes to drink a cup of tea

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# Your long-term success comes from a healthy workplace culture...

Let's talk kids and beer!

If you were to place a bet on the future success of one of two kids, which child would you choose?

The child raised by loving parents in a solid home, living in an environment of routine and discipline, or the one living with apathy, cynicism and dysfunction?

No matter the intelligence of the youngster, or the finance and resources available, or the school they attended, you'd probably bet on the healthier family environment, wouldn't you?

Your business success similarly depends on the health of your workplace culture.

## IN A NUTSHELL

The short and long-term prosperity of your business depends on the health of your workplace culture. The health of your workplace culture depends on the standards of behaviour, beliefs and values you, your people and your business live by.



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It pays to look at what happens to businesses that build an unhealthy working environment...

## Take Brewdog - Beer for punks!

BrewDog was founded by friends James Watt and Martin Dickie in an Aberdeen shed in 2007.

It has grown to have established breweries in the UK, US and Australia, including a carbon-negative brewing-and-bar complex at Ellon, near Aberdeen. It operates more than 100 bars in the UK alone, employing about 2,000 people. It recently raised more than £27m to help fund its carbon-negative brewing facilities.

On the face of it BrewDog appeared to be successful with lots of loyal customers and shareholders.

## Off the rails?

But in June 2021, BrewDog were accused of 'promoting a toxic culture of fear in the workplace' by a group of ex-employees.

This doesn't sound so 'Punk' when you consider one of the company's published core beliefs is:

*"We believe in being a great employer"*

This prompted James Watt to share an uncomfortable video and post statements on LinkedIn accepting responsibility for the problems.

In the same month it was also revealed that 23.25% of the firm's shares were owned by two exempted limited partnerships in the (tax haven) Cayman Islands. These shares were held as "liquidation preference shares" – meaning if the beer company goes bust, they would get their money back before anyone else. And any gains would be tax free.

Which is another contradiction to the business's published 'Punk' beliefs of BrewDog:

*"We believe in community ownership"*

## Expensive aftermath...

Because of the scale of social media coverage, the company has been forced to manage the aftermath of these two seemingly inauthentic behaviours that contradict BrewDog's stated values.

And if BrewDog's 2021 behaviours contradict their stated values, it brings into question whether they have a healthy or unhealthy business culture.

In 2019 Volkswagen reckoned that ignoring their own 25-page code of conduct (values) resulting in the 2015 emissions scandal had cost them in excess of £21billion!

Clearly an unhealthy workplace culture is costly.

You can choose healthy instead...

## If God did fast food...

Leon opened its first restaurant in Carnaby Street, London, in 2004, with a second restaurant opening a year later in Ludgate.

Fast forward to 2021, and the chain has 70+ restaurants, an impressive menu (featuring an array of vegan and vegetarian food) and has been bought by the EG Group for £100m.

What guides them?

"If God did fast food!" – this is Leon's guiding philosophy.

They navigated their way to this level of healthy and profitable success with behavioural standards for their business – the core values of their business are:

- a. Sourcing (of great food and ingredients)
- b. Society (caring for staff; community; customers)
- c. Environment (Reduce, Recycle, Reuse; Natural; No waste)

If you've eaten at a Leon, you know how engaging and upbeat their staff are (even at 6.05am on a Tuesday

on Birmingham railway station!). You can see Leon's full set of values in the downloadable tools (see the end of this report), you'll also find other examples of company values.

## HERE'S THE PROVEN SOLUTION FOR YOU...

To build a healthy workplace culture, establish a set of behavioural standards (values) you want your business to live by, and then have everyone in your business live by these values.

Make sure your values influence and direct decisions and actions on a daily and weekly basis in all aspects of your business – team meetings, operations, strategy, sales, marketing, recruitment, appraisals, etc.

## What does a healthy work culture look like?

If you and your team sat down and discussed what a healthy work culture looked and felt like, you'd probably come up with a similar list to the one suggested by Patrick Lencioni in his book *'The Advantage'*:

- Minimal politics
- High Productivity
- Minimal confusion
- Low staff turnover
- High Morale

However most business leaders tend to invest their time and energy on getting smarter (rather than healthier) by focusing on more tangible, practical, easier-to-measure aspects of business:

- Strategy
- Marketing
- Finance
- Technology

Yes, both are required, but fail with the first (healthy) list and your efforts on the second (smarter) list will be wasted. Succeed at the first list and your efforts on the second list will be multiplied.

Two very good reasons to build a healthy business culture.

**STOP** thinking success is about being smarter

**START** investing in a healthy workplace culture and release the untapped potential across your business

## Start your values conversation...

Working with your leadership team (or your whole team if you prefer), pose a series of questions:

1. **What behavioural standards, values and beliefs will help guide you and your business in achieving what matters most to you and your business?** You know the answers are meaningful when they can be openly shared with the business owners, team members, clients and community.
2. **Think of a current (or ex) great employee - what behaviours do/did they exhibit that captures all that's good about your business?** You'll discover what behaviours exist that you want to keep and see repeated across all team-members.
3. **Think of a current (or ex) problematic employee - what behaviours do/did they exhibit that captures all that you want to avoid in your business?** You'll discover what behaviours exist that you DON'T want to keep and work out what the polar opposite behaviours are that you want to live by.
4. **When you think about how you helped a customer (or team member) in a way that made you feel proud - what exactly did you do?** How did you/your team feel? How did you behave? When you capture your thoughts, behaviours and insights on this question, you'll be sign-posting the values you want to (and already do) live by. You'll find in the downloadable tools (at the end of this report) an orbital diagram to help you distinguish between values and behaviours. You'll also find some examples of the values of many recognisable companies.

## How many values?

A handful of values.

Is it any wonder Volkswagen lost their way if they had to refer to a 25-page code of conduct document?

Neuro-science shows that the recall of 3 or 4, possibly 5, things can be achieved consistently – aim for a handful of values to direct the behaviour in your business.



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## The right values for your business?

How will you know if you have established the right set of values for your business so that they sponsor the health and success of your business?

Use these 4 standards to assess your workplace values – score them out of 10 to assess if they're strong and believable enough:

- **Motivate** – to what extent do your values motivate the people and behaviours you want to see in your business and build pride?
- **Attract** – to what extent do you believe your values will attract the right future employees and

customers to your business?

- **Differentiate** – to what extent will your values show people that you're different from your competition?
- **Your business purpose** – to what extent do your values support and build on the core purpose you have for your business (check out the Business Breakthrough report on purpose – 'Lead with Purpose' for more on this)

## Make it real – walk your talk...

In his research for the book 'Practice What You Preach' David Maister posed the question – "do employee attitudes drive financial success or does financial

success itself result in improved employee attitudes?"

To answer this question David Maister conducted 11,000 x 74-question surveys across 139 offices of 29 businesses in 15 countries and along 15 different business sectors, which conclusively showed that:

- Staff attitudes drive financial results, not the other way around
- The skills and behaviours of managers are the prime source of energised people who provide great customer service
- Management who practice what they preach – **no disconnect between the walk and the talk** – are the most effective

Maister's last point is crucial, it's what damaged two well-loved brands, BrewDog and VW (with camper-van kudos) and many others.

## Build trust through accountability, clarity and alignment...

Everyone will know you mean it, that you're serious, when you build, nurture and maintain a clear set of behavioural values. You make your intentions clear to everyone involved in your business.

What you stand for and what you will not stand for will be clear to all.

Such clarity helps build trust with people – team members, customers and other stakeholders.

Establish, agree and commit to a set of core behavioural standards – call them values, beliefs or principles – whatever you call them they become a reference for holding leaders, managers and all team members to account. If you don't do this then your values become a piece of corporate B.S. which can do you more harm than good.

To maintain or grow trust, you must live by the values you set for your business by building them into all aspects of your business processes – values must show up every day or every week somewhere for everyone. If you don't, you end up looking like BrewDog or VW and your reputation will be in tatters.

To help you work on your Company's behavioural standards and values please check out the downloadable tools and resources.

## GET YOUR BITESIZE SUPPORT TOOLS NOW

<https://businessbreakthrough.online/healthy-workplace-wins-tools-and-resources/>

## 4 helping hands for you...

It pays to take your company values seriously, so that you build, maintain and nurture a healthy workplace culture. Your commitment to your business values and behavioural standards has a positive impact on everyone's attitude, taps into their discretionary energy and your team's untapped potential:

1. Take organisational health seriously (as well as being smarter)
2. Work with your team to identify a handful of behavioural standards – values
3. Use your weekly team meetings to bring your values to life
4. Embed your values in all aspects of your business

Remember, culture is not about funky furniture, table tennis tables, employee yoga classes or bring-your-dog-to-work programmes. Building a healthy workplace culture requires commitment, hard work and persistence so that it is seen to be real. Your values must show up in your business, every week.



## TIME TO DISAGREE:

*"We're a small team, why would we go to the trouble and hard work of agreeing a set of values when we all know what's important?"*

You are right to think it's much easier to understand what you stand for and what standards are expected in a small team compared to a larger team. Also, you're right to zero in on clarity about what's important.

However, if Maister's research is to be believed, why not have a go at making your behavioural values and standards crystal clear?

A small 5-person team we know has shared stories about their values at every weekly team meeting for several years – they seem to be going from strength to strength. For large or small, the small but persistent effort on values pays off.

Also, it's not uncommon for the businesses (large and small) you see in the 'Sunday Times Top 100 Places to Work' to also be financially successful – they too are pursuing a healthy workplace culture.

*"There's too much 'guff' and cynicism about workplace values that it will make us look false and inauthentic."*

People's cynicism is well placed about workplace values – the BrewDog and VW emissions stories fuel that scepticism and cynicism.

And yet businesses like Leon in the UK, Southwest Airlines in the USA and most businesses in the 'Top 100 Places to Work' take their workplace values seriously, consequently enjoying the pay off in profits, pride and stability.

## YOUR 'HEALTHY WORKPLACE WINS' CHECKLIST:

If you're persuaded to take workplace culture seriously, you'll earn the right to the positive financial results associated with a healthy workplace culture.

- 1. Take organisational health seriously** (as well as being smarter)
- 2. Work with your team to identify a handful of behavioural standards – values.** When you've worked out your 3, 4 or 5 values together you can start putting them to work. *Make your handful of core values verb-focused* – For example: Be present; Care wholeheartedly; Embrace change; Seek understanding; Set high standards; Support each other. Your team will then know what's expected of them.
- 3. Use your weekly team meetings to bring your values to life.** Have your team share a story that reflects one or more of your values in every weekly team meeting.
- 4. Embed your values in all aspects of your business** (walk your talk). Shouldn't your values show up in appraisals, in interviews, on your website, in policy documents and all regular team, workflow or development meetings? What about customer discussions, proposals, on invoices even?

**As always, it's not knowing about a business breakthrough that works, it's about putting it to work! Use the downloadable support tools to help you build a healthy workplace culture in your business.**

## ULTIMATE ARGUMENT:

*"Shouldn't everyone at least give change a chance?"*

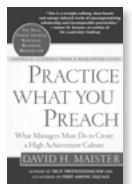
What about working with your leadership team or your whole team and engage in a discussion about your workplace values?

As your values take shape you can assess how committed everyone is to them.

Check out the downloadable tools for extra videos, resources and a few exercises you can use to help build your business values towards a healthier workplace culture. You'll also find many examples of core values used by other businesses.

## Want to know more?

**David Maister – Practice What You Preach.** To discover more about how you increase profitability and secure the future of your business by living your standards, values and beliefs, then read this brilliant book.



**Patrick Lencioni – The Advantage.** Read the real-world examples and true customer stories of how to go from an unhealthy to a healthy business. This book is a call to action, a blueprint and a must-read.



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<https://businessbreakthrough.online/healthy-workplace-wins-tools-and-resources/>  
Use these tools and resources to help you build your business values towards a healthier workplace culture.

FOR MORE EDITIONS OF BUSINESS BREAKTHROUGHS, PLEASE GO TO:  
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**T/+ Turner  
/accountants**