60+
TOP CULTURE TIPS

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A strong company culture impacts every corner of your business. It keeps your employees happy, motivated, and productive. It drives faster decision making and better alignment on business goals. And it drives competitive advantage: Companies with strong cultures see a 4x increase in revenue growth.

So, what is company culture? As Brandon Smith, professor and speaker focused on eliminating workplace dysfunction, says:

> Culture is about execution and HOW stuff gets done.
> Culture answers 'who we are.' — @TheWPTherapist

At CultureIQ, we define culture as the behaviors, beliefs, interactions, and attitudes that determine how things get done within your organization. For instance, a company culture that believes in innovation may provide employees with set time blocks to learn something new, experiment with project approaches, or teach others a skillset.

To truly drive competitive advantage, your culture must be advocated for every day by your leadership team and your employees. There are countless ways to uphold and strengthen your culture in the day-to-day. To help get you started, we've reached out to numerous culture experts — including our own team of culture strategists — to gather over 60 tips on improving your culture.

How does your company strengthen its culture?
Share your #culturetips with us on Twitter

@CultureIQ

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MEET OUR CONTRIBUTORS

In our ongoing quest to learn more about the world of company culture, we've built a network of culture experts we know and trust. Some of these experts are brands. Others, individuals. Some we've partnered with directly. Others, we've learned from indirectly at conferences, panels, or lectures.

Directly or indirectly, they've all influenced our knowledge of the culture space in some way. We've done our best to share their knowledge with you here. Thanks to our contributors for their passion for the culture space and their helpful insights!

Brandon Smith @TheWPTherapist
Speaker and professor focused on eliminating workplace dysfunction

Peter Phelan @culturedoctorny
Founder and CEO of ValuesCulture

August Public Inc. @AugustPublic
Building high performance teams for the world's most meaningful missions.

LifeLabs Learning @LifeLabsNewYork
Practice lab helping people, teams, and companies learn life's most useful skills.

Root Inc. @therootinc
Helping organizations drive change through culture and engagement.

Limeade @Limeade
An engagement company working to elevate culture.

Paul Davies @paul_w_davies
Employee experience leader at GE.
Tips shared here as heard at HCInnovation@Work Conference

Elite SEM @EliteSEM
Digital marketing agency with an award-winning company culture.

YourCause @YourCause
Empowering individuals, nonprofits, and corporations to champion the causes they care about most.

Plastarc @PLASTARC
Firm using workplace innovation and social research to guide design.

Simon Sinek @simonsinek
Author and motivational speaker focused on leadership.

Dara Blumenthal @thisisdara
Head of culture and strategy at LiveGrey (@livegrey)

Garry Ridge @LearningMoment
CEO of WD-40, co-author of Helping People Win at Work.
Tips shared here as heard at HCInnovation@Work Conference

Kavita Vora
Chief People Officer at Jopwell (@Jopwell), the career advancement platform for Black, Latino/Hispanic, and Native American professionals.

Justworks @JustworksHR
Payroll, benefits, and HR solution that simplifies your business's back office complexities.

MISSION AND VALUE ALIGNMENT

Your company's mission is the defined, shared purpose that provides meaning to your work. Your values represent the deeply held beliefs and expected behaviors that guide how you work. Together, your mission and values comprise your company's unique identify.

Every one of your employees should understand how their work connects to the company's mission and values.
And these employees should see the company's mission and values consistently adhered to in their day-to-day operations. Here are some ways to ensure alignment.

The strongest cultures have between

3-5 VALUES.
No more. No less.

Brandon Smith, @TheWPTherapist

Look for a culture-add vs a culture-fit when hiring - individuals who will help deepen and expand your team's perspective.

August Public Inc., @AugustPublic

Reinforce your culture with powerful stories of who you are and the difference you make.

Brandon Smith, @TheWPTherapist

Strategic cultures link their **values** to the values of their **best customers**.

Brandon Smith, @TheWPTherapist

When crafting company values - don't get too aspirational. If values aren't true reflections of existing organizational behavior today, they won't resonate with the team. With mission and vision you have more leeway to be aspirational and inspirational.

Peter Phelan, @culturedoctorny

Establish the team practice of reiterating the 'why' every time you launch a new project, make decisions, or set new goals. How can you tie it to your mission and values?
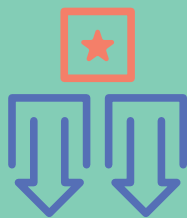
Read more: http://bit.ly/2iEJh5n

Instead of shooting in the dark with perks, offer perks based on your company values. Is one of your values continuous learning? Then, consider offering employees a professional development credit.

Read more: http://bit.ly/2iE9Ibp

SUPPORT

Prioritize developing your managers. Managers with strong leadership skills and a clear understanding of their role, priorities, mission, and company values spread their skills and knowledge to their direct reports, peers, and executives.

LifeLabs Learning, @LifeLabsNewYork

Leaders need to be chief storytellers—talking to their people in vulnerable, honest ways that resonate.

Root Inc., @therootinc

Don't skimp on details during onboarding: acronyms, company history and idiosyncrasies help new teammates feel "in."

August Public Inc., @AugustPublic

Setting up a Slack channel for introverts provides space for individuals to swap tips and feel **supported**.

August Public Inc., @AugustPublic

Organize support systems for your managers. They'll act as a sounding board for your managers to share challenges, ask questions, and gather ideas... fostering leadership development in a safe space.

Read more: http://bit.ly/2B0slaX

WELLNESS

A company that values wellness helps its employees maintain physical and mental health.
This can take the form of policies, resources, initiatives, and activities.

Employees who feel healthy and have work-life balance are more motivated and focused.
They bring a positive energy to the office. Embed wellness into your day-to-day norms with these tips.

Employees say direct managers matter more than the c-suite when it comes to well-being support.
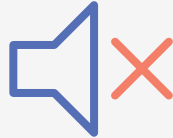Read more: http://bit.ly/2xWgKOh

Limeade, @Limeade

Physical, emotional, financial and work well-being are intertwined. Value the whole employee.
Read more: http://bit.ly/2Ai7KVg

Limeade, @Limeade

Be explicit about why well-being matters to your organization and connect well-being to company goals.
Read more: http://bit.ly/2zvAGfE

Limeade, @Limeade

Reduce noise pollution in your workplace to simultaneously reduce employee stress. Consider designating a quiet space in the office where employees can go to work silently. You can also add a white noise machine in the general office area to help drown out more distracting sounds.
Read more: http://bit.ly/2AliyWd

Justworks, @JustworksHR

Encourage your employees to take **mental health days** when they need to **de-stress**! Make it a cultural norm by having leaders model this **behavior** and highlight employees who have taken time to spend with their families or on their hobbies.

Read more: http://bit.ly/2BbXfDJ

Add some zen to the office with options for meditation. Consider covering employee subscriptions to Headspace for self-directed meditation, or host meditation or yoga classes right in the office.

Read more: http://bit.ly/2jJwtOz

COLLABORATION

A collaborative work environment encourages employees and teams to cooperate, share information, and work well together. Employees feel they can speak up, weigh in, and get involved. As such, collaboration is a measure of effective teamwork.

Encourage collaboration across your teams with these tips.

Setting up a Zoom-friendly (remote-friendly) office is a MUST!

August Public Inc., @AugustPublic

Ask yourself: are your tools and technology a source of empowerment or frustration for your people?

Paul Davies, @paul_w_davies
as heard at HCInnovation@Work Conference

Volunteer events are a great way to build a community culture within your company.

YourCause, @YourCause

Encourage employees to shadow each other or spend time working in a conference room together. By watching someone else's day-to-day, employees will have a greater understanding and appreciation of colleagues' work.

Read more: http://bit.ly/2hQFJ2U

Try "hot desking" (swapping seats at work) to break up silos, boost engagement, and promote cross-functional bonding.

Read more: http://bit.ly/2iEJh5n

WORK ENVIRONMENT

Effective office design and the appropriate resources are critical to employees' productivity. We've also found that access to the right tools and supplies reduces employee stress. No one wants to worry about finding a new notebook or fixing the printer when a deadline is approaching!

Here are some ideas to help you create a safe, comfortable office environment that's conducive to working productively.

The workplace is a petri dish for culture; help your office **accelerate** your business goals.
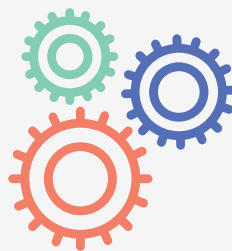
Plastarc, @PLASTARC

Walk the talk of your culture by ensuring your workplace aligns with and **reinforces** your organization's **mission** and **values**.

Plastarc, @PLASTARC

Conduct a space audit:
Do you have a nice balance of individual workspace, common spaces and designated quiet areas? Experiment by moving things around the office.

Read more:
http://bit.ly/2jLm9Wm

When it comes to work environment, default to diversity. The more diverse your office space is, the more easily you will accommodate the different work styles and preferences of employees.
Read more: http://bit.ly/2hTXQVz

Plastarc, @PLASTARC

Studies show that some contact with nature in the office can make employees happier and more productive. Add potted plants to the conference rooms or hang photos of a natural landscape around the office.

Read more: http://bit.ly/2iEaULV

PERFORMANCE FOCUS

A performance-focused culture ensures that people know how to be successful in their roles. Employees are recognized for their contributions and supported in their growth areas. Leaders help their teams set ambitious goals, are actively involved in projects, and provide regular feedback.

All of which goes to say: people are motivated to give their best when their strong performance is rewarded.
Get started with these suggestions.

Encourage personal development. Budget time and resources each year for your employees to further skills that will help them grow – both professionally and personally.

Elite SEM, @EliteSEM

Want to create a culture of learning? Consider a weekly "training moment" that highlights a different member of the team each week teaching a new skill.

Elite SEM, @EliteSEM

When expressing **gratitude** at work, consider how employees want to be recognized -- publicly? Privately? With more responsibility? -- and alter your recognition style accordingly.

Read more: http://bit.ly/2jeJVq2

When big projects launch, a benchmark is surpassed, or a goal is exceeded, send a 'props' email to the leadership team and the employees who drove the win forward.

Read more: http://bit.ly/2iEJh5n

Go beyond the standard thank you card to show employees you care. Demonstrate gratitude with an offsite company retreat and treat your employees to a fun day of team-bonding and R&R.

Read more: http://bit.ly/2zpHyLV
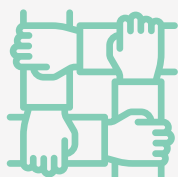
When working toward a goal, think about how your organization is holistically supporting it– are you recognizing behaviors that help accomplish it? Are your systems in line with new policies that drive toward the goal?

Read more: http://bit.ly/2zWOPSd

RESPONSIBILITY

Companies that value responsibility provide employees with the freedom to make decisions regarding their work. Doing so also encourages employees to hold themselves and others accountable for their actions.

Empower your employees by granting them responsibility and autonomy. Here are some ideas.

As a leader, look for ways to show employees you trust them. For example, ask to be taken off of email threads when your direct report has it handled.

Read more: http://on.inc.com/2hIHgV7

Simon Sinek, @simonsinek

Self-governance is leaderful rather than leaderless.

August Public Inc., @AugustPublic

FOCUS.
When it comes to making internal changes, trying to do too much often results in nothing getting done well. Choose one or two initiatives, track progress, and hold leaders accountable to the results.

Read more: http://bit.ly/2jMsnFy

Have a process for sharing what you are working on with teammates. This kind of understanding can help foster a sense of trust by debunking inaccurate perceptions that someone is slacking off or acting overly stressed for no reason

Read more: http://bit.ly/2hQFJ2U

Appoint a senior leader to be culture champion. This leader will be responsible and accountable for employee engagement, company values, career development, and overall culture.

Read more: http://bit.ly/2hTuVBj

Try sharing your calendar with your team. Not only does it allow you to schedule meetings more effectively, but it also enables greater understanding of what teammates are experiencing.

Read more: http://bit.ly/2hQFJ2U

COMMUNICATION

Communication refers to the flow of information throughout the organization, including two-way communication between leaders and employees.

Companies with strong communication have reliable communication channels that allow employees to send, receive, and understand the information needed to do their jobs well. It also provides forums to give feedback and continuall improve on working relationships and areas of development.

Boost your company's communication with these simple tips.

Encourage diversity of thought and practice active listening by repeating what you've heard your teammate say, without interpreting it. Try this by saying, "what I hear you saying is...."

Dara Blumenthal, @thisisdara

Promote an open door policy and hold yourself to it! Try quarterly skip-level 1:1s or office hours.

Read more: http://bit.ly/2iEJh5n

When collecting employee feedback, have key leaders champion the program and explain how the feedback will be used in short-term and long-term.

Brandon Smith, @TheWPTherapist

Use a suggestion box?

Close the loop on all ideas collected. House ideas that couldn't be implemented in an "idea parking lot" and explain why certain ideas are implemented over others.

Read more: http://bit.ly/2zotj9T

Incorporate the employee voice in fun, creative ways. Turn to employee surveys to prioritize potential programs, source ideas for your next team building activity, and collect questions for town hall meetings.

Read more: http://bit.ly/2B1vZH7

Look for nonverbal cues to understand how employees feel about your organization: Did people arrive on time for your all-hands? How are employees using your common spaces? Are people participating in your team activities?

Read more: http://bit.ly/2zpKRCS

When following up on employee surveys, don't feel pressure to promise a resolution for everything at once. Instead, phrase your response as "based on our learnings, here is where we'll focus" and provide an outlet to continue the conversation.

Read more: https://buff.ly/2muBqfl

INNOVATION

Innovation is the continual process of improving your current state. At innovative companies, employees are encouraged to experiment strategically and learn from potential failures — all in the name of achieving the best possible outcome.

Innovation doesn't have to happen just with large-scale concepts. Encourage innovation in the day-to-day with these suggestions.

Instead of "failures" and "mistakes" call them "learning moments." It empowers people to take ownership and innovate.

Garry Ridge, @LearningMoment

Consider introducing reverse mentoring. Assign a junior employee to mentor a senior leader to bridge the communication gap so you can innovate together.

Kavita Vora, @Jopwell

Conduct a monthly audit of your processes to identify and remove unnecessary steps causing delays in moving ideas through the company.

Read more: http://bit.ly/2zotj9T

Provide employees with the space, permission and resources to innovate. Reward employees for rapidly iterating on ideas and if (when) they "fail," coach them on how to quickly adjust their strategy and try again.

Read more: http://bit.ly/2zotj9T

Be honest about failure and incorporate it into professional development. Ask leaders to share stories of their "failures" and how they've shaped their current experiences, success, and learnings.

Read more: http://bit.ly/2jKB2s5

When it comes to innovation, it's not the absence of new ideas that holds companies back but rather the ability to push those ideas through the organization. Create a clear process to help employees move new ideas through the organization.

Read more: http://bit.ly/2zotj9T

AGILITY

Agility is the ability to quickly respond and adapt to opportunities as they arise. Employees approach work with an open mindset and remain flexible to change. They strive to learn from previous experiences and improve accordingly.

Here are some ways to make the phrase "but this is how we always do it" a thing of the past.

To communicate changes to employees, answer the 5 W's (who/what/when/where/why) as well as what it means for them.

LifeLabs Learning, @LifeLabsNewYork

When strategy changes, adjust your culture so the behaviors you want within your organization reflect the new roadmap.

Root Inc., @therootinc

To help others embrace change, craft a "change pitch" that

1. acknowledges their concerns;
2. sparks emotion;
3. creates a logical/evidence-based argument; and
4. creates a sense of urgency for why a change should happen sooner rather than later.

LifeLabs Learning, @LifeLabsNewYork

Companies that navigate change and scaling most gracefully develop their employees' question skills and feedback skills. These two 'tipping point skills' speed up learning and improve communication, collaboration, and creativity.

LifeLabs Learning, @LifeLabsNewYork

Your company's culture isn't meant to last a lifetime. It needs to be fluid and ever-changing.

Root Inc., @therootinc

Sometimes you need to slow down to speed up. Do this: Build in time to learn from your projects when they end, get to know what motivates your teammates, and if you're someone who talks often, take a breath before you speak.

Dara Blumenthal, @thisisdara

Agility is all about optimizing. Try conducting a monthly audit of your processes to identify and remove unnecessary or repetitive steps that cause delays in moving ideas through the company.

Read more: http://bit.ly/2zotj9T

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

A company culture of diversity and inclusion welcomes a range of thoughts, perspectives, and approaches from employees with a range of backgrounds. Diversity comes in all aspects of life: ethnicity, experience, gender, socio-economic standing. This variety of backgrounds directly impacts your business's innovation, agility, and problem solving abilities.

Increasingly embrace diversity and inclusion at your organization with these recommendations.

Conduct an inclusion audit of your organization, noting touch points of the employee experience that hold the greatest risks of exclusion and opportunities for inclusion (e.g., social events, meetings, performance reviews).

LifeLabs Learning, @LifeLabsNewYork

To develop an inclusive culture, identify concrete, observable behaviors of inclusion you want to see in your organization (e.g., giving credit, making sure every voice is heard during meetings). Next, set clear expectations and provide training and feedback.

LifeLabs Learning, @LifeLabsNewYork

Great leaders see diversity and inclusion as a business imperative and prioritize it from Day 1.

Kavita Vora, @Jopwell
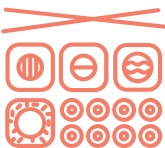
Celebrate your team's culture diversity. Host a company potluck that allows people to share their cultural experiences through the food they contribute. Whether you're asking people to bring dishes from their original or adoptive culture, food acts as a catalyst to talk about the bigger picture — celebrating diversity and unifying your team.

Read more:
http://bit.ly/2hLgoUw

Is your employee population reflective of your customer base? If not, explore how you can make it more representative.

Kavita Vora, @Jopwell

Different employees value different things. Your benefits should reflect the diversity of your team! Take the time to understand the unique needs of your current workforce and your desired workforce.

Read more: http://bit.ly/2zp4gUn

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Now it's your turn!

Share your #culturetips with @CultureIQ on
Twitter to be added to our next roundup!

Feeling Inspired?

Learn how CultureIQ can help you make culture
a competitive advantage at your company.

LET'S TALK →