



Stanford eCorner

Defining Company Culture

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Hawkins believes you have to be conscious and methodological about your company culture. The culture starts at the top and permeates to the bottom. The culture at palm is a product culture. High integrity is not just internal, but integrity with vendors, suppliers and customers. A lot of companies keep secrets, but the transparency has been very good for Palm, Hawkins points out. A good, solid culture can help a company go through hard times.



Transcript

The question was, what is the culture at Handspring? How do we go about creating it? This sounds corny but it really is true. That you ought to be conscious about your culture. You ought to be very methodical about it. And it's really important. It sounds like one of those HR things. "Oh what's our seven, you know, circles of quality?" Whatever but... . And that's not what I mean, but there is this truth. That the culture of an organization starts at the top and it infuses to the organization. It is true.

It really happens. And whatever the guys at the top and people at the top are doing, that's what the rest of the rest of the company's going to be like. And so, you ought to think about it. You ought to think about it when you pick your partners to work with. Do you have a common culture? And so on. Now, it's something that myself and the other people, Donna Dubinsky and Ed Colligan; the three of us, have been working together for a number of years now. We talk about this. We don't do anything 'goofy' about it. But we tell everyone about it. We have a culture there.

First of all it's a product culture. We are there because we are trying to do good products and everyone knows that. A lot of companies aren't like this. A lot of companies are growth or beat the competition." Or whatever, make a lot of money. Ours is a product culture and it really impacts how you go about your business. We communicate it with people. We tell them, when we hire them. When we interview them, we ask them questions about it. We filter for that. We also have a component of our culture which is very high integrity.

And integrity stands, not just internal things, but of course, with our vendors, our suppliers and our customers. And it's impossible to make everyone happy all the time. But you can try to have a high integrity with all of them. You can say, "Look, I'm going to be honest with you. I'm going to tell you the truth. I'm not going to hide it from you." And you know, you can go out of your way to communicate that. So we do that internally. In the company we tell everybody everything. Everyone knows all of our problems as much as we can do it. And we tell our vendors the same thing.

We're very honest with them. A lot of companies don't do this. A lot of companies keep a lot of secrets. But this is something that Donna really taught me. And it's been very good. And I think it helps tremendously. Again, as I said earlier, if you have the right culture then you can go through the difficult times and the good times and so on. So, those, I would say, are our product culture and a real high integrity culture. You know honesty type of thing.