

CULTURE OF LEADERSHIP

RITUALS. I like the “cult” in culture. The best companies, like Dell and Google and Southwest Airlines and Apple and Wal-Mart, have something in common with cults. They have unique rituals like 7 am team huddles or Friday afternoon pizza parties to promote team bonding. Rituals shape culture and keep it special.

CELEBRATION. John Abele, founder of the multi-billion dollar Boston Scientific, once told me over dinner that “you get what you celebrate”. Powerful idea. When you see someone living the values your culture stands for, make them a public hero. Behavior that gets rewarded is behavior that gets repeated. Catch people doing good.

CONVERSATION. Your people become what the leaders talk about; to get your vision and values into your people’s hearts, you need to be talking about that stuff constantly – at employee gatherings, at your weekly meetings, during your daily huddles and at the water cooler. You need to evangelize what you stand for constantly. In his excellent book **Winning**, Jack Welch said that he spent so much time evangelizing GE’s mission that he could call his people at three in the morning and – half asleep – they could re-state it (He never did.)

TRAINING. A mission-critical focus to build culture is employee development. If you agree that your organization’s number one resource is your people, then it only makes sense to invest significantly in developing your number one resource. Hold seminars and have leadership workshops to instill the values you seek to nurture and build a leadership culture into their hearts and minds. When your people improve, your company will improve.

STORYTELLING. Great companies have cultures where great stories are told from generation to generation. The story about how the company was founded in a basement, or the story about how a teammate went the extra mile and delivered a customer’s baby, or the story about how the organization fought back to victory from the brink of disaster. Storytelling cements a company’s most closely cherished ideals into the hearts of its people.