



## Creating a Positive Culture

By: Bruce Rector, President of The Rector Group ([www.therecorgroup.com](http://www.therecorgroup.com))  
To contact Bruce Rector, email [brector@therecorgroup.com](mailto:brector@therecorgroup.com)

It is surprising to me how few companies that I encounter proactively contemplate creating a corporate culture as a competitive advantage. Many times, corporate culture is an afterthought – if it's even thought about at all. And, in my experience, this can be the case not only at middle-market companies, but even at large, multinational firms. This might be a result of viewing operating results purely from a financial perspective without thinking about the softer issues that often can drive those results.

Why might a firm benefit from a thoughtful approach to creating a positive corporate culture?

- Your employees will be more productive. I've seen companies that have clearly positive, encouraging cultures, and the difference in employee satisfaction and productivity is remarkable. When problems arise, these companies are focused on fixing the problem, not finding a person on whom to fix the blame. Bottom line: If people feel like they are in an environment that is positive, they add more value.
- It can make it easier to identify potential leaders. By creating a strongly positive culture, a company can make it easier for leaders to emerge. They will be the ones that will feel free to suggest improvements to processes and procedures because the culture will support their stepping out and taking the risk to be proactive.
- It will make it easier to recruit and retain quality employees. Companies that garner a reputation as places that are quality places to work will do a much better job of recruiting strong employees. And a company is only as strong as the people who work there.
- It will almost certainly enhance the company's reputation in the marketplace. This sort of credibility and awareness in the marketplace can be terrifically valuable to your company.

While you may understand the value of creating an appropriate culture, management needs to recognize that building a strong, positive culture is a conscious choice on their part. Like any aspect of developing and growing a business, this doesn't just happen accidentally. Management must decide that creating the right culture is a priority, and put some thought into how they will make it happen. By putting pencil to paper and laying out a series of steps they can design and implement a strategy to make it happen – and add enormous value to their company.

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