





## INTRODUCTION

Today's business leaders exist in an era of unprecedented instability and relentless change. Accelerating product lifecycles, encroaching competitors, shifting regulations, engaging new generations of employees, mergers and acquisitions, market volatility and breakthrough technologies, are forcing leaders to discover an advantage that will drive them to a higher position in the marketplace.

Some companies try to pull ahead with innovative products, technology and concepts, but the gain is only temporary as competitors regain market share through imitation.



## IN ORDER TO PROVIDE A TRUE, SUSTAINABLE SALES LIFT,

successful leaders strengthen the only part of a company that cannot be easily replicated: **the workforce.**

This has catapulted business leaders' view of a high-performing corporate culture from an affable amenity to a strategic business imperative.

## CREATING AND SUSTAINING A CULTURE OF HIGHLY PERFORMING EMPLOYEES IS NOT A SIMPLE TASK.

Corporate cultures are comprised of ecosystems with complex, interdependent parts. Generating higher employee engagement that leads to strong support of the long-range vision and the organization's goals requires careful and strategic communication. Many leaders know they need to improve culture in order to move forward, but they simply do not know where to begin.

# I

## LEVERAGING CULTURE AS A UNIQUE, SUSTAINABLE COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

Creating a high-performance organization may not be simple, but it is essential to winning in today's competitive landscape.

The Gallup Organization found that companies that had **SUCCESSFULLY ENGAGED EMPLOYEES EXPERIENCED UP TO**

# 240% MORE

performance-related outcomes than organizations that did not. <sup>1</sup>

THE PERFORMANCE INDICATORS THEY EXAMINED INCLUDED



The Gallup research findings have been reinforced through dozens of additional studies showing a direct connection between high levels of employee engagement and superior financial performance. Engaged employees are more psychologically committed to their work and willing to put forth greater effort to help the company succeed. They are the entrepreneurial individuals who bring the best ideas, deliver exceptional customer experiences, generate innovative solutions and have a positive influence on an organization's reputation.

One of the biggest employee engagement struggles most companies face is the gap between what leaders want employees to understand about the corporate strategy and what employees actually comprehend.<sup>3</sup> According to S. Chris Edmunds, author of *The Culture Engine*, communicating clearly about strategy and goals helps leaders and employees create alignment among decisions and actions that impact the company's performance over time. He emphasizes that the only way to ensure that employees understand the strategy is to communicate it and reinforce it regularly.<sup>4</sup>

Companies that prioritize employee engagement and shaping high-performing cultures also develop strong employer brands that attract and retain the best employees. Highly talented employees want to work with other top performers, so they are drawn to companies that employ the best in the business. According to some researchers, this may be the single best predictor of overall organizational excellence.<sup>2</sup>

For many companies, the motivation to leverage their employees to create a strategic competitive advantage comes from a craving to dominate the marketplace. Here are four common situations that drive companies to initiate cultural transformation.

<sup>1</sup> Gallup (2013). *State of the American Workplace: Employee engagement insights for U.S. business leaders.*

<sup>2</sup> Daft, R. (2008). *The Leadership Experience.* Mason, OH: Thompson South-Western.

<sup>3</sup> Kochar, S. (2016). *Employee line-of-sight: Driving business performance in global corporations.* Institute for Public Relations. (Web-based lecture, Sept. 3, 2015).

<sup>4</sup> Edmunds, S. (2014). *The Culture Engine: A framework for driving results, inspiring your employees, and transforming your workplace.* Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

## II SITUATIONS THAT DRIVE TRANSFORMATION

For many companies, the motivation to leverage their employees to create a strategic competitive advantage comes from a craving to dominate the marketplace. Here are four common situations that drive companies to initiate cultural transformation.



### PREPARING FOR MARKET DOMINANCE

These companies exist in a relentlessly competitive environment. Their goals include gaining dominant market share, recruiting top talent and ensuring alignment between the internal culture and the company's consumer brand. They often have many locations spread across the nation or the world and they need to be able to inspire employees at each of them. They want to pull ahead of competitors quickly. They are ready to be an industry leader.



### INTRODUCING NEW LEADERSHIP AND A NEW DIRECTION

These companies are making major transitions like merging, restructuring or hiring a new CEO. Their goals include unifying the workforce around a common purpose, ensuring everyone understands the organization's strategic direction, and keeping employees informed. They want to limit employees' anxiety and keep everyone focused on achieving the new business goals.



### IMPLEMENTING NEW SYSTEMS OR PROCESSES

These companies are making far-reaching changes like deploying new internal systems, processes or programs. Their goals include ensuring a smooth implementation, gaining employee buy-in and creating an environment of collaboration and teamwork. They want employees to understand how their work and the new changes will help the organization achieve its goals and pull ahead of competitors.



### RECOVERING AND READY TO ACCELERATE FORWARD

These companies survived a set-back and are ready to get back in the game. Their goals include jump-starting performance and re-energizing the workforce. Their employees are usually unsure if they should invest their energy, but these companies are prepared to make it clear that they are back on the fast track and it is time for everyone to bring their A game.



## JPL'S METHOD FOR USING COMMUNICATION TO BUILD HIGH-PERFORMANCE CULTURES

At JPL, we understand what it takes to create the type of high-performance culture that gives a company a unique, sustainable competitive advantage. We understand the importance of reaching employees in a way that inspires, motivates, empowers and ignites a deep desire to win.

We have been a part of the evolution of how organizations approach internal communication. In the past, it was a one-dimensional, tactical, communications exercise focused on telling employees what you wanted them to know. Today, it is about creating engagement, an experience that involves the employee in all relevant facets of the enterprise.

Building employee morale, achieving brand integration, educating and inspiring support around new initiatives and cultivating change is achieved through communication that generates dialogue, events and experiences that create excitement and learning opportunities that empower.

To create cultures that drive companies to the next level, JPL collaborates with business leaders to develop a plan of action. Tailored to each company's specific needs, these can range from projects designed to complement existing internal communication initiatives to full-scale communication programs. JPL's methodology, while scalable and agile, typically includes these six steps.



**HIGH-PERFORMANCE CULTURES**  
do not get that way by chance.

They are built  
**STRATEGICALLY  
AND METHODICALLY**  
through well-choreographed experiences.





## JPL'S METHOD FOR USING COMMUNICATION TO BUILD HIGH-PERFORMANCE CULTURES

### 1. FORM THE CORE TEAM



The foundation of an effective internal communication and employee engagement initiative is a solid, cross-functional team of company representatives and experts committed to activating the communication plan throughout the enterprise. This "Core Team" includes individuals who are key influencers and decision-makers in positions to make change possible and to foster adoption, ownership and empowerment of the plan. In some cases, this group also includes advisors or consultants working with the company. This Core Team be heavily involved in the planning and implementation of the communication initiative to build a high-performing culture and they will carry it forward even after the engagement with JPL is complete.

### 2. UNDERSTAND



In order to develop a communication plan that generates results, it is essential to gather primary and secondary research from the Core Team and other sources in order to understand a company's business, goals, employees, corporate brand, employer brand and culture. The insights gathered in this phase become the foundation for setting measurable goals for the program and developing a strategic communication plan.

### 3. DEFINE



JPL presents the research insights and works with the Core Team and other company experts and advisors to establish performance metrics for the communication initiative to ensure the plan drives relevant business results. The insights are also used to inform JPL's work to define a strategic communication plan to align employees' attitudes and behaviors with key business goals.

### 4. CREATE



Leveraging the new communication plan, JPL creates strategic content that brings the company's message to life and ignites employees' desire to win. Depending on the goals of the initiative, components of the plan may include written or video content, design of graphics or imagery, event and experience design, and development of communication systems and learning solutions. Each component of the plan is designed to be fully integrated so that all of the elements complement one another. This integration creates consistency that leads to greater understanding and support from employees.

### 5. ACTIVATE



Working alongside the Core Team, JPL deploys the strategic communication plan into the organization. The Core Team takes a visible role as advocates for the plan, working to shape employees' attitudes and acceptance of the program. A successful culture transformation initiative must be fully fused into a company's systems and processes in order to produce credibility and engagement from the workforce. The Core Team ensures the tenets of the program are activated and upheld at every level of the organization.

### 6. EVALUATE



Results keep a company moving forward, so the strategic communication plan is monitored closely to be certain that it performs in accordance with the metrics determined. When necessary, adjustments are made to keep the plan on course.



## IV JPL'S 10 TENETS OF INTERNAL COMMUNICATION SUCCESS

JPL has helped many businesses implement strategic internal communications programs to support culture transformation initiatives. The most successful companies followed these key principles to drive the effectiveness of their internal communication programs.

- 1 Change must be driven from the top.**

One of the most powerful indicators of a successful change management effort is the active support of senior management.
- 2 Research and measurement are essential.**

Without them, it is impossible to have a clear understanding of what needs to change or how well a communication plan is working.
- 3 The plan must be strategic.**

Truly high-performance cultures take shape when there is congruence among the internal communication plan and existing tools that drive decisions within a company including the vision, values, strategic business plan, brand strategy, employee communication and the consumer brand. A new culture transformation initiative does not replace what a company already has; it runs parallel to it. This is the reason it is so critical that all elements – new and existing – complement one another.
- 4 Leaders at all levels need to be part of activating the plan.**

Supervisors are the primary source of information for most employees and the biggest factor in the success of implementing a major change. They must be engaging, effective and inspiring. They must support the strategic internal communication initiative, promote it to their teams, and integrate it into their departments' daily functions.
- 5 Meaningful experiences shape attitudes.**

And attitudes shape behavior. Successful businesses ignite support and a deep desire to win with experiences designed to reach employees on an emotional and psychological level.
- 6 Clarity is essential.**

Without it, employees are confused, unsupportive and working in the wrong direction.
- 7 Selection, onboarding and feedback are sacred.**

Creating a high-performance culture begins at selection, so everything from the job description to the interview process to ongoing formal performance appraisals and informal feedback sessions need to be perfectly aligned with the tenets of the culture a company aspires to create.
- 8 Culture is an ecosystem.**

There are many components that interact and reinforce one another including team-building, processes, communication systems and leader development.
- 9 Trust drives adoption.**

In order for change to take place, employees must feel confident trusting their leaders. Authenticity, integrity, honesty and accuracy are important in communicating to the workforce.
- 10 It must be sustainable.**

It's not a once-and-done communication exercise. A culture is constantly shifting, and successful organizations need to be able to adapt.



## CONCLUSION

Today's competitive pressures are stronger than ever, and the companies that get ahead are drawing on the power of their employees to give them a winning advantage. JPL's methodology for helping companies build high-performance cultures through strategic internal communication programs includes a research-based, data-driven approach to ensure alignment between employees' work and the company's goals. By building high-performance cultures, these companies are attracting and keeping the best employees, delivering superior customer experiences, increasing their market share and boosting revenue.



In today's business environment, it's not enough to just be an average performer.

**TO SUCCEED,  
YOU HAVE TO BE THE BEST,**  
and it takes the combined determination of a highly engaged workforce to drive a company to the top.

**WE HOPE YOU'VE  
FOUND THIS EBOOK  
TO BE VALUABLE.**

If it has, let us know. We'd love to hear your feedback. If you would like to speak with us about internal communication and employee engagement, drop us a line at [NewBiz@JPLcreative.com](mailto:NewBiz@JPLcreative.com).

### ABOUT JPL

JPL is one of the Mid-Atlantic's largest full-service, integrated, communications agencies. We provide strategic thinking and creative execution across brand, internal communications, integrated marketing and strategic content development. Founded in 1989, JPL is a member of the American Association of Advertising Agencies (4A's).

Phone: 717-558-8048

Email: [NewBiz@JPLcreative.com](mailto:NewBiz@JPLcreative.com)

[JPLcreative.com](https://www.jplcreative.com)



## Resources

Agrawal, S. (2014, Mar. 17). *How companies can attract the best college talent*. *Harvard Business Review*.

Barea, D. & Silverstone, Y. (2016). *New rules for culture change*. *Accenture Strategy*.

Blanchard, K. & Miller, M. (2014). *The Secret: What great leaders know and do*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

Burton, S. (2006). *Without trust, you have nobody: Effective employee communication for today and tomorrow*. *Public Relations Strategist*, 12(2), 32.

Caffrey, A. (2013, Nov. 21). *Three companies that “get” employer branding*. *Recruiter*.

Clinard, D. (2016, Aug. 23). *Employer brand must shape the experience of your brand*. *Universum*.

Connors, R. & Smith, T. (2011). *Change the Culture, Change the Game: The breakthrough strategy for energizing your organization and creating accountability for results*. New York: Portfolio/Penguin.

Crisp, D. and Reid, J. (2007). *The talent challenge: creating a culture to recruit, engage, and retain the best*. *Ivey Business Journal*.

Daft, R. (2008). *The Leadership Experience*. Mason, OH: Thompson South-Western.

Davis, A. (2015). *Revitalizing internal communication: How to use strategic thinking to engage employees*. *Public Relations Strategist* 21(4), 8-9

Edmunds, S. (2014). *The Culture Engine: A framework for driving results, inspiring your employees, and transforming your workplace*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

Gallup (2013). *State of the American Workplace: Employee engagement insights for U.S. business leaders*.

Garnett, J., Marlowe, J., & Pandey, S. (2008). *Penetrating the performance predicament: Communication as a mediator or moderator of organizational culture's impact on public organizational performance*. *Public Administration Review*, 68(2), 266-282.

Gylling, C. & Lindberg-Repo, K. (2006). *Investigating the links between a corporate brand and a customer brand*. *Journal of Brand Management*, 13(4/5), 257-268.

Glassdoor (2016). *The link between employee engagement and customer experience*.

Keller, S. & Price, C. (2011, June). *Organizational health: The ultimate competitive advantage*. *McKinsey Quarterly*.

Kinias, Z. (2016, Aug. 11). *A Simple Exercise Can Help Women Overcome Self-Doubt to Succeed*. *Harvard Business Review*.

Kobel, B. (2016). *Six ways to kill your brand*. *JPL Integrated Communications*.

Kochar, S. (2016). *Employee line-of-sight: Driving business performance in global corporations*. *Institute for Public Relations*. (Web-based lecture, Sept. 3, 2015).

Kurose, C. (2013). *Motivation, behavior and performance in the workplace*. The George Washington University Graduate School of Education and Human Development.

Leadercast (n.d.). *Employee engagement ideas: 7 employee engagement best practices to inspire and motivate people*.

Loehr, J. & Groppe, J. (2008). *The Corporate Athlete Advantage: The science of deepening engagement*. Orlando, FL: Human Performance Institute.

McGregor, L. (2015, Nov. 25). *How company culture shapes employee motivation*. *Harvard Business Review*.

Minchington, B. (2014, May). *2014 Employer Branding Global Trends Study Report*. *Employer Brand International*.

Nautin, T. (2014). *The aligned organization*. *The Lean Management Enterprise*. McKinsey & Company.

Reed, A. (2002). *Social identity as a useful perspective for self-concept – based consumer research*. *Psychology & Marketing*, 18(3), 235-266.

Society for Human Resource Management (2014, Nov. 21). *Branding: What is an employer brand, and how can we develop an employment branding strategy?*

Society for Human Resource Management (2016). *SHRM Customized Human Capital Benchmarking Report*.

Watkins, M. (2016, July 22). *Why changing your company culture requires more art than science*. *Inc.*

Wellins, R., Bernthal, P., & Phelps, M. (2005). *Employee Engagement: The key to realizing competitive advantage*. Pittsburgh: DDI.

Whitehurst, J. (2016, Feb. 15). *How to build a passionate company*. *Harvard Business Review*.

