

10 Must Do's for Creating and Sustaining a Strong Culture

As you navigate your way through the holiday season and prepare for a brand-new year, it's a great time to reflect on what you currently do well and what opportunities there are to improve your organizations' culture.

Here are Drive's top ten "Must Do's" for creating and sustaining a strong culture for your organization:

- 1. Focus on the Positive.** We've seen it time and time again what the power of positivity can do! In fact our [positivity pact](#) workshop is one of our favorites and can be especially helpful to those who need a little boost in employee morale. The positivity pact provides a constant reminder that negative talk (gossip, complaining and criticizing) can bring down even the best organization. It's toxic to your culture, and your bottom line, so don't let those Negative Nellies drag you down! Next time you catch yourself saying something negative try to channel your inner Dr. Seuss by creating [Seuss's Land of Fott-fa-Zee](#).
- 2. Ensure Shared Values.** Skills and competencies are important, but behaviors are often rooted in one's personal values. When we facilitate leadership retreats for clients, we help bring a team's values to life. Attendees constantly share that it was eye opening to discover how their values impact them as a person, and what is important to their teammates. If you aren't already hiring for shared values we wrote a [blog](#) earlier this year that can help you get on the road to employing team members who model behaviors that fit your values.
- 3. Give and Receive Feedback.** Some of you may or may not know, but before joining Drive I worked for Tiffany & Co. for nearly a decade and one of the most valuable things I ever learned from their leadership program was "Specific Behavior Impact" or as they called it, SBI. Since joining Drive we've taken this concept (When giving feedback be Specific, focus on the observed Behavior, and describe the Impact it had) to the next level in our coaching conversations workshop where we discuss [why it pays to address conflict](#) and how to have comfortable conversations. Most people love giving positive feedback but dread the tough stuff. If you're used to structuring your feedback and developing a strong level of trust amongst your team, the tough stuff won't feel so difficult anymore. Want to role play a difficult conversation? Our coaching calls are a great way to practice giving feedback and keeping your own emotional response in check should it not go the way you want.
- 4. Follow-Through.** Following-through builds trust and shows your commitment to getting the job done. Consider when your residents have a special request or a complaint, don't you want your employees to resolve the issue and follow up afterwards? If you find yourself nodding your head in agreement then you need to model this behavior to your employees too.

After all, they will mirror what they see. Whenever we visit an organization to conduct focus groups we always advise leaders to share the feedback from our visit. Sadly, I can't tell you how many times front-line team members have said to me, "they won't do anything with this." When we visit homes and communities we recommend very specific "quick successes" that are unique to the feedback we heard, something like, we always run out of paper towels on the night shift, or ensure everyone has a name tag badge, to show team members that they were heard and that management is following-through on the feedback they received.

5. **Care About Your Team Members.** I sat down with my boss recently to discuss my performance (Denise doesn't like it when I call her my boss but she is after all my boss!) I told her the number one reason I like coming to work is she cares about me as a person. If you want your people to care about your residents, not just checkoff tasks on a list, then you must care about your people! [Otherwise you're just creating a drama ridden high school.](#) Think about some of your own former bosses. What about them made them a "good boss" vs a "bad boss"?
- Did they care about your career development?
 - Could you bring up concerns to them?
 - How were issues handled?
 - Did you trust one another?

If you're interested in facilitating this exercise with your team, let us know and we are happy to send you the worksheet!

Please stay tuned for a second installment of "Must Do's" as we wrap up 2017 and say hello to a brand-new year of creating and sustaining a strong organizational culture. In the meantime, can you guess what else made our list? We'd love to hear what made your list. Pop me an email at Allison@cultureoutcomes.com

This article was written by team member Allison Duda.