



### **Assessing Your Nonprofit's Culture – Seven Questions To Ponder**

Have you ever taken a careful look at the culture of your nonprofit organization? Is the culture positive or negative? Do people enjoy working there, or would they rather be somewhere else? The culture of an organization impacts staff retention, client satisfaction, and the organization's overall effectiveness and success. This article provides seven elements that need to be examined, to help your organization develop and retain a positive, healthy, and thriving culture.

1. Do you respect and trust your staff? When you respect the thoughts and opinions of your staff, regardless of whether or not you agreed with them, they will feel that their input and feedback is appreciated and valued. When you trust your staff, they will feel empowered. It will give them more freedom to take risks and try new approaches and practices.
2. How do you communicate with your employees? Communication should be a dialogue, not monologue. Employees should be able to be honest, and free to express how they are feeling, in a safe environment. Meet with your employees on a regular basis. The more you take an interest in and are open with them, the more open they will be with you. They will be more likely to share issues and problems with you when they occur, versus keeping things from you.
3. How are errors and mistakes handled? If the employee has violated a policy or done something wrong, it is best to address the issue in a constructive manner. You want the employee to learn from his mistake, not repeat it. As such, state what the problem is, and give the employee a chance to explain what happened. Then, provide some concrete steps he can take in order to resolve the issue quickly and successfully, so that it doesn't happen again.
4. Do you allow for flexible hours, job sharing, or telecommuting? In today's world, there are a lot of single parents and other individuals who may have difficulty in working a standard 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. job. How flexible can you be in allowing your employees to work a modified schedule; one that takes into consideration their needs? If an individual can only work part-time, would you be willing to hire an additional employee to share that specific job? Would you be willing to entertain the idea of employees working at home versus the office?

5. Do you recognize your staff members for creative and innovative ideas, accomplishments, awards, certification/licensure and/or exemplary practices? Recognizing staff for new ideas and accomplishments demonstrates an interest in their ideas and achievements. The more employees are listened to and recognized, the more they will feel like part of the team, and the harder they will work for you.
6. Is your culture one that supports full inclusion and diversity? Today, more than ever, our workforce consists of a wide variety of people, including women, minorities, older workers, persons with disabilities, and individuals who are gay or lesbians. Is your organization committed to hiring qualified individuals, regardless of their gender, age, ethnicity, race, disability, or gender preference? Does your organization value and support full inclusion and diversity; is this evident in policies and practices? The more diverse an organization's workforce is, the more they can identify with the needs of their clients and customers.
7. Do your policies and procedures support a healthy and productive culture? Review them to ensure they are absent of any type of discrimination, that they solicit and value employee input and contributions, and that they provide flexibility in an attempt to meet the needs of their employees. Also, does your strategic plan have goals and objectives related to developing and maintaining a healthy culture? If not, you might want to develop a few, to demonstrate your commitment to having an open and productive culture.

Assessing the culture of your organization, and developing and implementing policies and procedures that support a diverse, inclusive, and healthy culture, can benefit you, your employees, your clients, and the community. By developing and maintaining a positive and productive culture, it will help you to retain staff, provide better services to your clients, and be more effective and efficient. It is truly a win-win situation for all parties involved.

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If you want to make positive changes in your professional life, and create the job or career you desire and deserve, then working with Executive & Life Coach, Sharon L. Mikrut, is the solution. Although her specialty is in partnering with nonprofit executive directors and managers to maximize their resources in a competitive environment, she is passionate about working with all individuals committed to personal and/or professional growth. Visit her website at <http://www.createitcoaching.org> or Nonprofit Professionals blog at <http://www.createitcoaching.com>, and sign up for her free monthly newsletter that provides information and resources designed to help you manage your nonprofit organization in a more effective and efficient manner. You can also visit her Empowerment blog at <http://www.createitcoaching.net>, and sign up for her free monthly life coaching newsletter.