



Building Your Startup Culture

Peter Drucker, a management consultant, famously once said, “culture eats strategy for breakfast.” He was certainly onto something regarding the importance of strategy for businesses, organizations, and startups alike! So let’s dig into this concept more and discover how it applies to building your startup successfully.

WHAT does that mean?

Effectively instilling a positive, productive, and inspiring work culture within your startup itself is possibly more important to your company's success than having and executing a perfect business strategy. Culture consists of various elements, ranging from how employees interact with each other to how they treat customers externally. These interactions include how decisions are made, how communication takes place, and how people work together. As a founder, you have incredible influence in shaping and curating your success’s ideal work culture environment.

WHY should you care?

When your startup’s internal culture is happy and energized, there is an underlying synergy that will help your company excel and overcome its challenges. The right culture will help guide decision-making processes, strengthen team efficiency, and enhance your ability to scale quickly.

HOW can you implement a great culture?

Check out the tips below and consider the follow-up key questions you should ask yourself early on. These answers should shape your actions around the ideal startup culture you wish to create.

We’ve broken down all the tips out there into three main categories:

PVP - People, Values & Practice

PEOPLE

- **1) Hire employees based on company culture fit, not only on qualifying skills.** Yes, as employers, you want to bring the best of the best to your team. However, consider how the best people might NOT be those with a long list of credentials, but rather those you enjoy working with most and who align with your values and how you like to work (see below). When hiring, consider how the diversity of thoughts, experiences, and backgrounds will ultimately benefit your team.

Ask yourself: What are the personality traits, energies, ways of working that are most important to you and you want to surround yourself with?

- **2) Assure an environment of psychological safety.** This means employees can speak up, experiment, and take risks without fear of negative consequences to their self-image, status, or career. Psychological safety exists when employees demonstrate curiosity, ask questions, raise concerns or challenges freely, experiment in tasks, roles, and more. These behaviors contribute to positive internal company culture. As a founder, you can curate an environment that encourages psychological safety.

Ask yourself: How might I encourage my employees to feel confident in taking professional risks, giving and receiving constructive feedback to advance the company?

VALUES

- **3) Be clear in your declared vision and purpose of what you are aiming to achieve.** We all seek to be a part of a cause that is greater than ourselves. As a founder, when you are clear on your purpose, you will better achieve employee engagement and simultaneously attract investors and partners around you to be a part of the process.

Ask yourself: How does your startup help people or create a needed change in the world?

- **4) Declare your core values and fundamental principles as a guiding compass.** Core values manifest themselves as the behaviors that your team exhibits. Like trust, these are the non-negotiables. They should be actionable and resonate with the company but do not always need to be made public. Fundamental principles are truths about your business that must be incorporated into how your business operates. These principles might be things like being customer service oriented or data-driven.

Ask yourself: Identify 2-3 core values that are non-negotiable for your team and name one fundamental principle that will guide your team’s work.

PRACTICE

- **5) Implement rituals, company traditions, and habits that draw people together through everyday practices.** Ways of working *and* enjoying work can significantly impact how people perform and effectively collaborate. There are many ways of establishing work practices that shape the company’s culture. Some examples might include daily check-ins, the use of project management tools, a standard mode of communication (i.e., Slack or Gchat), regular happy hours for fun, celebrations for milestones achieved, and more. These various practices both influence and shape the internal and external team dynamics and behaviors.

Ask yourself: What typical behaviors and habits do you want to instill among your team? Consider practices that will enhance employee engagement, satisfaction, and collaboration.

- **6) Establish a work style and processes that are fit for purpose.** This practice is about how employees interact and work together. Consider the functionalities of the company hierarchy, as well as the reporting procedures and management structures. Consider the approach for giving and receiving feedback. You may also consider implementing agile or lean working processes depending on your startup.

Ask yourself: What ways of working will best support the startup to achieve its targets, KPIs, end goals, and mission?

The single most important takeaway from this message is remembering that people, values, and practice are the essential components for shaping your startup culture. Furthermore, consider how you can come back to the drawing board to shift, tweak, and change your company culture to suit your needs at any point in your startup's journey.

Are you seeking 1-on-1 guidance?

Contact Gali for coaching and consultation on your startup investment journey!

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