

Every Employee is a Partner in the Company Culture Garden

Gerald R. Wagner, PhD.

This is a piece in the Culture Gardening series from the Academy of Culture Ambassadors.

Each plant in a vegetable garden has a purpose in contributing to a collective bountiful harvest. The role that each play and the fruit it produces is different yet each is the part of the whole for a successful harvest. Each is like a contributing *partner* that is essential to the accomplishment of the purpose.

In order for plants to achieve their purpose there are necessary conditions. Conditions have been discussed in previous issues of Company Culture Gardens and include good soil, temperature, food, wind, and water.

Every business employee is a partner in a whole that is contributing to a purpose. As with the vegetable plants, employees need conditions to thrive and contribute to the whole. Such workplace conditions or culture practices might be these:

- To understand the Company's purpose and vision.
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- To know (and feel) the importance of their role to the Company's purpose.
- To be recognized, seen and heard (being listened to).
- To share without fear.
- To be trusted.
- To be informed of the company direction and contribute their opinions.
- To know and offer input about company policies.
- To participate in deciding upon the practices the lead to the type of culture they wish to be a part of.
- To know the company values and if they are being achieved.
- To express and share differences of opinions openly and honestly.
- To contribute rationally and openly to fixing what needs fixing.
- To know that one's behaviors will affect the behaviors of others.
- To know each other at a personal level.
- To contribute to the good of each other.
- To celebrate together.
- To know what is important for personal wellbeing and know whether or not surrounding conditions are supportive.

Whether implied or explicit the above conditions mean ultra-transparency; ultra-truthfulness; knowing the theory, concepts, and practices that support healthy human emotions and behaviors; an open system where every employee feels safe to freely contribute their opinions and ideas to be vetted; and it means diversity and fairness. They apply to individuals as well as to all employees as a group at a company.

To fulfill the above conditions in a business culture, management practices from only a few years ago won't work. Millions of workplace partners have had their business experiences influenced by bureaucratic dictators that managed using fear, control and secrecy. Many company cultures, employees and managers are left without support, their cultures a result of a vacuum versus a culture

built on intentional positive practices, processes and coaching tools, It will take time, patience, education and will but we know brains can be rewired and habits changed.

After sitting on this as a draft for a few days I went back over it. While reading the list of conditions I felt like each was pointing to “me” and what I would want. That’s even though I know they also a healthy “we” as in a group of employees. But, the lists between the two may or may not be similar.

Quoting Margaret Wheatley: “WE focused workplaces bring out the best in their employees – at every level. WE centric leaders are characterized by caring, courage and vision and to use the old expression, walk the talk. Environments that foster WE centered behaviors encourage diversity of thought and expression of feeling. They encourage risk-taking and tolerate “failure.” WE cultures support sharing and discourage territoriality. They are dedicated to fairness and the achievement of the full potential within everyone. Confidence, passion and satisfaction are the common emotions found in a WE centered workplace.”

What Margaret expresses is right on target. The point I wish to make is that for an individual to *authentically* be a part of a “we” workplace culture their “me” conditions need to aligned with the company’s “we” conditions. An interesting use for both would be during interviews of prospective employees. The prospect presents their workplace conditions to thrive and the company presents theirs. Together they decide is there seems to be a close enough match.