

Good morning everybody. Dennis Engelbrecht with The Family Business Institute, Digging Deeper.

So, as mentioned in my last blog, I had the real pleasure of witnessing some great cultures this spring and trying to capture, what it is about that culture and how they came to be and how they sustain themselves. So today I want to talk about a characteristic that I saw in the great cultures that I witnessed this spring. And each of these companies had, outside of their top leader, somebody or some people who were sort of the heart of the company, all right? And you know, if you think about that, just look down through your organization and see who in my organization might be the heart of the company, the person that most reflects caring for the other people, always does the right thing, represents our values and our mission and all of those things. Who is it there and what is the heart of our company?

Well, in trying to identify this and see this, the first thing I noticed from these great cultures is they are very field-oriented and there's a lot of communication and care for the field people. Knowing their names, knowing their families, it's very much personal. And if you're not as connected to the field in construction, I think it's very hard for your culture to sort of have that beating heart. To me, that beating heart is the field. It is in the field in construction, that's where it happens. So, think about if you have that going on or if you don't have that going on and how you might get it going on a little bit better.

The second aspect in looking at these truly great cultures is you could see down through the organization there were multiple culture builders. People who do the right things, show the care, collaborate well, they're team-oriented, they connect with other people. And I kind of identified them as culture builders. So aside from that top leader, who obviously has to be doing the right things, there are probably a number of culture builders in your company and you can help your company develop that culture by supporting those culture builders in everything they do.

But then on the other side of this, there are also culture killers potentially among the people working for you. Who are the ones that make the day miserable for the other people that have to work with them? And maybe you don't have any of those and maybe it's not truly miserable, it's just a little unpleasant, but if you have people in your organization that are making work unpleasant for everybody else, maybe you need to eliminate them, or at the very least have some behavior modification and make sure they understand the impact they're having on other people.

As I was looking at the really great cultures, each of them, they just didn't have any culture killers in the organization. We frequently ask is there anybody on the bus who needs to be off the bus. And in these great cultures, there aren't. There isn't anybody that... People think and they go, "No, everybody seems to be a good contributor." They might have a couple of people, very new field employees or something like that that have only been there a week or two who aren't cutting it and things like that. But when I talk about culture killers, I'm talking about the people that you've probably kept for a long time, often times 15 and 20 years, but they keep dragging people down with either their attitudes or how they act and those sorts of things.

And you may remember this quote that I've used a few other times that "culture is determined by the lowest level of behavior that the leaders are willing to tolerate." Well, if you want to have a truly great culture, you cannot be tolerating low levels of behavior because that drags the great people and all the great things going on down. So, look for your culture builders, look for your culture killers, take the appropriate actions along those lines. And finally, I think also in these truly great cultures, there were a number of mid-level leaders who were great leaders by example. Again, the leaders by example, they show up, they're always looking for solutions, they're always bringing out the best in people. They're doing what they need to do, and everybody looks at them and says, "Oh yeah, I can act like that too."

It isn't always working hard, so I'm hesitating to use that, but they come in, they work smart, they get the job done, they treat people well, they take care of the customer, they help get the job done on time and they're out there doing it, and great leaders by example. And I think every great culture needs a few of those folks that people can look to sort of as the role models. And so, make sure that you've got some of those folks in. I've seen a few of these cultures that aren't as good,

and they're made up of great cogs. Everybody's doing their job, but maybe not any more than just their job. And you really need leaders who lead by example that people want to follow, and people want to be like. The heart of the company again definitely needs to be in the field, definitely want to have culture builders and get rid of the culture killers, and you want folks who can lead by example.

Again, Dennis Engelbrecht, Digging Deeper.