



FOCUSED FEATURES

GETTING AND KEEPING YOUR COMPANY'S EDGE

What *really* differentiates your company, not only from the competition, but what sets it apart from the masses in general?

Does your company offer a product or service that is in demand from consumers and businesses alike? Is your company well known for modeling great customer service, having the largest footprint in your industry, or being very committed to community stewardship? All of these things can help define your company, but “your people” are what gives your company its edge.

Keeping the edge, however, depends on decisions you make about things that impact the company's culture like igniting the passion, employee engagement and value, recognition and reward, and not settling for mediocrity. If you just felt added weight on your shoulders, know that it is appropriately placed. As the organization's leader, the process of getting and keeping your company's edge needs to start with you.



When companies find their true edge they are less likely to compromise their values, or fall prey to situations that are completely within their control. Companies that find their edge, find passion. That passion becomes ingrained in the culture. The culture drives engagement, creativity, innovation, new opportunities, happy employees and customers, healthier work environments, bottom line performance and ultimately, sets and keeps your organization apart from others.

Share Your Passion

Share *your* passion for the organization with your employees. It will give them an inside look at who you are as a person, and why it's important for the company to exist. When passion for your work becomes a shared value, enthusiasm blossoms, making everyone's journey more enjoyable and worthwhile.



Sam Walton, Founder of Wal-Mart Stores, Inc., once said “If you love your work, you will be out there every day trying to do it the best you possibly can, and pretty soon everybody around you will catch the passion from you, like a fever.” To this day, Wal-Mart still has their edge.

Drive Engagement

Many of the reasons employees feel disengaged come from the direct lack of leadership skills in the people responsible for leading them. When people are promoted to positions of leadership because they are doing a good job, they don't always possess the soft skills needed to successfully lead others.



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If you provide soft skills and leadership training, mentoring and coaching, and then challenge the leaders to teach those skills to the people they lead, everyone is able to grow their potential.

Help Employees Feel Valued

Every human being needs to feel valued. If that need is not supported, especially in the place where they spend the majority of their waking hours, they may disengage, perform at less than peak levels, and feel defeated. Help your employees feel valued by showing them *how* they can add value to the organization.

Promote Ownership

Every person on your payroll brings different *consumer* experiences to work with them day-after-day. Imagine how their ideas may improve the internal and external customer experiences. When ideas are initiated and acknowledged, ownership will follow. After all, you (or someone in your organization) thought enough of the person to hire them, compensate them, entrust them with your customers, finances, equipment and other valuable aspects of your business. Why would you not engage your most valued resource to help you make your company the most outstanding entity it can be?

Recognize and Reward for the Right Reasons

Do recognize and reward behaviors and attitudes that model the ultimate culture you want to create for the organization. Recognition can be as simple as a “thank you for helping out and staying late so we could complete that last minute order.” The reward does not have to include money, gift cards or other material items. If the recognition expresses sincere and heartfelt appreciation, the need for a “reward” become less important to the individual receiving the acknowledgement.

Do not recognize or reward tenured employees who consistently demonstrate attitudes and behaviors that undermine the company’s culture. Classifying these employees as “loyal” is no excuse to accept their attitudes and behavior. Instead, it sends a clear message to the rest of the team that poor behavior is acceptable. Do not allow these people to bring your company to its knees. Help them find another way to earn their living, elsewhere.

Challenge Yourself

- Start by clearly defining, articulating, promoting and modeling the core values and company culture.
- Include questions about soft skills (like accountability and communication) when interviewing for every position in your organization.
- Benchmark and celebrate your company’s achievements with everyone on the team.





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Finding and keeping your company's edge takes hard work, time, patience and perseverance. But, if you truly want your organization to be a LEADER, **you** need to make the decision and start the process. Defining your business as a true leader is always within the realm of possibility.

KEY NOTES:

- Getting your company's edge is driven by your people. Keeping the edge, depends on decisions you make about things that impact the company's culture like igniting the passion, employee engagement and value, recognition and reward, and not settling for mediocrity.
- Help your employees feel valued by showing them *how* they can add value to the organization.
- When ideas are initiated by employees, and acknowledged by leadership, ownership will follow.