




CULTURE CHECKLIST

12 Ways to Improve Your Company Culture



Company culture is hard to define, but it's often called the personality of an organization. Every organization develops a company culture, whether they realize it or not. That's because even if an organization does nothing, culture forms and evolves on its own. But an unguided, unstructured culture may do more harm than good, so BambooHR has created this checklist to help you shape and strengthen your culture and align it with your organization's values and goals.

CULTURE CHECKLIST

WHAT IS COMPANY CULTURE?

Company culture reflects both the written and unwritten rules of behavior that people in an organization follow. Your own company's culture is the sum of all that you and your colleagues think, say, and do as you work together.

Every company culture is different—the result of a unique combination of many factors such as the organization's mission, values, leadership, goals, obstacles, industry, and position in the marketplace.

REAPING THE BENEFITS

Why should you spend time and money on culture initiatives? Because a strong, vibrant company culture can help improve productivity, innovation, employee engagement, retention, and a host of other benefits. So let's get started!

Culture Checklist

The following 12 steps can help you repair a broken culture, or turn a pretty good culture into a pretty great one. Don't get overwhelmed trying to do everything at once. Study the checklist and evaluate which steps most need attention in your organization. Then choose one high-priority step to focus on and add others as your time and resources allow.

1. KNOW WHERE YOU'RE GOING.

The first thing your organization needs to do is establish its values and use them to define mission, vision and values. (If you already did this some time ago, take another look to make sure they continue to be as relevant and precise as possible.)

Think of this process as laying the foundation for a stellar culture. Leaders should carefully identify what makes your organization tick and write down the values behind it. Then, they can use those values to define your organization's reason for existing (mission statement) and what your organization wants to become (vision statement). Check out these [values from leading companies](#) to help you create your own.

2. FIND PEOPLE WHO FIT.

Hire people who not only have the needed job skills but also share your organization's vision and values and will fortify it with diverse perspectives. [Here's how.](#)

Avoid the common mistake of hiring people who think alike. That might seem like an easy way to have a unified culture, but instead it limits the healthy differences in experience, background, and perspective that strengthen organizations and their culture.



3. HELP NEW EMPLOYEES FIT IN.

Does your onboarding process do enough to welcome new hires into your **company culture**? Starting a new job can feel stressful, and you'd be amazed how much simple things can do to help smooth the transition. For example, here at BambooHR, the welcome wagon rolls out before a new hire's first day in the office. "I often interview newly hired employees," said our HR director Cassie Whitlock, "and so often they mention how much it meant that the manager reached out and sent them a message or texted a picture of the team. It made them feel cared about and part of the team."

And once they begin? Cassie added, "Each week for the first five weeks, new hires come together for one hour to meet with our executive team or learn skills about crucial conversations and other topics we have identified that accelerate full participation in our company culture.

We consistently hear that our culture is one of the most compelling reasons candidates choose us compared to other employment opportunities."

Thought full onboarding practices such as these can help your new hires become confident, successful long-term employees. Here are **more great ways** to successfully onboard new employees into your company culture.

*BUILD A
CULTURE
THAT
BOOSTS
PERFOR-
MANCE*



4. SET THE RIGHT EXAMPLE.

Integrity. Empathy. Accountability. When leaders embody their culture's positive values, the good example they set trickles down to all levels of the organization. There are lots of ways for your leaders to do this, depending on the values you're cultivating. For example: the **kind of leader worth emulating**.

- To foster transparency and trust: In company meetings, leaders should be as open and honest about your challenges as they are about your successes.
- To encourage open communication between all levels of your organization: leaders should walk around your firm regularly, greeting employees, asking their opinions, and answering their questions.
- To promote teamwork: leaders should welcome collaboration in their own tasks and use rewards and recognition to shine a spotlight on outstanding team efforts throughout the organization.

Through examples like these, wise leaders magnify their positive influence on company culture by being the **kind of leader worth emulating**.

5. INTEGRATE YOUR VALUES INTO EVERYDAY ACTIVITIES.

Your culture should be the showplace where your values come to life and prove their worth. As BambooHR CEO Ben Peterson [said](#), “The values you define for your organization will mean nothing if you don’t intertwine them into everyday work.” Ways to integrate your values can be found almost everywhere in your organization. For instance, use your values to guide performance management and help [underperforming employees improve](#). Also, remember to stress the importance of your values during company meetings. Reinforcing values strengthens a healthy culture, which further reinforces values—a virtuous cycle. Here are more ways to help everyone in your organization [live your values every day](#).

6. GIVE REWARDS AND RECOGNITION.

Sure, everyone likes a cash bonus for a job well done, but fostering a culture of employee recognition doesn’t have to break the bank. In fact, BambooHR research revealed that some of the most meaningful and effective recognition costs nothing. For example, we found a sincere, in-person thank you from the boss was the most preferred way of receiving recognition. And, surprisingly, nearly one-third of employees said they’d rather be recognized in a company-wide email than receive a bonus! If you’d like more ideas to improve your rewards and recognition program, download the free BambooHR ebook [13 Ways to Get Rewards and Recognition Right](#).

7. KEEP UP WITH THE CHANGES.

Your organization and workforce change over time, so your company culture must change, too. Right now, for instance, baby boomers are retiring in droves as millennials with different culture expectations replace them. Prepare your culture to adapt to such changes by basing it on timeless best principles, instead of locking it into rigid best practices that often become obsolete. [This article](#) by BambooHR CEO Ben Peterson can teach you more about evolving your organization and its culture to keep up with the times.

8. PICK THE RIGHT PERKS.

When leaders are asked what's so great about their company's culture, it's easy to point to crowd-pleasing perks like free food and foosball tables. Although perks can be worthwhile signs of a healthy culture, they are not the foundation that a healthy culture is built on. As mentioned above, that foundation is your company's mission, vision, and values. Perks should be carefully chosen to reflect those principles and help create a great work environment that reinforces positive aspects of your culture.

For example, one of the BambooHR values is "Enjoy Quality of Life." It's supported by a perk we call **Paid Paid Vacation**, which is an annual stipend employees can use to pay for vacation expenses—and nothing else. "We believe employees have healthier, more meaningful lives when they have quality time spent with the people they love," said Cassie Whitlock, Director of HR at BambooHR. "We've seen employees finally go on that honeymoon they couldn't afford when they were first married, or go on a dream family trip to Disneyland which previously felt years away due to cost."

Which perks do your employees want most? [This national survey](#) has insights that can help you make wise decisions. (Spoiler alert: no ping pong tables in sight.)

*"If you create a great place to work,
great work will take place."*

— **Ben Peterson, BambooHR CEO**

9. FOSTER MORE FEEDBACK.

Your employees can benefit from a company culture that encourages more and better feedback—and so can your organization. Here are solutions to two common feedback issues:

- To help staff members progress, many organizations still primarily rely on annual performance reviews that aren't very accurate or helpful. **Performance management software** enables you to replace this often-dreaded ritual with a constant channel of communication that's more meaningful, up to date, and simpler to administer.
- Also, many organizations don't know what their employees really think of them, leaving leaders in the dark as they make decisions about culture initiatives. **Simple, anonymous surveys** can reveal what employees like and don't like so you can shape your culture in ways that increase employee satisfaction and reduce turnover.

10. MONITOR KEY METRICS.

Once you're on the right track, track your progress. First, decide which metrics are most relevant to your unique company culture. (Here are [10 suggestions](#) to get you started.) Next, monitor and measure your metrics in the best ways you can. Frequent feedback surveys may be your most versatile and valuable tool. Over time, they can expose key trends among individuals, teams, and your entire organization. Also, make sure your leaders and HR professionals know which metrics you're monitoring so they can observe what's actually happening in your workplace and report on it.

11. FIX WHAT'S BROKEN.

Despite best efforts, just about every organization will hit an occasional rocky patch on the road to a great culture. There are many possible reasons why components of company culture can become broken: growth issues, rebellious employees, inadequate training, lack of transparency, etc. Whatever the issue, the situation is generally the same: something about the company's culture isn't living up to your ideals and needs to change. Don't think of this as a failure, but an opportunity to improve. Learn from the experience. And before you make changes, be sure your employees understand why and have a chance to air their suggestions and concerns. Culture changes aren't always easy for employees or organizations, but [this article](#) can help you implement them successfully.

12. GIVE CULTURE CONSTANT ATTENTION.

Once you've followed these steps and improved your culture, you can't set it on autopilot and turn your attention elsewhere. Like tending a garden, maintaining your culture requires constant attention and care. Revisit the steps on this checklist often.

This is especially important during times of rapid growth. Here's [additional advice](#) about how to use your organization's vision, values, and culture to scale a team.

Whether your firm is a promising startup or a seasoned success, consider how every new change in your organization could affect your culture—and vice versa. Observe, evaluate, analyze, strategize, act, and repeat. Keep on improving!

Want to learn more about improving your culture? BambooHR can help!

[What is Company Culture \(and Why Is It Important?\)](#)

[Making Performance Management a Positive Part of Your Company Culture \[Ebook\]](#)

[How Your Attitude Toward Compliance Shapes Company Culture \[Ebook\]](#)

Your Culture Checklist

- Know where you're going:**
Create or review your firm's values and mission and vision statements.
 - Find people who fit.
 - Help new employees fit in.
 - Set the right example.
 - Integrate your values into everyday activities.
 - Give rewards and recognition.
 - Keep up with changes.
 - Pick the right perks.
 - Foster more feedback.
 - Monitor key metrics.
 - Fix what's broken.
 - Give culture constant attention.
- 