

Unstoppable Cultures™

**FIVE LIES ABOUT
ORGANIZATIONAL
CULTURE**

GINGER HARDAGE

LIE #1: CULTURE IS SOMEONE ELSE'S JOB

Truth: Culture is everyone's job and a requirement for leaders.

Tip: Add culture-building to your job description. Plan for it, invest in it, and track it as you would any of your other performance metrics. Don't let your Culture happen by default. Actively define Culture and, as a leader, set the tone.

LIE #2: WELL, OUR VALUES ARE ON THE WALL

Truth: Basic-level organizations post their values, but best-in-class cultures assure that reinforcement of values is part of every key employee touchpoint. Culture isn't a faucet that you can turn on and off.

Tip: All Cultures start before hiring; take the time to hire employees not only for the right skills, but those that fit the values of your organization. The other benefit of "hiring tough so you can manage easy?" Your retention rates will soar.

LIE #3: CULTURE IS FLUFFY

Truth: Culture—one that fits our organization—can drive the bottom line and business results.

Tip: To put your customer first, you must begin by putting your employees first. By assuring that employees have the level of training, support, and empowerment to "act like owners"...they will serve your Customers; who will return; and your shareholders will be served as well. Happy Employees = Happy Customer = Happy Stakeholders. (Thank you Southwest Airlines Founder Herb Kelleher for teaching this philosophy.)

LIE #4: IF I EMPOWER MY EMPLOYEES, I MIGHT LOSE CONTROL

Truth: Empowering employees, while setting the overall tone with your values, allows employees to deliver customer service based on the personality that you actually hired them for.

Tip: Consider giving your employees "Freedom in a Framework." Don't be too formulaic, or you will miss some delightful surprises from your employees.

LIE #5: WE CAN'T AFFORD CULTURE

Truth: Culture doesn't have to cost a lot to be effective.

Tip: Here are FREE activities that you can start today:

1. Boost Leadership Visibility—Just like you calendar meetings, calendar time to spend with your employees.
2. Be Inclusive with Decision-Making—Involve employees who are closest to the work. It's more difficult to criticize a decision when you helped make it.
3. Put Storytelling Front and Center—Stories and examples help employee know the unlimited boundaries of their personal empowerment.
4. Live Your Values—Nothing can turn a Culture toxic faster than leaders not walking the talk. How you act always trumps what you say.
5. Practice Recognition—Not all recognition, such as saying thank you, has to appear on the budget. Post examples (electronically or physically) of how employees have solved customers' problems.
6. Put People First—When considering a product or policy change, always put the change through the filter of the impact on employees (and see B above).
7. Create Volunteer Opportunities—Mixing up employees in new situations creates bonds and the plus is all the psychic benefits of volunteering.
8. Expand Employee Hiring—Involve current employees in hiring the next generation of employees who will protect the culture.