



# How Corporate Culture Will Change in the Face of Openness

By

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Great leaders know that they need to cultivate the skills of their workforce while simultaneously building a work environment that motivates, excites, and inspires workers. Not surprisingly, companies who are committed to developing a strong workplace culture tend to perform well.

But building this type of environment takes sustained time, effort and resources. Some organizations will adeptly catalyze the successes of employees – and others will not.

For over a century, corporations have ruled with a top-down mentality. Management experts have long encouraged businesses to set objectives and targets that map to well defined priorities and plans.

But those standards are evolving. The new benchmark of success today is not only to execute with excellence, but to do so while managing rapid change.

The rising forces of globalization and technology over the past decade have inherently changed the way we communicate, exchange information and work. Working in today's economy means operating in a 24/7 digital environment, across various time zones and cultures across the globe.

IBM's (IBM) new survey of 1,700 Chief Executive Officers is signaling a new shift in corporate culture – one that will embrace a new spirit of openness, transparency and employee empowerment.

Taking note of the popularity of social sharing, organizations are now looking at adopting new models of working that tap into the collective intelligence of an organization's networks. To do this, CEOs are showing a growing appetite for technology - specifically social media technology - to infuse more collaboration into everyday business functions.

As CEOs ratchet up the level of openness within their organizations, they are developing collaborative environments where employees are encouraged to speak up, exercise personal initiative, connect with fellow collaborators, and innovate. But at the same time, CEOs are reinforcing the strength of their corporate characters. In order to manage the risks associated with an open workplace, an organization's values must be responsibly practiced and upheld. Employees will willingly engage as an organization's brand ambassadors if they are appropriately guided and empowered.

From both inside and out, these leaders are encouraging employees, clients and partners to connect and learn from each other. According to IBM's study, more than half of CEOs (53 percent) are planning to use technology to facilitate greater partnering and collaboration with outside organizations, while 52 percent are shifting their attention to promoting great internal collaboration.

Following are some additional strategies that CEOs hope to implement to revitalize the strength of organizations:

**Encourage flexibility in employees:** To build its next-generation workforce, organizations have to actively recruit and train employees who excel at working in open, team-based environments. At the same time, leaders must build and support practices to help employees thrive, such as encouraging the development of unconventional teams, promoting experiential learning techniques and empowering the use of high-value employee networks.

**Empower employees with values:** For CEOs, organizational openness offers tremendous upside potential – empowered employees, free-flowing ideas, more creativity and innovation, happier customers, better results. But greater openness also comes with more risk. As rigid controls loosen, organizations need a strong sense of purpose and shared beliefs to guide decision making. Employees must truly believe in the purpose, mission and values of the organization. And to develop a shared belief system, employees must help create it.

**Lead by example:** Championing collaborative innovation is not something CEOs are delegating to their HR leaders. According to the study findings, the business executives are interested in leading by example. While social media is still an uncharted frontier for many, business leaders understand the power of technology to facilitate valuable connections. Like their employees, CEOs must reinvent themselves and invest the time to build new skills and familiarize themselves with new tools.

Building a great workplace is not something that will happen overnight. However, this transformation can be achieved if an organization makes a long-term investment in its people and puts the right tools and processes in place to help them succeed.

Forward-looking business leaders understand that the new connected era is fundamentally changing how people engage with the organization and each other. These changes are putting new pressures on organizations to adapt, but also creating new opportunities to innovate and lead.

*Saul J. Berman, Ph.D. is Partner & Vice President, Global Strategy Consulting Leader & Innovation and Growth Services Leader within IBM Global Business Services.*

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