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Culture Archetypes: Achievement Culture

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Andy Friere, Co-founder and CEO of Axialent, describes the achievement culture archetype, one of the five basic cultural archetypes into which organizations fall: 1) Achievement, 2) Innovation, 3) One-team, 4) People-first or 5) Customer-focused. Specifically, Friere suggests that achievement cultures focus on measuring and awarding performance outcomes. Friere describes the behaviors, symbols and processes that build this type of culture as well as the actions that destroy it.

Transcript

A culture of accountability is one where people really talk in "I" statements all the time.. And I tell you, executive boards of very large organizations, people just keep on blaming each other.. And they just gain innocence by blaming the external world.. And they just bitch and moan all the time for the sake of gaining innocence.. So it's not my fault.. Oh yeah, it's the macro context.. Oh yeah, well, with this macro, who can forecast effectively? Oh, of course not.. So let's keep going.. This empowers the culture of achievement in an organization.. The three values that are relevant in a culture of achievement is meritocracy, my word is my bond, and truthfulness..

And the deal breaker is a CEO that is not willing to hold people to account.. I was thinking, when I was thinking this example of green, yellow and red, I'm not sure we were firing those that were really in red.. Were we? I think we weren't.. So it was like everything was set for a fantastic achievement culture, meritocracy, we were measuring everything.. But then the underperformers, we were going to them and saying, "Come on.. Keep it up, come on." And then some of them, after two months were yellow.. And then we're saying, "Yes, I don't need to fire you.. So you keep going." So the reality is, although we were measuring a lot of things, we were not--I was a CEO at that time, so I take responsibility.. But we were not getting rid of those underperformers.. And a culture of achievement is one where you just say the bottom 10 % needs to go..

I need to open the door for other people that are willing to do things more effectively.. I'm not saying you need to like that, and you need to make that your culture.. I'm just saying a culture of accountability does that.. And when you ask, why were people fired? "Oh, because they are underperformers." "Okay, so what do you need to do to stay here?" "I need to perform." Great, well that's an achievement culture.. Lack of clarity in communication and goal setting.. If you're not willing to share information, make it transparent, you cannot create a culture of accountability.. And then lack of healthy confrontation when excuses for non-performance are presented.. If you're not willing to confront the facts, the brutal facts and put things on the table and really set standards and respond to those, you're not going to create that culture...