

100 Ideas to Improve the Workplace

An HR Nerd's Guide to Creating Excellent Culture

Let's talk about 30!

Idea 1 - Culture

- Culture IS an organization's norms, values, "the way they do business," etc.
- It is ALSO (and importantly) HOW WE INTERACT AND TREAT ONE ANOTHER.
- Culture is NOT a pool table in the break room or free sparkling water and chocolate strawberries on Fridays.
- Culture IS a big boat that turns slowly.



Idea 2 - Know How You Are Doing: Measure

- **Embrace Data Fluency!!**
 - What's your Turnover Rate (don't lie)
 - Calculate your turnover cost and go to your management team. Do the math – if a program could save 10 turns at \$2500/turn.....\$25k



We started measuring turnover in 1999 (right after I had attended NACS HR!) We were at about 130%. Now we are at 61% and have been in the low-60's for the last 5 years or so....(big boat turns slow). Yes, even during Covid

Idea 3 – The Traditional Theorists Were Right!

- Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs
- Herzberg's Motivation/Hygiene Theory
- Both state that Basic Needs must be met before folks can truly be motivated. I contend that the same holds for CULTURE!!!
- Theory: Culture Begins when Basic Needs Met + Belonging Starts



Idea 4 - Pay

- It really does start with pay.
- Be competitive – you don't have to be “top” payer.
- Do your diligence – Industry & Geographic Surveys help
- Don't be caught off guard when your competition moves
- Always know what raising your rate will cost you (HR needs to speak the language of BUSINESS)



Idea 5 - # of Employees = # of Sets of Needs

- This simply means that everyone is different. That's why it takes 100 ideas instead of 3!
- Everything does not appeal to Everyone!!



Idea 6 – Hey HR Pros!! Use Personal Power Until you get Position Power

- Don't be afraid to speak to power to improve your company – especially when it comes to improving culture
- Speaking to power earns you the right to be at “the table.”



Idea 7 - Keep Your Mind Open

- Just because it didn't work 5 years ago doesn't mean it won't work today....Referral program
- Just because it worked 5 years ago doesn't mean it still works today...Paper Applications



Idea 8 – Good News: The Applicant Pendulum is Swinging Back To The Employer (woot woot)

- The worldwide pandemic is over. Do better...Put away the “fogging mirrors.”
- Get your standards back up. Don’t compromise for your customers. You’ll let them down...and your revenues will show it!



Idea 9 - Be More Agile, Not Necessarily Faster

- Faster does not win if you sacrifice quality
- Agile wins...especially in the recruiting world.
- Focus on your ATS – don't compromise quality of application for speed to apply. People who try to convince you that a name and phone number "is" an application truly make me sick!



Idea 10 - People Want to BELONG to Something Good

- I've never met a REALLY GOOD employee that didn't want to belong to something GOOD (A GOOD company)
- So – REALLY be GOOD. The BEST workplaces are where we meet people “where they are” and include them.
- How you treat your employees, your customers and your community will determine your “level” of GOOD. Brand Pride creates reputation!



Idea 11 - Assessments Will Reinforce Belonging

- It's ok to do personality assessments. People have to “fit” in order to feel that they belong. I love Big 5 Assessment Tools
- If you hire people that are not a good fit, your turnover goes up, your customers are less satisfied, and you lose reputation because your Brand Pride disappears!
- Oh, and you also lose REVENUE



Idea 12 - Soft is HARD!!

- Soft skill development is a true art form. Make sure your training at all levels has as much or more soft skill development as it has policy and procedures.
- Make sure you have the right trainer who keeps the customer as the top priority (Customers being internal and external).
- Go Deep – Train “soft power” skills such as empathy, insight and curiosity.



Idea 13 - Have a Hook or Two

- Have the COURAGE to bring Big Hairy Audacious Goals for recruiting and retention to your organization.
- Do Something Big and Different at your Company to Retain Good People. What is your “Big Thing?”
- I call it “The Hook.” What’s your hook? Don’t have one? That’s a problem....!



Idea 14 - The Deal

- There is still a psychological contract between employer and employee – and it goes both ways.
- It's okay to pay better, offer better benefits, and be creative with “perks” but you must have expectations for people. The bigger the “offer,” the more should be expected.
- The Deal must be communicated as early as pre-application!



Idea 15 - Let's Start Getting Specific – Retirement Plans Need to be “On Steroids”

- Does Anyone in the room have a Defined Benefit Plan? How many have Defined Contribution Plans?
- Do you have the nerve to try a DB?
- If you can't go DB – be generous with your DC match.
- Don't let your people retire in poverty because your Plan is bad! Educate, educate, educate!!



Idea 16 - Health Insurance

- If you want to reduce your turnover immediately, improve your health insurance “Big Time”
- The government, through the ACA, gave you permission to have crap insurance and call it “affordable.” Why would you want to do that to your people?
- Ask me about my health insurance and you’ll understand why I’ve been doing this for 27 years....



Idea 17 - Education

- Think DEEPLY about educating your workforce. We have SO MANY dedicated and hard-working people that may have a GED or graduated high school. Maybe that's all they want, or is it??
- Why not team up with higher ed to help them attain (at least part of) their degree for FREE.
 - Tuition Reimbursement Program
 - Teaming up with an “education broker” (Strategic Education is an excellent one) to pay for your employees to take classes (for free) that will transfer to accredited colleges/universities.



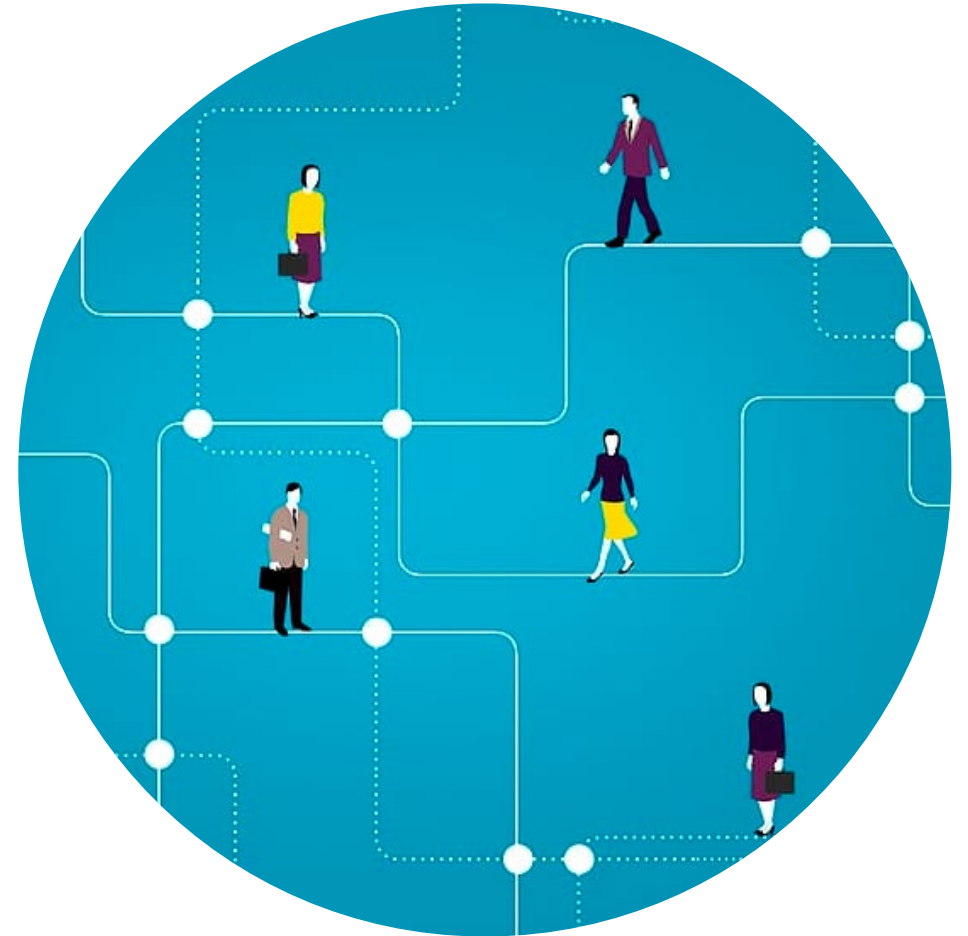
Idea 18 - Review and Critique Your Recruiting Vendors

- Recruiting must remain top of mind – and your #1 Dashboard each day
- Brokers have been a huge help to me
- Job Boards continue to be helpful BUT:
 - We must work as an industry to tell these major job boards that we are ready to pay a “Cost per Hire” fee. The heck with this “pay by the click or pay by the application start.” We can’t even track that well. They are not transparent enough for me – I think we are getting ripped off.



Idea 19 - Clear Career Paths

- Lack of Career Development Opportunities has Overtaken “Bad Boss” and “\$\$” as the biggest reason people leave an employer in many employee satisfaction/engagement polls.
- What are you doing about it?
 - Do you have internal promotions working in your HR Dept.?
 - Are internal promos mentoring new hires and career development candidates?
 - Does your social media “brag up” promotions?



Idea 20 - Story Telling

- Are you telling your employee stories????
- This is especially important when displaying career development and tenure!! Your Customers and Community LOVE seeing their favorite employees on social!!
- Get them on your social media internally and externally.
- Promote the “heck” out of your employee stories.
- This is more than “feel good” stuff – it creates CULTURE.



Idea 21 - Right Butts Right Seats

- The number one goal of HR should ALWAYS be to strive to PUT THE RIGHT PERSON IN THE RIGHT SEAT within your organization.
- Wake up every morning and tell yourself this. Put a sticky note on your computer screen – set up a computer screen saver – ANYTHING to keep this top of mind.
- Don't let influencers inside or outside of your organization allow you to take your eye off this ball!! FOCUS, FOCUS, FOCUS!!



Idea 22 - Community Embedded

- We are very good at saying “we are an integral part of the community.” Are we walking the talk?
- The most “Memorable” programs are those that customers love, and employees take pride in (engagement is not enough, Pride!)
- In the C-Store Industry “Charity Pump Programs” seem to get the biggest bang for the donation buck.



Idea 23 - Providing Access to Voluntary Benefits

- I didn't say "pay for them," although you could...
- Voluntary benefits should serve as "gap fillers" that employees can buy to get things they need that you don't offer.
- This includes Pet Insurance. The pandemic emptied pet shelters throughout the country. Many folks didn't realize the expense!! (Now, are you ready to provide "Pet Bereavement" days?)



Idea 24 - Check-Ins

- Scheduled and executed by HR – for us, 30 days of work works
- Be ready to react if there are issues
- Try to keep it to 5 minutes
- Plan and ask open-ended questions
 - How are things going so far?
 - Is your training completed?
 - Do you feel comfortable in your role?



Idea 25 - Pay Frequency

- If you do not pay your people weekly, consider it. Our store shrink went down more than double what it cost to go from every 2 weeks to weekly!
- Consider on-demand pay options. Most all employees CAN handle it. I LOVE our on-demand pay vendor.
 - This will also help with attendance. Half of employees that drive to work claim they are calling off because they have no money for gas.



Idea 26 - Food

- Free or Discounted Meal Program (if you sell food) – do you realize how hungry your people might be?
- If you don't, bring in a meal on occasion
- Work with local restaurants to do some trades if you can...
- If you can't budget a meal on occasion – how about snacks? (Donuts for me please)



Idea 27 - Swag

- Swag is the most basic inclusion program you can have! Swag makes you feel like part of the team!
- By the end of their first day of work, every new employee should have at least 2 swag items.
- If you don't have a budget, have your vendors promote a new item by paying for your employee t-shirts.



Idea 28- Keep People in the AI Equation

- I Love AI – when it is used to ENHANCE the employment experience.
- I Hate AI – when it takes the place of a person when a person should be helping you.
- When you take people out of the people business you fail.
 - Ask yourself – “Would my people (employees, customers) appreciate AI in this situation?”
 - Think about those “customer service” calls you make.



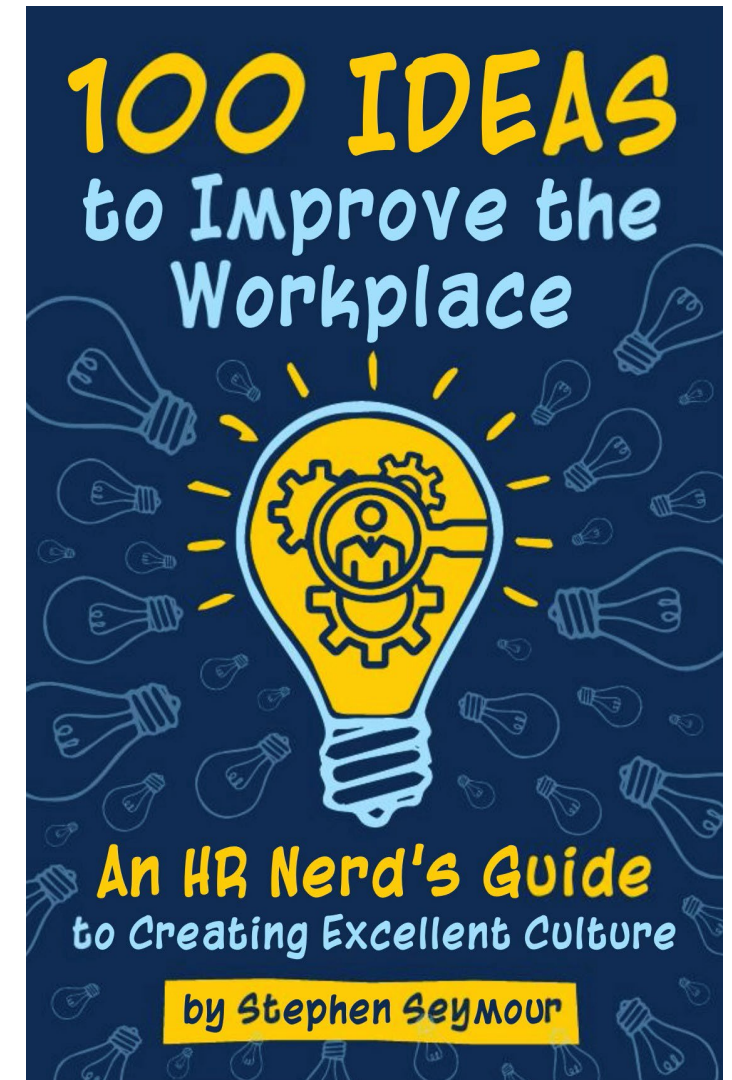
Idea 29- Servant Leadership

- Introspection Time – Take a Hard Look!
- Are you a servant leader? Success occurs when you treat your internal customers better than you expect them to treat your external customers!!
- Are you teaching your staff to be servant leaders?
- Much respect to companies whose executive teams lead by serving



Idea 30- Find 71 More in the Book

- I wrote the book to help people:
 - To help business leaders start conversations about building better work environments and cultures.
 - To help HR Professionals with ideas that can help them earn that coveted SEAT AT THE TABLE.
 - To help someone close to my heart who had a double lung transplant – all proceeds go to his bills (\$2.5 million at retail)



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