

HOW TO BUILD A ROCK SOLID AWESOME CULTURE



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Your company culture is a reflection of the values you live out as a company – not just the ones you aspire to – or what’s written in your mission statement. Culture shows what you’re made of as a company – and is a reflection of you as the business owner.

And yes, culture is measurable. If it’s good or if it’s bad – it will affect your bottom line.

So what’s the recipe for building a rock solid awesome company culture?

Let’s dig in and find out by reviewing some of the ingredients shared by three of our

Onward Nation guests who put culture first everyday:

- Marissa Levin, CEO of Successful Culture International
- Richard Sheridan, CEO and Chief Storyteller of Menlo Innovations
- Justin Copie, CEO of Innovative Solutions

We’ll look at a few of the obstacles that all business owners and their teams face as they work on culture. And we’ll find out if experiencing joy in the workplace is too lofty a goal – or actually – right on target.



Culture Starts with Leaders

Culture is reflected throughout your entire business but it starts with you. How you manage yourself and your leadership style matters.

Let's take a lesson from Marissa and use the old adage about the airplane oxygen mask. You as the business owner need to get that oxygen mask on yourself before you try to fix anyone else's attitude.

Marissa uses the oxygen mask analogy in describing her own convictions about self-care. She knows she can be of the most value to others within her team – or when working with a client's team around the challenges in their organization – when she's at her best physically, emotionally, and spiritually. So heading to the gym and spending time in meditation every morning is non-negotiable for Marissa.

"I focus on starting my day that way and then once I've done that, then I'm able to launch into my day, putting myself in a place where I can serve others. I have also gotten good at saying no and putting boundaries in place, making sure that everything that I say yes to is aligned with my greater purpose, my greater intention, and the way I want to show up."

If you as the business owner are chronically frazzled, at your wit's end, and emotionally drained, it's going to negatively affect your company's culture.

So as much as you might think it's selfish, or you don't have the time, self-care is a make-or-break proposition when it comes to building a rock solid awesome culture for your business.



Leadership Over Being "Boss"

Another ingredient to culture is how you approach managing your team. Tackling an issue “like a boss” may make for a fun Internet meme, but it’s a lousy way to lead and mentor your team.

That’s what Richard Sheridan wants you to understand. Leadership is about influence – not hierarchical authority.

The best leaders use influence rather than hierarchical authority to work with their team. A “my way or the highway” attitude will cripple to your culture.

Investing in – and teaching your leaders to use influence rather than hierarchical authority – provides a bedrock for culture:

- It creates a more agile business where your team knows they can try things without getting in trouble
- You can construct and deconstruct leadership models based on current needs
- Your people will see it’s not about titles or new business cards – it’s about moving the business forward

Being a “boss” is just a power trip. But being a teacher – and being teachable – goes a long way in becoming a business owner who develops leaders.



The Case for Fear and Conflict

Fear and conflict would seem like things you'd want to avoid. But avoidance is not the answer. A rock solid awesome culture understands that conflict is an inevitable aspect of people interacting with people.

The question is: How do you manage fear and conflict?

Don't avoid them. Face them and work through them.

Facing Fear

Justin Copie knows that to be successful in life — and as a business owner — confronting fear and the pain that goes along with it is a necessary skill.

“Fear is something you have to work through over time. And fear is something that as you go through life. It is very similar to how you would work out a muscle in the gym. You're going to have days where you push it a little too hard. Those are the days when you need to back off a little bit. But if you're not feeling it at the end of the day, you're probably not pushing it hard enough. And I've really taken that approach to a lot of the things, that I consider bold moves forward for our business and I plan to continue to do so as we found success through that process.”

So face those fears.

Lean into those fears and work them like a muscle group.

Being in business means managing risk, so finding ways to face fears together as a team is essential.



Facing Conflict

How can conflict be good for culture?

Unfettered and festering conflict is not good.

It is like a cancer growing inside your business.

Marissa Levin shared her thoughts on managing conflict, saying:

“Conflict is not something that we should try to avoid. It's something that we should truly embrace. Recognizing that challenges in our path are not obstacles. They actually are our path. We need to have the mental fortitude and strength to be able to know that you can move around them and you can learn from them and get stronger from them.”

Having a rock solid awesome culture means finding ways down the path of conflict and to solutions that put your people first.



Creating Joy in the Workplace

Is experiencing joy in the workplace too high a bar? Not according to Richard Sheridan, who has made joy in the workplace his life's mission.

Richard is the author of the bestselling book, "Joy Inc. How We Built a Workplace People Love." His company, Menlo Innovations, was founded with the purpose of bringing joy to the world through software, and to teach others how to create a better, more meaningful life at work.

Menlo remarkably opens their workplace and their processes to tours, workshops, and forums in full transparency.

Nothing they do is kept as a trade secret. It helps the people who come to learn from them and it helps Menlo keep on innovating.

Richard shared with Onward Nation, "The first place joy should be thought about is in regards to who we serve and delight. If we organize ourselves around that fundamental principle, it's amazing how much other stuff just falls away as less. If our entire team comes in in the morning and asks, 'Who do we serve?' that just makes everything fall into place."

That should be the big takeaway here...

1. Serve your clients.
2. Serve your employees.
3. Find specific tactics that work for your business, starting with taking good care of yourself – getting that oxygen mask on.
4. And a rock solid awesome culture is not optional in the long run. Aligning your actions and results with a people-first mindset is building and scaling your business onward to that next level.