

How to Win Your Team Again

Let's assume for a minute that you've been putting some of the foundational, building-block things in place to [foster and support healthy culture](#) (things like [clarifying the values](#), [making sure teammates understand them](#), [aligning recruiting and hiring strategies](#) with them, etc). You could almost kind of think of these things as a framework. You're trying to create the conditions within which healthy culture is more likely to happen.

But meaningful [change](#) isn't just a mechanical thing that happens if we publish values and align our "stuff" around them. Those things help set the stage, but we have to find ways to help our *people* align around them.

And while I don't think many of us would deny the need for that sort of stuff, and while it appears that in many organizations most managers and execs will nod and smile when asked if they'd prefer a great workplace environment; it's important that we understand that just having the framework in place won't automatically produce the things we all want to see in our respective organizations.

We can talk all we want about having an [engaged workplace](#) (or being more efficient, or having better training, or whatever), and we can even *really want* an engaged workplace (or those other things); but until we—meaning you, me, and every other manager or leader—start doing things as individual leaders to create that environment with our teams, it's not going to happen across the organization.

So I think we—myself definitely included—need to take a look at what we're doing to *win* our Team members. If we've got [bitter Team members](#), we've got to do the uncomfortable work of admitting that we may have played at least some part in that; and then we need to put that [vulnerability](#) into practice. Find out what has them feeling what they feel (whether you feel like it's fair that they feel that or not).

If we have folks that seem unhappy or that aren't jiving with the culture stuff, we've got to dig in and figure out *why* that's the case and what we can do to help them. It's easier just to shrug our shoulders and wait for them to either get miserable enough that they leave or for them to work themselves all the way through the disciplinary process. But we can't adopt that mindset. Will that stuff happen? Sure—it happens everywhere. But our goal has to be first to win them. We should take losing them personally.

The thing is—and whether it's fair or not—much of this really does fall on what's commonly referred to as "[middle management](#)." That's our branch and/or department managers. It's those managers who generally have the widest reach, given that they likely have the lion's share of the employees reporting to them. That's where the rubber meets the road. That's where much of the day-to-day interactions are going to happen. That's where much of that magic happens if we're doing it right. That's not at all to say that that's where all the responsibility lies. *Not at all*. But that *is* usually the front line.

So **we've got to step up and own culture in our respective areas**. We've got to take it personally in a sense. If we've got folks struggling in some way (like we all do), we've got to figure out how to help them. How to win trust. How to earn respect. How to work through the layers of resistance that have been formed over the months and years.

For example, say you've got people coming in late left and right and over and over again for months and months. Maybe you need to ask them why they're not excited to get to work. Ask *yourself* why they're not excited to get to work. How did they get to the point where they felt like it was OK to do that over and over again? Tardiness is just one random thing; it could be a bad attitude, sub par performance, or some other thing.

It's a big and tough responsibility, but that's what we all signed up for when we accepted positions of leadership. We don't get to just sit back and wait for change to happen on its own. We have to do what it takes to make it happen.

No team's going to ever get the culture stuff down perfectly, but we can be consistently on the right trajectory. What we can't do is let stuff snowball for days, weeks, months, and years. When that happens is when you'll see an organization that's had the same culture issues in the same spots for years. We'll all have rough patches—no doubt. But it's about what we're doing with our teams when we're in one of those patches.

It's on all of us. We've got to win them.

Read more from Matt [here](#).