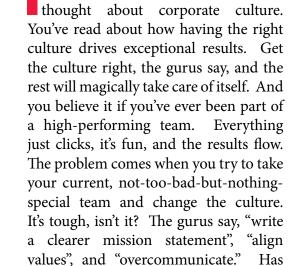


ATTENTION BUSINESS LEADERS:

YOUR COMPANY **CULTURE IS NOT** CONTROLLABLE!



f you lead a business unit—a team, a

department or a corporation—you've



Don Drews

Culture is not a controllable for a leader. but you do set the climate for your unit. Climate is an input, culture is the output.

that worked for you? I didn't think so.

Here's why: culture is a bottom-up, dayto-day, individual-by-individual thing. It's not a controllable for the leader. It is the dependent, not an independent,

Think climate, not culture.

Oh. OK. That fits my observation of the real world. But then how do I take my current team to higher performance levels? Well, culture is not a controllable for the leader, but *climate* is. You set the climate for your unit. Climate is an input. What behaviors do you recognize and reward? What's your energy level? Do your people feel you trust them? How do you model stress management and conflict resolution? How do you react to failure? (In fact, let's not call it failure. Let's call it "learning.") The leader has enormous influence over the climate in her unit. The leader sets the tone.

The leadership breakthrough ...

Here's the breakthrough: if you foster the right *climate*, you will get the right *culture*.

Several years ago, I observed a young leader surrounded by a culture of reaction and panic. Although it was a publicly traded, billion-dollar company, it was essentially a family-run business. When the founder said, "jump!"—which was often—the culturally appropriate response was, "how high?" Financial fire drills were a very common event. Most mid-level managers would dash from a meeting where they were given a costvariable. Culture is a result, not an input. cutting or profit improvement directive

business, became more collaborative. within his small area of influence. By the way, his unit also increased sales +19% and profits +46% over the prior year.

Adult-to-Adult vs. Parent-to-Child

The same idea of setting a climate in order to change a culture was embedded in a recent speech by an expert on stimulating business innovation. He adapted Transactional Analysis concepts to the workplace, saying, "If you want to spark more innovation, you have to interact with your employees as adult-to-adult, rather than parent-to-child." What a powerful idea and a clear metaphor. When you have a top-down, command-and-control, parent-to-child climate, what kind of culture usually results? Employees who, for the most part, color inside the lines and do what they're told. A new mission statement probably isn't going to change that. Re-aligned values might change that, but setting a new climate gives you the missing piece: *how* to do it.

I saw the same thing as a customer of a business that delivered great service and

and toss it at their subordinates: "Find played unusually well as a team. I was a way to cut X-thousand dollars." The intrigued, so I talked with the manager of young leader took a different path. He the unit. He explained that his predecessor would take a few moments in his office, had hired salespeople who had credit collect his thoughts and outline a plan. problems and drinking problems and Then he would inform his team of the "had to sell to eat." That created a assignment, but he would also provide disconnect with the high-income target context, guidance and an approach. Most customers for the product and with the importantly, he changed the emotional high-end marketing materials put out landscape. He created a buffer and by corporate headquarters. The new a small oasis of relative calm. Over manager made several changes to the time, the culture in his unit changed. climate of the unit, starting with hiring Decisions, and the management of the a different, more professional type of salesperson. He brought the marketing The subordinates learned how to think and selling processes into alignment instead of just do. The young leader with each other—and with the target set the climate and changed the culture customer. But he also tracked all the key performance measures, shared financial information and results freely throughout the unit, and modeled integrity and passion for the business. He had made tremendous improvements in the business results of his unit. But the more significant accomplishment was that he had set a new climate which resulted in a culture that impressed the customer. That's rare. After talking with him and hearing his story, I was not at all surprised when he was quickly promoted to a much larger role at headquarters.

The bad news, and the good news ...

Getting the culture right is critically important to achieving superior results, butcultureisnotacontrollableforbusiness leaders. However, culture is the result of climate, and leaders do set the climate for their unit. Setting a climate that produces a high performing culture is hard. It takes real leadership: Creativity. Energy. Flexibility. Principles. Perseverance. Butitworks. And it's extremely rewarding. Good luck!!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Don Drews is President and Founder of Courageous Marketing. Courageous Marketing helps established companies accelerate growth and new ventures enter the marketplace with momentum This article originally appeared as a guest blog post on 1to1media.com.

