

Heaven at work

Excellent Cultures transforms corporate culture

BY GEORGEANN H. IKUMA

While casual Fridays and Ping-Pong tables in the break room may represent an appealing company culture, they do not necessarily spell success and serenity for the business or its employees. Steve Gandara, co-founder and managing director of Excellent Cultures Inc., headquartered in McKinney, Texas, knows what it takes to transform a corporation into a thriving work environment — adopting a unified vision of the company mission.



Steve Gandara,
co-founder
and managing
director,
Excellent
Cultures Inc.

“The problem with culture is that everyone knows what it means, but it means something different to everyone,” said Gandara, who has spent more than four decades transforming leaders and corporate cultures to have relentless excellence. “When people believe different things in their heart, they behave differently and when they behave differently, their customers and colleagues feel it.”

Using scientific data to produce a measurable impact on a company’s revenue, cost savings and bottom line, Excellent Cultures employs seasoned business consultants, coaches and corporate trainers to assist businesses in achieving their desired outcomes of winning, building and sustaining the type of cultures that lead to success.

PAIN, PASSION AND PURPOSE

Companies typically reach out to Excellent Cultures with what Gandara calls “a pain or a passion.” Some companies already enjoy a good culture that they wish to make great, while others need to make critical changes to inspire employee engagement and retention.

The big pain/passion in today’s corporate climate is diversity and inclusion, he said.

“While diversity is what every company needs to be at their best, inclusion is not the way to get there. Nobody wants to be included. We want to be celebrated,” he said. “For this to take place, we need unity because diversity without unity is chaos. To win in this season of chaos, we need cultures of unity that celebrate diversity, not tolerate it. To accomplish this requires taking advantage of the Excellent Cultures superpower.

“Our superpower is the technology we’ve devel-

oped over time that unifies people in less than 60 days,” added Gandara, whose coaching strategy helps companies reach their full potential using four main benchmarks. “We work on what it means to live achieving goals, self-actualizing, valuing people and unity.”

Although Excellent Cultures boasts a vast and varied client roster from Toyota Motor North America Inc. and Microsoft Corp. to Starbucks Corp. and Amazon.com Inc., he said employees all seek the same thing — heaven at work.

“You don’t quit a job, you quit a boss,” Gandara said. “Seventy-two percent of bosses lead in a manner that creates defensive behavior, and we can help change that.”

WINNING ATTITUDE

He attributes his resilience and constant drive for excellence to his father, a Mexican American teacher and football coach turned car salesman. Growing up, he and his brothers watched their father earn the position of sales manager three times only to get replaced by a Caucasian co-worker.

“Eventually, my dad ended up becoming the first minority auto dealer that General Motors [Co.] ever recruited,” Gandara said. “If you knock us down, we don’t cry; we just get up and do it again until we win.”

COACHING THROUGH COVID-19

He has carried this same mindset throughout the ongoing pandemic. Gandara said Excellent Cultures continues to overcome the challenges of this difficult time by adapting its curriculum to a virtual model.

“Our particular culture includes a bunch of feisty entrepreneurs who can always figure out the best way to make things happen,” he said of his “diverse and talented team.”

“We were fortunate to have actually set things up using Microsoft Teams back in 2019, so our transition to virtual was relatively seamless,” he said. “We figured out how to make it work even better than in person.”

With a tidal wave of new businesses flooding Texas — according to the state’s governor — Gandara anticipates Excellent Cultures will see its biggest year yet.

“There is a real void of leadership development in this country,” said Gandara, who continues to expand and build his team with experts who know how to cultivate a company’s cultural landscape. “And we’re the ones to change that.” ■

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