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How to create – and maintain – a positive work culture

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A good working culture is the key to a positive company environment in which people can thrive and succeed in their roles.

But creating that culture is not a fait accompli, and maintaining it once you've succeeded in establishing a positive vibe can be harder still.



Workplace culture is integral to company success. **Judo Bank**

Ultimately, a lot of the effort comes down to the leaders of an organisation and the policies they instil – both in writing and by modelling accepted behaviour, which has a knock-on effect throughout the company.

“We are proud of the unique culture we have at Judo Bank, which has absolutely become a competitive advantage for our business,” says Jessica Lantieri, chief people and culture officer.

“The foundation of the Judo culture is to empower our team, at all levels, to have an owner’s mindset, and together we’re committed to living and breathing our values of trust, teamwork, accountability and performance.

“We’re focused on hiring the best talent and, in return, we want our team members to experience Judo as a ‘game-changer’ for their career, and the very best place they have ever worked.”

Judo Bank is an Australian challenger bank focused on small and medium-sized enterprise lending which offers a range of personal term deposit products to consumers.



Judo Bank seeks to empower its team by creating a positive workplace culture in which employees are rewarded via the bank’s Judo Perks benefits program. **Judo Bank**

In its 2022 report ‘Strengthening Workplace Culture: A Tool for Retaining and Empowering Employees Globally’, the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) reported that 72 per cent of global respondents rated their workplace culture as “good” or “very good”. In Australia, while that percentage was lower, at 65 per cent, an astonishing 88 per cent of workers stated that they felt safe at work.

However, that hasn't stopped people leaving their employers, with 50 per cent of Australian workers saying they had an eye on the exit door – up 5 per cent on the global figure.

What the researchers found was that a positive work culture was critical in ensuring staff feel happy in their work environment and would prefer to stay put.

“Workplace culture is the environment that you create for your employees,” says mental health consultant Kerry Howard. “It plays a powerful role in determining their satisfaction with their career, their interpersonal relationships and their career progression.

“The culture of your workplace is determined by a combination of the company's leadership and the employees' values, beliefs and attitudes, which translate into behaviours and interactions that contribute to the relational environment of your workplace. In general, these are the intrinsic rules that govern interpersonal connections in the workplace between peers.”

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The SHRM ‘Strengthening Workplace Culture’ report emphasised why a positive culture is imperative to a productive workplace, revealing that “negative workplace culture experiences can – and will – drive top talent to look elsewhere”.

“Once an organisation develops a reputation for a toxic workplace culture, recruiting and retaining talent is a challenge. Workers will punish organisations for a poor culture – by leaving.”

The report also noted that for employees unhappy at work, mustering up the energy to actually work is difficult.

“Positive workplace culture is created by an organisational focus on psychological safety and wellbeing,” Howard says. “Research defines workplace psychological safety as an environment where employees feel comfortable to voice their ideas,

willingly seek and provide honest feedback, collaborate, take risks and experiment in support of innovation, learning and continuous improvement – all elements also identified in ‘agile’ workplaces.”

Judo Bank prides itself on the thought, time and consideration it puts into its employee benefits.

“As a challenger bank, we want to attract people who, like us, detest bad bureaucracy, want to roll up their sleeves and make an impact,” Lantieri says.

“And we want to reward them for it, by supporting our people to live their best lives, inside and outside of work. Our benefits – or, as we call it, our Judo Perks – have been designed to include a suite of supportive and generous leave policies and wellbeing initiatives to help our people enjoy this balance.”

The Judo Perks program is designed to empower team members to invest in their personal health and wellbeing alongside their career aspirations. They include six weeks of annual leave each year, “big life event” leave, paid volunteer leave, a happiness allowance (an annual cash benefit for permanent team members to spend on family, community, health or personal development), and staff home loans, among other benefits.

“We know that great cultures are earned and are not a ‘set and forget,’” Lantieri says. “Our culture at Judo is something that we think about, talk about and invest in heavily.

“One way in which Judo brings to life a unique culture is through our approach to hybrid-working. Judo has curated a flexible work culture through flex@judo, a leader-led approach to hybrid-working.

“We’re all about balancing the needs of our people and our teams to best serve our customers. Flex@judo is our platform to do that, where our leaders are empowered to work with their people to determine how hybrid-working can work best at a team-level. We strive to create an inclusive environment where every team member across the business feels like they belong and are empowered to make an impact.”

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