

How to create a positive workplace culture (with examples)

Did you know that the average Australian spends around 90,000 hours of their lifetime working? So it makes sense to want to make this time as enjoyable as possible.

A great culture goes beyond enjoying the work itself – it includes how you work, your workplace relationships, your values and expectations, and whether or not your employer has invested in building a positive workplace culture.

Culture has a huge impact on your happiness at work, your [career trajectory](#) and how long you stay with a company. Learning more about [workplace culture](#) and what you consider a good cultural fit for you can help you make better career decisions. In this guide, you'll learn about the different types of culture in the workplace, spotting signs of negative culture and ways to find joy wherever you work.

- [What is workplace culture?](#)
- [Types of culture in the workplace](#)
- [Elements of workplace culture](#)
- [Good workplace culture examples](#)
- [Examples of negative workplace cultures](#)
- [Why is it important to build a positive company culture?](#)
- [Tips for creating or changing workplace culture](#)
- [How to sustain a positive work culture](#)
- [FAQs](#)

What is workplace culture?

Simply put, workplace culture is the environment and atmosphere of a workplace. It can be broad, like organisational culture, or specific to a department or team within a company. The exact workplace culture definition may look a little different depending on the industry and workplace, but generally you can view it as the behaviour and

interactions of people within an organisation.

No matter where you work, workplace culture plays a big role in productivity. In a positive workplace culture, you feel supported, respected and happy – and therefore more likely to be engaged and dedicated to what you do. There are many factors that influence workplace culture, including company values, [leadership styles](#), internal communications and employee perks and benefits.

Organisational culture vs. workplace culture

The terms ‘organisational culture’ and ‘workplace culture’ are often used interchangeably, but they are slightly different things. Organisational culture refers to the shared attitudes and beliefs of an entire company, while workplace culture refers to how those beliefs are expressed on a smaller scale within teams and departments.

For example, you might enjoy the workplace culture of your team, due to the values of your particular supervisor, but not feel aligned with the values of the overall organisational culture. Both types of cultures affect your enjoyment of work, so it’s essential to know what type of workplace culture a company promotes, to find the best fit for you.

Types of culture in the workplace

There are four main types of cultures in the workplace:

1. Clan
2. Adhocracy
3. Market
4. Hierarchy

Each of these is distinct from the others, and there might only be a single ‘right’ type that leads you to feel happy and fulfilled in your workplace. Whether you want to promote a positive culture in your existing workplace or you’re trying to find the right culture fit for you someplace new, it’s important to be able to tell these styles apart to make the right decisions.

Clan culture

You may have heard companies who say, “We’re like a family.” This is often an example of clan culture. Companies with a clan culture are promoting a close-knit work environment where they want employees to have strong interpersonal bonds and

commit to a shared vision.

Positive clan culture encourages employees to all feel equal. You should feel like you're part of a supportive team, can comfortably share your opinion or ideas, and that you're working towards a common goal. If this culture style is fostered correctly, with a balance of accountability, efficiency and opportunities for growth, it can help you enjoy the time you spend at work.

Adhocracy culture

Adhocracy emphasise flexibility and informality. At a company with an ad-hoc culture, employees make their own decisions, rather than following a centralised leader or system. This allows for more rapid change and growth, and is commonly seen in start-ups and technology companies.

For a company to thrive in an adhocracy culture, it needs to [encourage communication](#), collaboration and flexible leadership, so that employees feel nurtured and supported. If you're interviewing with or working for a company with an adhocracy culture, it's important that you're comfortable with change, experimentation and non-traditional work structures.

Market culture

Market culture is designed to drive results for a company, so it's often used in sales environments. It encourages competition and high performance, and when it's done in a positive way, celebrates wins with rewards and incentives.

For example, a positive market culture can motivate employees to achieve targets by offering bonuses, trips and other rewards. Within a market culture, it's very important that there are leaders to offer support and guidance so you can be successful while avoiding [burnout](#).

Hierarchy culture

A workplace with hierarchy culture is highly structured, with clear job titles, roles and levels within the business. The military is often used as an example of hierarchy structure, with clearly defined ranks and tasks within those ranks.

While hierarchy culture can give employees a sense of confidence in having clearly defined chains of command and progression, these workplaces can be slow to evolve or make decisions. If you're looking for a traditional workplace, with an outline of your [progression plan](#) and what you'll do each day, joining a company with a hierarchy culture may be ideal for you.

Elements of workplace culture

Regardless of what type it is, for a workplace culture to be positive, it should foster an atmosphere where employees feel valued, motivated and engaged, leading to enhanced productivity and a sense of fulfilment. Here are some factors that influence whether a company is fostering good workplace culture.

Leadership

As an employee, you want to feel trusted, supported and encouraged to openly communicate. The leaders in the company you work for should nurture this belief and value these behaviours. This might look like supervisors or [leaders checking in with their team members](#) or encouraging [giving and receiving constructive criticism](#). This is one reason why good communication is critical to a positive workplace culture.

Communication

No news is good news – unless you're in the workplace. Open communication throughout all levels of a company helps reduce gossip and toxic relationships and promotes positive culture. There should be clear lines of communication for you, as an employee, to [share your feedback](#), concerns or requests, whether that's via a single person, a team or a feedback form.

Values and beliefs

Clear company values and beliefs support good workplace culture. When these are clearly defined and consistently practised, they guide everything from high-level

decision-making to everyday interactions between employees. When you resonate with the company's values, you're more likely to feel a sense of belonging and purpose, leading to higher levels of [job satisfaction](#) and enjoyment at work.

Good workplace culture examples

Workplace culture examples often revolve around how people feel in the workplace. While the specifics of what works will be different from person to person, all examples of good workplace culture offer an environment where employees feel valued, supported and heard.

Some signs a company has built good workplace culture include:

- A feeling of togetherness or 'family' in the workplace
- Having supportive leaders who listen constructively and offer mentorship
- People work as a team, not for themselves
- There is open communication and [collaboration is encouraged](#)
- The company fosters [work-life balance](#), protecting employees against burnout and offering flexibility with working hours and remote work.
- The company promotes innovation and experimentation
- You receive recognition and appreciation, whether that's through bonus structures or a simple thank you
- Employee well-being is a priority, with perks such as wellness programmes, mental health support, gym memberships etc.

What you want to see from any company is tangible evidence that they are invested in the well-being of their employees.

Examples of negative workplace cultures

Sometimes negative workplace culture isn't easy to spot, even from the inside. Other times, it can be quite obvious, like high turnover of staff, poor employee reviews or a lot of gossip or negativity from teammates.

Signs of negative workplace culture may include:

- Companies that focus on profit only
- Companies where change is discouraged
- Authoritarian [leaders who micromanage](#)
- Unhealthy competition, where employees feel pitted against one another

rather than unified towards a common goal

- Lack of recognition or appreciation for employees
- High stress or burnout, which includes workloads that discourage team members from taking leave

If you're interviewing at a company and want to check for signs of negative workplace culture, ask about processes the business has in place for seeking feedback, managing staff burnout and recognising achievements. This can help you determine if the company prioritises employee satisfaction and well-being.

Why is it important to build a positive company culture?

Positive company culture is important in any workplace. The culture of a company speaks volumes about the business and how it's run – and how much leadership values its people. Employees who work in a place that builds a positive company culture enjoy more benefits than those who don't. It's more than just being happy at work; it's feeling empowered to express ideas and opinions, engaged in the work you do every day, and encouraged to stay at the company.

When you feel valued and happy at work, you'll be more productive and committed to helping the company achieve results. This may benefit you in return, in the form of new opportunities, promotions and pay rises.

Tips for creating or changing workplace culture

Workplace culture starts and ends with people. Yes, the people at the top of the company should nurture good workplace culture, but assuming they've done that, they need the support of their employees. As an employee, you play a big part in fostering or changing workplace culture.

1. Lead by example

If you want to help create a positive work culture, you need to have a positive attitude. If there are changes to the culture in your workplace you'd like to see, embody those values and lead by example. You don't always have to be smiling, but you should always treat your colleagues with respect, demonstrate integrity in your work, and be a 'team player'. All this will help set a positive mood in the workplace and encourage others to do the same.

2. Foster open communication

Communication is a two-way street. Even if you don't currently see open [communication in your workplace](#), it doesn't mean you can't start to practise it yourself. [Listen](#) to your colleagues, share ideas and ask for [constructive feedback](#). You can even approach your supervisor or leadership and encourage them to give you feedback, both good and bad, so you can improve.

3. Celebrate wins

Big wins don't happen every day, but you can certainly celebrate the little wins you see and hear about. Maybe a colleague handled an upset customer well or a teammate finished a difficult task – celebrate those wins. Give someone kudos for getting through a long shift. Sometimes the smallest bit of encouragement can make all the difference in someone's day.

How to sustain a positive work culture

Just as a negative work culture requires effort to change, a positive work culture needs continued support in order to remain that way. People at all levels of an organisation are responsible for sustaining a positive work culture.

At a leadership level, managers should ensure open communication, good work-life balance and adherence to company values. At the employee level, team members can help maintain a good work culture by adopting a positive mindset, staying engaged in their work, treating colleagues with respect, and giving and receiving effective feedback. It's all about having [clear communication](#) across all levels and being receptive to change – both on the employer and the employee side.

The culture of company workplaces is important for everyone, from the business

invested in growth to the employee looking for balance and happiness in their work life. As an employee, you play an important role in changing workplace culture, through embracing changes from leadership, having a positive attitude and leading by example.

We all want to be happy at work. By getting a better understanding of what is a company culture and what influences a positive workplace change, you can lead the way to attaining that goal.

FAQs

Can positive company culture lead to increased productivity?

Positive company culture has been directly linked to increased productivity. An empathetic and supportive company culture can help boost morale, improve collaboration and increase focus on tasks, in individuals and in teams as a whole.

How does positive company culture affect employee turnover rates?

A positive company culture can reduce employee turnover rates by helping staff feel valued and connected to their colleagues and workplace. This encourages employees to perform better and want to stay in roles longer, resulting in lower turnover.

What are the benefits of a positive company culture?

There are many benefits of a positive company culture, including reduced employee stress and increased feelings of belonging and happiness at work. All of these factors can help you progress in your career and feel content with the time you spend at work.

How does workplace culture affect employees?

Workplace culture greatly affects employees, influencing happiness, productivity and commitment levels. As an employee, feeling supported and connected will help you perform better, resulting in more positive relationships in the workplace and more opportunities for career progression.

Why is leadership commitment important in building a positive company culture?

Leaders set the example for the entire company, demonstrating its values and culture. You can gauge how much a company values you as an employee by seeing how engaged leaders are in your success and well-being, and how interested they are in fostering a positive company culture.

What is the difference between organisational culture vs. workplace culture

While 'organisational culture' and 'workplace culture' are sometimes used interchangeably, they are different things. 'Organisational culture' refers to the shared attitudes, values and standards across an entire company, while workplace culture refers to these values within teams or departments.