

Managing Company Culture in a Hybrid World

7 min read

HOW THE LARGEST CREATIVE STAFFING COMPANY HANDLES CULTURE & DIGITAL MARKETING

Path to
PROFIT
PODCAST

Host:
Stephen King
Podcast Host, CEO, Growthforce

Guest:
Michael Weiss
VP at Creative Circle

GrowthForce

When the pandemic hit, we went from a world of emotional connection to a world of disconnection in an instant, and as a result, the question that has been on the mind of every CEO over the last two years has been: How do you maintain your workplace culture in a hybrid world?

Key Takeaways

- **Combat Zoom Fatigue:** When working from home, the boundaries between work and home are virtually non-existent...
- **Practice Empathy:** According to Weiss, the silver lining in the pandemic was that it led to people waking up to what is really important to them, and it's important for business owners to have empathy for those things...
- **Hire for Culture and Values:** Whether hiring remote staff, hybrid workers, or in-office employees, prioritizing values and cultural fit is essential to building a high-performing workplace culture. It's even more important than finding a person with the right skillset...

GrowthForce President and CEO Stephen King asked that question of [Michael Weiss](#), the Vice President of [Creative a Circle](#), a recruiting and consulting services company that pairs digital marketing, creative staffing, managed services, and in-house studio development with a unique set of business prospecting tools to help businesses of all sizes and shapes to hire the right people for their teams. While some members of Weiss's team have returned to the physical office, others are continuing to work remotely.

As the pandemic subsides, the world is tasked with determining what the new normal, post-pandemic world is going to look like. Some businesses have decided to return to in-office work, some are sticking with the 100% remote work model, and others have adopted a hybrid approach. As we redefine the workplace, maintaining workplace culture is one of the biggest challenges businesses are facing as a result of the pandemic.

According to Weiss, the silver lining is that the pandemic has given us a degree of empathy that we simply lacked before, and that empathy can and should inform how we approach the challenge of maintaining corporate culture as we move forward.

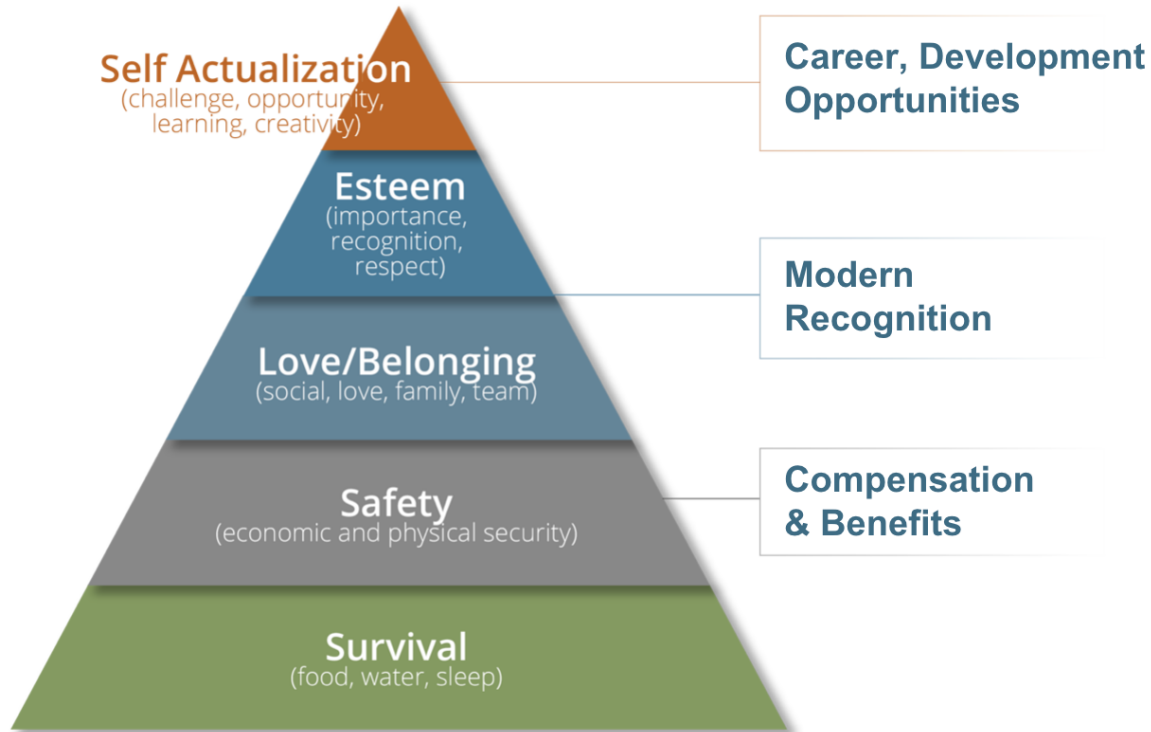
5 Ways to Improve Company Culture in a Hybrid Workplace

1. Take Care of Immediate Needs

Although it is not directly related to culture, workplace culture cannot exist or function until your employees' immediate needs are met. So, this means that when operating a remote or hybrid workplace, you need to prioritize figuring out, investing in, and organizing the tools, technology, resources, and training that your people need in order to carry out their roles and responsibilities with minimal roadblocks in their way.

As Weiss put it, "It went from a 3D world to a 2D world, and it went from a touchy-touchy-feely, emotional connection world to somewhat of a disconnection. What we did is we worked really hard at training people how to use the technology [and] how to feel comfortable in it because

you can't really start getting into culture stuff until you take care of the immediate needs."



Maslow's famous hierarchical pyramid of needs can offer a lot to business leaders when it comes to managing & motivating employees, as well as creating the type of workplace that people never want to leave. [Lower Turnover & Boost Profits By Honoring Maslow's Hierarchy Of Needs](#)

If your employees don't have the resources they need to do their jobs effectively, they will feel ineffective, morale will suffer, and there will be so much stress in your company that there won't be room to worry about corporate culture. So, in order to maintain a positive company culture in a hybrid workplace, you first need to have a fully functioning hybrid workplace. If that doesn't exist, then culture can't exist either.

2. Combat Zoom Fatigue

Remote work can quickly lead to burnout if it is not properly managed.

When meetings are held in the office, we get a five-minute travel break between our desk and the boardroom during which we might pick up a donut or a cup of coffee and chat casually with a co-worker. Working from home, this mini mental break doesn't exist. Plus, when working from home, the boundaries between work and home are virtually non-existent. If you do not actively set boundaries yourself by maintaining office hours, controlling your calendar, and managing the way you take meetings, then remote work can quickly overtake your home life and feel oppressive.

Weiss shared his [Zoom fatigue](#) tips that he uses personally, and they are primarily all about setting boundaries. First, Weiss said, "Taking control of your calendar and taking control of your time is critical."

He explained that he has started prioritizing focus time by scheduling it on his calendar so that he is unavailable for meetings, phone calls, or Zooms for at least a portion of each day.

Additionally, he has also begun re-training his employees that every call doesn't necessarily need to be a Zoom call. Since Weiss now primarily works from his home office, he said that it makes a big difference, in terms of avoiding Zoom fatigue, to put on his headphones and take a phone call outside on a walk, into the backyard, or simply into a different room in his house – as long as the call isn't going to require a screen share. If he doesn't have to be on video that day, then he doesn't go on video that day.

3. Practice Empathy

According to Weiss, the silver lining in the pandemic was that it led to people waking up to what is really important to them, and it's important for business owners to have empathy for those things. In a remote workplace, it's important to demonstrate that empathy through the corporate culture. This can translate as cutting down on travel for employees and even hiring professionals that are available for employees to talk to if they are experiencing anxiety or feeling isolated, depressed, or stressed.

Read More: [The Cost Of Your Words As A CEO](#)

Weiss said that, for Creative Circle, it also meant communicating very clearly about work options (remote and hybrid choices) while being upfront about expectations and supportive of whichever office model an employee chooses.

Providing this kind of empathic support to employees shows them that you see them as whole people – not just cogs in your corporate machine – and it demonstrates that you respect their humanity. As a result, you generate more loyalty from employees and foster a corporate culture that your people feel proud and thankful to be a part of.

4. Hire for Culture and Values

Another way to improve workplace culture is by prioritizing your company's values during the hiring process. Weiss talked a bit about how remote work benefits the hiring process, such as access to a larger talent pool and the benefit of having employees keeping office hours across multiple time zones.

Whether hiring remote staff, hybrid workers, or in-office employees, prioritizing values and cultural fit is essential to building a [high-performing workplace culture](#). It's even more important than finding a person with the right skillset. Identify the values that are important to your company (honest, creative, organized, efficient, motivated, innovative, hard-working, self-starter,

humble, empathetic, brave, etc.) and craft interview questions to help you determine where your potential hires fit in terms of the qualities your company truly values.

5. Host Happy Hours

To improve their workplace culture in a remote environment, Weiss knew that there had to be a way for people to communicate – and to communicate not about work but about anything and everything. "Work is interpersonal relationships," he said. "Work is having a connection with your peers, and not always talking about work, not always talking about the job at hand."

To help foster better communication, remote workplace relationships, and camaraderie among their employees, to improve workplace culture, Creative Circle started hosting happy hours every Friday during the pandemic. Weiss acknowledged that the "happy hour" idea wasn't exactly original because a lot of companies were doing it, but his company did it in a unique way.

Read More: [How to Build a Successful Company Culture Committee](#)

While some departments or offices would hold traditional happy hours that were just meeting up on Zoom and talking with a drink or a snack, they also hosted company-wide happy hours with hired entertainment. So, in their company of about 400 employees, they would have maybe 250 people signing into a zoom to watch a magician, listen to a stand-up comic, or enjoy some live music. Their happy hours were more like evenings out, something that everyone was missing during the lockdown. They focused on giving everyone a real break that could deliver some levity and fun to help connect their people while also combating the enormous amount of anxiety that everyone was experiencing at that time.

Can You Measure the Success of Your Corporate Culture?

From labor statistics, employee engagement, and employee retention rates to productivity and the bottom line, corporate culture affects every aspect of your business and its numbers. As a result, you can absolutely measure it.

With the right back-office tools in place designed to automate tracking the most important functions in your company, you can start tracking key performance metrics designed to help you identify the strategies that are working in favor of your workplace culture and those that are working against it to improve employee satisfaction, productivity, and the bottom line – whether you're operating with a traditional office, remote workplace, or a hybrid model.



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