Because culture originates with the Latin word culture ("to cultivate"), culture is a skill that can be nurtured and tended. Real culture resides in a company's actions, behaviors and beliefs.

Caring about culture equates to time and money savings. Twenty percent of workers have left an employer because of its culture. As it costs up to 1.5 to two times a person's salary to replace him or her, it behooves a company to invest in creating good culture. Additionally a good culture increases productivity, efficiency and morale. Stress reduction, improved teamwork and job satisfaction are more reasons to nurture a good culture.

Just like people have different personalities workplaces have different cultures. Generally they fall into four categories:

- **Adhocracy**: creative, innovative, entrepreneurial (examples: Apple, 3M)
- **Clan**: collaborative, employee empowerment/focus (example: small companies)
- **Hierarchy**: stable, standardized, lines of authority (examples: DMV, McDonald’s)
- **Market**: competitive, results oriented (examples: Verizon, Sprint)

It is unusual for a company to identify completely as one type, so hybrids of these cultures exist. The type which dominates your company is its predominate culture. Ideally the culture should encompass all four cultures to varying degrees.

Understanding culture assists in day-to-day operations such as how to get a project approved, whether or not to approach someone directly or through a superior, be able to address customer issues, etc. To navigate each type of culture, try the following:

- **Adhocracy**: Be prepared for change and keep up on the latest developments. Illustrate how your job/project supports innovation.

- **Clan**: Get to know your co-workers. Demonstrate how your job/project assists others in the company or contributes to the company’s well-being.
From Lake Placid to Roaring Rapids: Tips on Negotiating Workplace Culture

- **Hierarchy:** Know the rules and procedures! Tie in how your job/project affects the company’s stability, products, predictability and efficiency.

- **Market:** Know your competition and how your company compares. Show how job/project affects company’s goals or betters its competitive position.

Outcomes of building a culture include employees know how management wants them to respond to any situation, they believe the expected response is the right one and they know they will be rewarded for demonstrating the company’s values.

Successful workplaces eat culture for breakfast and lunch!

For questions regarding workplace culture, please contact Michelle L. Wing or Julie Smith Maekask. Ms. Wing is the director of human resources at Eastman & Smith with degrees in organizational development. Ms. Maekask is Eastman & Smith’s law librarian, holding degrees in business and library science.

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