

# CULTURE

## *Maintaining Culture in a Virtual World*



### A conversation with the Columbus Chamber

Think back to the time pre-mid-March, 2020 when corporate recruiters and savvy office managers looked for ways to stand out to job seekers, adding perks that some would argue demonstrate a corporation's culture. With the outbreak of COVID-19 and the move to many employees working remotely, gone are the days of ping pong tables in the staff lounge, unlimited free snacks and pizza Fridays. Many businesses are now asking themselves: "What is our culture? How do we define it for ourselves and our teammates? How do we keep culture alive virtually?"

As we acknowledge the great loss of spontaneous interactions that happen when we all meet together face to face, we seek out ways to replicate or replace them in a virtual space. We must now pivot and be purposeful and intentional in finding ways to create opportunities to coach and brainstorm with our teams. We seek new ways to have those "just popped in to sit down for a second" conversations or those "waiting in line for a turn at the coffee maker" discussions.

Let's start with a few basics. We can all agree that every company has a culture (intended or accidental), whether they know it or not. If a simple definition of culture is a set of shared beliefs, values and PRACTICES; what does your company believe, value and practice? Your culture was already in place before the disruption sent many to working remotely.

#### KEY POINTS

**DEFINING YOUR HOW AND WHY AS AN EMPLOYER**

**CREATING A CHANNEL FOR CONSISTENT ENGAGEMENT**

**EXPANDING THE INTERVIEW PROCESS**

**COLUMBUS**  
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# Who are you and what is your purpose?

It has always been critical to be strategic in how we operate and how we articulate the organization's "how" and "why" to our employees, and even more so in a virtual world. There is little room for error and we must be clear in all communication and deliberate in process.

According to a recent study by HR Consulting firm Mercer, half of the employees canvassed want to work for a company that offers responsible rewards, with nearly 40% seeking opportunities with businesses who place value on social equity and environmental protection.

From Steve Guyer, a partner at Mercer: "A lot of individuals are looking at the company itself and...the decisions of that organization, and whether they really believe in what the company does. The attraction is not just about comp and benefits anymore—although they are still important. It's more of making that personal value connection."

Job seekers/employees are more likely to evaluate a position and offer based on the observable decisions and stances a company makes than in previous years. Does your client-facing marketing and outreach reflect these decisions and are the decisions in line with your stated vision, mission and values?

In a recent conversation with **Rachel Friedman Founder & CEO of TenFold**, "Job seekers are really looking for a way to peek behind the curtain and see what the organization is really about, what they value. They are looking for a clear articulation of impact. Leadership sets vision, mission and values. Culture is how you live."

Living in a world of incredible disruption and uncertainty has certainly taken a toll on everyone. Employers and employees alike are looking for ways to define, acknowledge and retain a quickly evolving culture. Friedman and her team sit down with Mikaela Hunt for a deeper dive on how companies can create and support their teams during these unprecedented times. [Click here to listen.](#)



## CONTACT YOUR COLUMBUS CHAMBER

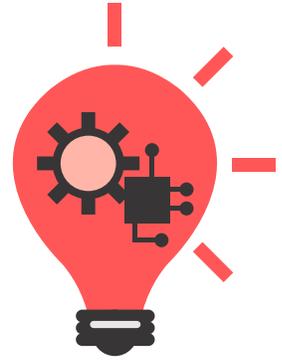
Are you a Chamber member looking for guidance and direction on your workforce strategy? You can schedule a meeting with Workforce Development Director Kelly Fuller to discuss the best ways to attract and retain talent in today's workforce, as well as ways to build a strong company culture.

[KellyFuller@Columbus.org](mailto:KellyFuller@Columbus.org) | (614) 225-6084



# How are you developing your team?

Today's employee is not just looking to jump ship for a pay bump. Growth and future advancement within the organization are highly valued, and often the reason to stay with the company. Recruiters can begin by communicating how the company values investing in their employees as early as the first interview.



In fact, clearly stated and authentic examples of how other staffers have moved within the organization should be openly shared and used as a recruitment tool. Research tells us that as many as 30% of new hires leave within the first 90 days of employment. Engagement early in the hiring process, and sustained throughout, leads to improved retention.

Market research tells us that the worker of today looks different than counterparts in the past. Job seekers today focus on purpose vs. pension; need great colleagues vs. good bosses; define tenure as "whatever" vs. lifetime careers.

**Jennifer Robinson, Director of Human Resources and Customer Service for Franklin County Public Health shares:** "We're being asked more about professional development opportunities from candidates and employees. The benefits of tuition reimbursement, flexible schedules, and benefits for attaining certifications or other training opportunities (and always affordable health insurance) are some of the things asked frequently. With unemployment as high as it is, people are interested in a long term, stable employment with internal development."

As we continue this discussion in the coming weeks, we will explore ways companies can provide quality training through online platforms. The Columbus Chamber will be offering our successful Elevate Cbus in a virtual format and we are excited to continue this personal development opportunity with our next cohort in the fall, [registration is still open for those interested in uplifting a member of your team.](#) We will also explore funding opportunities for businesses to upskill their workforce.

**Tom Harris, CEO HMB:** "All of our employees are encouraged to embrace our culture. We are proud of our company culture and feel it is a major selling point to encourage candidates to consider HMB. Our number one preferred method of recruiting is referrals. In order to have a successful referral program, our team members have to feel comfortable enough to refer their friends, family, co-workers, acquaintances, etc. In addition, the success of our employee growth, corporate/community volunteer, and fun/social initiatives are entirely dependent on employee organized committees; such as, HMB University (HMBU), HMB Connect, HMB Cares, and Helping to Make our Communities Better. Not only do our team members plan and participate, they also share their experience with co-workers and others within the community via social media and word of mouth. "

# But really...who are you?

It is often helpful in recruiting new talent or promoting an incumbent worker to ask them if they would like to connect with and ask questions of someone who is not part of the interview/selection process. Even though HR should be able to clearly articulate beliefs, values and practices; the conversation between candidate and someone else on your team can provide insight and assurance to the job seeker.

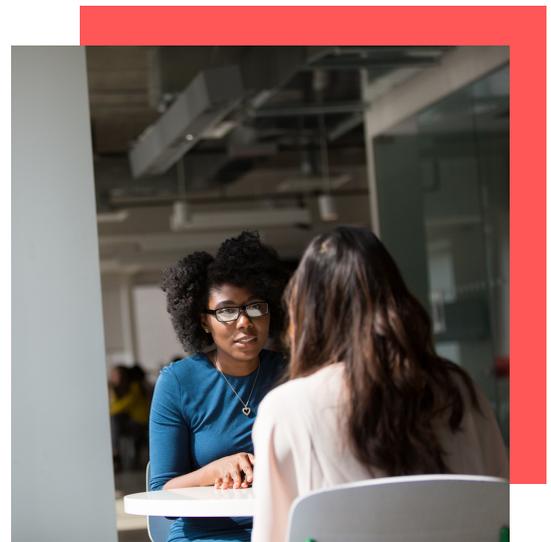
This practice can also aid in getting the right person in the right spot. Meet ups via ZOOM, Microsoft Teams, or the virtual platform of your choice can be facilitated and encouraged as part of the virtual interview process.

**From Darci Congrove, Managing Partner GBQ:** “Entry-level candidates from campus have two interviews – one at school and then the group is narrowed down for a full-day office visit. During the office visit, they have structured interviews with managers, but also participate in several discussion roundtables with people ranging from partners to peers.

GBQ candidates at all levels meet a series of people, including peer-level, in order to determine fit from both sides. We generally have at least two separate days for interaction before making offers to experienced hires. We then gather everyone who has met the candidate to discuss cultural fit. This is a key part of the decision to hire.”

**Ami Williams, Vice President New Visions Group:**

“We have very open conversations on the company culture and importance of communication in a virtual office setting. We actively test soft skills in this area during the interview process, such as follow-up time, use of multiple forms of communication and communication with differing team members. More often than not we actually use the intern program to vet fit with our culture when looking to hire a long term/permanent employee. Our last three hires have matriculated through the program. We have used video calling to further build our virtual culture through more casual remote lunch discussions and informal social events.”



As we all move through this challenging new landscape, remind your team to protect themselves and loved ones not just physically, but also mentally and psychologically. As an organization, you’re going to be in a much healthier position if you take your emotional wellness culture seriously and uphold a culture of respect. Look out for more resources from the Chamber on this topic soon.