

Memorial Business Journal

THE WEEKLY RESOURCE FOR PROGRESSIVE FUNERAL DIRECTORS,
CEMETERIANS AND CREMATIONISTS IN THE SERVICE OF END-OF-LIFE CARE

August 14, 2025
Vol. 16 No. 33
www.nfda.org



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Does Management Affect Your Organizational Culture?

By William E. Ford

BRISTOL, TENNESSEE – A positive organizational culture is critical to an organization's success. Recruitment and retention of employees, high morale and productivity, and support for organizational growth are the results of a good organizational culture.

Organizational culture is shaped by many factors – leadership chief among them. The values, vision and goals of your organization come from the top. Management's actions can foster a culture that keeps employees happy, attracts new talent and encourages a quality work environment. On the other hand, managers can negatively affect culture and move it away from its intended form.



Good organizational culture does not occur spontaneously. You build it in large and small ways across various facets of your organization. For example, your hiring process should go beyond looking for applicants who meet the basic job requirements. New hires should share similar values to your business and fit in immediately.

Your organization's vision should be more than a pithy statement on your "About" page. It should be the driving force behind your company and guide all critical decisions.

The most important question to ask yourself is: Do I provide sufficient resources to empower and develop my staff and managers? In order to work toward the long-term goals of an organization, managers

and employees need the right tools to handle their job duties. These resources might include new technology, a specific workspace or foundational-skills training. Employees should feel fulfilled by their positions. If they feel that their input is not valued or don't understand their place in your organization, they will not maintain the company culture. Managers also need to watch closely for signs of disengagement and proactively address problems before they negatively impact the team.

HOW MANAGERS REINFORCE COMPANY CULTURE

Managers directly influence corporate culture through leadership, communication and delegation. They can strengthen your business culture by ensuring their actions and words adhere to the values and vision of the organization. To encourage adoption of the culture, managers must set a good example for their team. Clear and transparent communication promotes frequent feedback, information-sharing and collaboration with staff. Managers have an easier time conveying cultural values when they have the appropriate communication channels readily available.

Your managers' approach to leadership should be shaped by the culture. If the company emphasizes a healthy work/life balance and working together, then managers should demonstrate those priorities through their actions. Teams need a positive role model to admire and emulate. In this environment, managers should collaborate with one another to incorporate these values into their leadership skill sets.

Delegation also plays a role in cultural reinforcement. Your managers empower team members by showing them the big picture of their work. They have ownership of this duty and should understand how each team member fits into the company's plan. Their job isn't disconnected from the vision. In fact, it's an integral part of it. Effective delegation gives managers more time to emphasize the organization's values and builds trust within the team.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PROPER TRAINING

Proper communication techniques are important tools for positively influencing organizational culture. Managers must take steps to increase their

team's comfort level. If employees don't feel confident talking to leadership, then opportunities to reinforce culture get lost. Your company's values can become convoluted if upper management says one thing and front-line managers say another. This confusion makes it difficult for employees to remain engaged; therefore, strong communication is one of the most important skills a manager can have.

Effective communication doesn't automatically occur. Through proper training, managers learn best practices to implement, listening strategies and how to handle employee communication overall.

However, effective communication doesn't automatically occur. Through proper training, managers learn best practices to implement, listening strategies and how to handle employee communication overall. Organizations that want to establish and maintain a very positive culture – which results in a satisfied workforce and, ultimately, high morale, efficiency and productivity – must invest in training and developing managers. Companies also must give managers the resources and support they need to achieve the desired culture. In 2025, one of your priorities should be developing and training managers to support your organization's culture. The benefits of training greatly outweigh the expenses associated with negative company culture and its resulting high turnover, low morale, and poor productivity and quality.

CULTURE IS EVERYTHING

All companies, regardless of size, industry or profession, struggle with attracting and retaining a high-quality workforce. Many experts have opined

or written books about how to solve this critical challenge that is at the core of every business's success. Throughout SESCO's 79 years of serving businesses, we have found that an organization's culture is everything when it comes to recruiting and, more importantly, retaining good employees. Simply stated, a positive culture equals high employee morale and, subsequently, high retention.

A positive (or negative) employer-employee dynamic is the result of effective (or poor) leadership. Business leaders, consider the following:

- Are you working *in* or *on* your business?
- Do you provide effective coaching and counseling in real time when needed?
- Do you hold all employees accountable for adherence to policies, procedures and performance expectations, or do you ignore mediocre behavior?
- Are you sharing in your success? Do you have meetings, lunches, awards, etc.?
- Do you reward employees for a job well done, both monetarily and non-monetarily?
- Have you developed the HR tools necessary for a successful employment relationship?

When we reference critical HR systems that are essential to a successful business, these include:

- An effective screening and hiring system that includes background checks, personality testing, skills testing, behavioral interview questions, and a thorough process for individual and team interviews.
- Open communication that involves employee-management satisfaction surveys, as well as effective day-to-day, week-to-week and month-to-month communications. If there is little or no communication, the void will be filled by negativity, backbiting, turnover, etc.
- An employee handbook – the cornerstone of every employer-employee relationship. Every business, no matter how small, must provide an

effective employee handbook that is professionally developed and compliant with federal and state laws. Its purpose is to explain, in a positive way, what employees and their families can expect from the employer as well as what the employer expects from its employees.

- A formal compensation system and job descriptions. More on these two below.

We have found that an organization's culture is everything when it comes to recruiting and, more importantly, retaining good employees.

Formal Compensation System

In today's world, we can no longer say, "Come to work, do a good job, and we will take care of you." Younger professionals interview organizations in the same way that they're interviewed, and want to know basics such as pay, benefits, work hours, etc., up front. Through a developed system of compensation and benefits, you can meet these expectations.

Additionally, current employees need to know their road map in terms of compensation and benefits, should they perform as or better than expected. A formal compensation system addresses those questions and sends the message of management credibility to employees. You know your right price as well as the market. Further, a formal compensation system:

- Provides a fair and equitable basis of policies and practices for optimizing employee morale
- Ensures that wage and salary opportunity is maximized to best compete in the marketplace, while also confirming that expenditures are fiscally responsible
- Confirms the appropriate return from monies

expended with effective and supportive employee-performance appraisals

Recipients of a compensation system:

- Know the job duties, standard performance expectations and compensation opportunity available to them
- Feel confident that their employer has a credible and equitable system of compensation administration and performance evaluation
- Project a high degree of job satisfaction and self-esteem, derived from psychological and monetary rewards gained through good job performance
- Understand that every effort is being made to provide the best in long-term opportunities expressed to them, other employees and the organization

Job Descriptions

Job descriptions are no longer optional. Per the amended Americans with Disabilities Act, a job description that identifies the essential functions as well as the physical, mental and sensory requirements of a given position is a must. An organization cannot comply nor operate within the regulations if they do not have effective and compliant job descriptions. A satisfactory job description:

- Clearly articulates not only general tasks but also performance measurements and expectations
- Contains ADA compliance data (i.e., physical, mental and sensory requirements of essential job functions as defined)
- Serves as a screening tool (i.e., “Can you perform these duties with or without accommodation?”)
- Serves as a training and performance-management tool

IN SUMMARY

A common question related to retention and organizational culture from clients is, “How can I motivate my employees?”

The reality is that all employees are motivated; however, employees do things for their own personal reasons, and motivation comes from within. Therefore, managers can affect employee motivation, but they cannot actually motivate employees.

So, how can managers affect employee motivation? That is through effective leadership, communication and systems.

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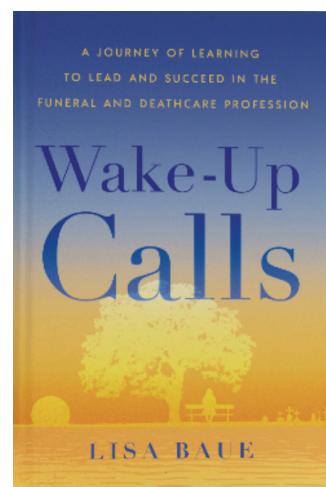
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Lisa Baue Publishes Memoir for Women in the Deathcare Profession

PARKER, COLORADO — Lisa Baue's first book, *Wake-Up Calls: A Journey of Learning to Lead and Succeed in the Funeral and Deathcare Profession*, will be published on September 3. Baue recently established the Funeral Women Lead Foundation, the first nonprofit dedicated exclusively to advancing women's leadership in the funeral profession.

Part memoir, part professional guidebook, *Wake-Up Calls* offers a deeply personal and motivating look at Baue's decades-long journey in funeral service – an often overlooked but vitally important profession. A third-generation funeral director

and former owner of Baue Funeral Homes, Baue draws from her 40-plus years of experience to share stories of resilience, reinvention and rising through adversity.



Women now represent a growing majority of funeral service professionals, yet they continue to face unique challenges regarding longevity, leadership and professional support. Baue's book directly ad-

dress these issues by offering mentorship through storytelling. She encourages women to lead with courage, empathy and vision in a trade that needs them more than ever.

Said the author: "Wake-Up Calls is about more than my story – it's about encouraging women in death-care to listen to their own wake-up calls, trust their instincts, and lead from the heart, head and with grit. We have an opportunity to transform this profession by investing in the next generation of compassionate, capable leaders – especially women. I'm very excited that the book proceeds will be supporting vital initiatives to educate and support women as leaders in the industry through our charitable donations."

In the book, Baue shares pivotal moments from her own life, including personal losses, business decisions and leadership challenges that pushed her to

grow, adapt and, ultimately, thrive. Offering both practical wisdom and heartfelt encouragement, each chapter serves as a blueprint for future leaders.

Following her successful tenure as president and CEO of Baue Funeral Homes, she went on to found Your Funeral Coach, consulting with funeral businesses and helping individuals grow into strong, values-based leaders.

All the proceeds from the book will be given to industry charities, including the Funeral Women Lead Foundation; Selected Independent Funeral Homes Educational Trust; International Cemetery, Cremation and Funeral Association Educational Trust; and Funeral Service Foundation.

For more information, visit *LisaBaue.com*.

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The Notebook

INTEGRITY FUNERAL HOME at Forest Lawn Cemetery, a member of the Park Lawn Corporation family, held a back-to-school event for its community in Houston, Texas, on Sunday, August 10. Five hundred backpacks with school supplies were distributed. Additionally, 11 barbers volunteered their time and gave 62 haircuts. At the gathering, there was also a DJ, face-painting, refreshments and vendors offering a wide variety of merchandise and food.

NATIONAL GUARDIAN LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY (NGL) recognized four team members with G.R.I.T. Awards during its company-wide meeting in July. The awards incorporate NGL's vision for the future – "together for tomorrow" – into its team members' daily professional lives. Peer nominations recognized and celebrated colleagues for their outstanding achievements and performance. These awards highlight the winning mindset needed to deliver and successfully achieve NGL's goals and vision. The G.R.I.T. Awards comprise four categories:

Growth and Personal Development Award: Dylan Etter, payroll and disbursements manager

Resilience and Accountability Award: Courtney Shaffer, senior business systems analyst

Initiative, Drive and Execution Award: Andy Mohr, assistant vice president of internal audit

Trust in Each Other Award: Jaime Perez, senior agent solutions coordinator



From left to right: Dylan Etter, payroll and disbursements manager; Jaime Perez, senior agent solutions coordinator; Courtney Shaffer, senior business systems analyst; and Joe Celentano, president and CEO. Not pictured: Andy Mohr, assistant vice president of internal audit.

From the Editor's Desk

The Best Fit

Back in college, I had a psychology professor who spoke frequently about how sports are a microcosm of society. I found this to be quite true, and, to this day, when searching for a good metaphor, I occasionally drift over to the world of sports, where there is a metaphor for almost any pitch life throws your way (see what I did there?).

The main story in this week's edition is about organizational culture, and I didn't have to go far to find my sports comparison. Prior to this season, the Boston Red Sox signed an elite third baseman, Alex Bregman, with a big contract. There was a dilemma, though: The team's best player, Rafael Devers, already played third base and, just two years ago, signed an enormous 10-year contract that would pay him roughly \$31 million a season. After some cajoling from management, Devers agreed to become the team's designated hitter because Bregman was an elite defender *and* hitter.

Earlier in the season, the Red Sox corner infielders suffered serious injuries, so the team asked Devers to go back to third base. He refused, telling the team that they had made him switch once already. Then, the team asked him to work out at first base. Again, he refused. This apparent lack of an I'll-do-anything-to-help-the-team-win attitude from Devers created a toxic environment, and the Red Sox sputtered to a 37-36 record.

The Red Sox shocked the baseball world when they traded Devers to the San Francisco Giants for four players, none of whom will impact the Red Sox this year. What followed was a Red Sox tear. The team won 26 of its next 40 games and became a contender for the playoffs. Broadcasters have remarked that it seems like the team is loose and the players are having fun. As an aside, in San Francisco, when asked where he would prefer to play, Devers said that he would play anywhere the team wanted him to play. The question remains: Why didn't he say this in Boston?

A team – or your company – is greater than the sum of its parts. Devers, on paper, was the best Red Sox player, but he was toxic when it came to the team culture, and other players saw that. So, he was moved, and Boston is better for it, even without the benefit of receiving an immediate impact player in the deal.

Sometimes, the best move is not about the best performer. What adds to your business's culture is more often the best fit.



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Memorial Business Journal
is a weekly publication of the
National Funeral Directors
Association. The mission of
this publication is to provide
objective, comprehensive news
and analysis to all providers and
suppliers of goods and services
to the deathcare profession.

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The **Memorial Business Journal**
is an NFDA member benefit.

Non-member rates:
\$199 for one year (52 issues)
\$349 for two years (104 issues)

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