



**TOP**  
**WORK**  
**PLACES**

# Lessons from the Top

## 5 Keys to a Better Workplace

by Doug Claffey

What distinguishes a Top Workplace from just an average organization? The truth is, there's no single practice, no one-size-fits-all solution for achieving great results. We know it's not perks or "coolness" that makes the difference. We know that the best organizations prioritize and carefully craft a healthy work environment that supports employee engagement. We also know Top Workplaces share a common foundation.

Here are five key lessons we've learned from a decade of Top Workplaces research:

### 1. People *really* are the greatest asset.

It goes beyond lip service. It's a core principle that's brought to life every day, with leadership putting employees at the center of their thinking. Done right, the sentiment is returned. Employees consistently tell us that appreciation and confidence in leadership are among the most important factors of workplace satisfaction.

### 2. Leaders who listen.

The best leaders listen to feedback provided by employees both formally and informally. While some might dwell on the inherent risks of giving employees a voice, leaders at Top Workplaces are "clued in" to their team's challenges and they use this knowledge to drive decision-making. Leaders who listen build a sense of commitment and accountability.

### 3. Everyone is in the loop.

Employees want to be well-informed. After all, it's difficult to be fully dedicated if you're kept in the dark. Top Workplace leaders recognize this. They're committed to sharing information as much — and as often — as they can. And they don't just share the happy news, either. Organizations that fail to communicate with staff on a regular basis leave an information void that can get filled quickly with rumors and speculation.

### 4. Live with a purpose.

Employees want to feel their work contributes to something meaningful. Effective leaders deliver an inspiring vision, which the entire team connects with day to day. In our 2016 surveys, the top 10 percent of Top Workplaces revealed that 96 percent of their employees reported feeling motivated. Compare that to the bottom 10 percent of organizations we surveyed, where just 62 percent of employees felt motivated. This 34 percentage-point gap represents a massive drop in productivity. The bottom line? Motivation matters.



## 5. Build community.

Neuroscience teaches us about the importance people place on feeling accepted and safe in their “tribe.” It’s what keeps them in one place and motivates them to contribute to the group’s success. In forging productive employee experiences, Top Workplaces care about building community. They hold regular and purposeful events that foster a strong sense of belonging. That sense of appreciation also keeps employees connected.

Building a Top Workplace is a journey, not a destination. Even top-ranked organizations have things to work on in a process of continuous improvement. And when done right, employees will know their workplace is special. But don’t be shy asking for extra effort in return. Ensure your staff remains active in the ongoing success of the organization, while maintaining necessary accountability. And don’t forget to celebrate along the way.



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