

How to Create a Mentally Fit Work Culture

Seal Team Six is known as the USA's most prestigious and highest performing unit in their armed forces — so how do you think the members of this team are chosen?

Instantly, your mind might naturally go to performance on the battlefield. **However, the panel that select Seal Team Six also take into account 'trustworthiness'. They do this to such an extent that they would rather select someone who is higher on the 'trustworthy' scale and a medium 'performer' than someone who is a top 'performer' and scores medium-to-low on the 'trustworthy' scale.**

Taking this example back to the real world, notice how we have hundreds of metrics to measure someone's performance and negligible to no metrics to measure someone's trustworthiness. In doing so we're actually promoting toxicity in our businesses, something which we all know is counter-productive in the long run to an organisation's overall performance.

It turns out having trust within a team and promoting people who are going to champion a trustworthy atmosphere is one of the key ways a company is going to create a happy and mentally fit work culture.

But there's more components to all this than just promoting trust. Let's delve in deeper.

WHAT IS A MENTALLY FIT WORK CULTURE?

A mentally fit work culture is:

- An environment where employees are not only looked after physically, but are also cared for financially and emotionally
- Employees are not just given a wage that represents the work they do, but also that they are made to feel valued, safe and happy within the workplace

When you have a mentally fit work culture employees are more likely to:

- Perform at a higher level
- Come up with more innovative ideas
- Have more resilience when the working day becomes more stressful
- Have the capacity to perform at a higher level for the organisation

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Creating a mentally fit work culture can be narrowed down into 3 categories:

1. TRUST

- Trust is built by managers within the organisation
- Once trust has been built from above, it creates a ripple effect within the organisation

2. GRATITUDE

- Employees need to feel as if their work is valued in order to feel happy and satisfied within the workplace
- This can be achieved by expressing gratitude for a job well done out loud or creating spaces for staff recognition such as a bulletin board or a company email

3. PROMOTING A SAFE AND HEALTHY WORKPLACE

- If there are high levels of trust and gratitude in the workplace, then it's generally going to be a happier, nicer and less-toxic environment
- Employees are less likely to experience conflict, bullying,



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harassment or discrimination

- Managing conflicts and tensions between team members takes a lot of time and the longer it takes to get back to a more peaceful working environment, the greater the negative impacts on the team dynamics and organisational wellbeing
- Employees should talk to each other as individuals and not colleagues and are kept in the loop and team conversations place a greater focus on how members of the group are feeling

HOW DO WE CREATE A MENTALLY FIT WORK CULTURE?

TRUST

One of the reasons why Seal Team Six select more trustworthy candidates is because, to develop trust within an entire team, you not only need trustworthy individuals, but trustworthy leaders. When trust is built employees know that their leaders:

- Are on their side
- Will treat them fairly and with respect
- Will not view setbacks negatively and will not 'punish' mistakes

Once a leader is respected and trusted, they are more likely to inspire and motivate other employees around them. The following qualities can help induce a sense of trust amongst a team.

1. Honesty and support
2. The ability to listen and show understanding
3. Consistency
4. Model behaviour
5. Accountability

Working on these qualities and building trust is worth the effort because, once trust is lost, it can be very difficult to recover.

GRATITUDE

According to Sodexo's 2017 Global Workplace Trends, only 59% of Australian workers felt that their contribution to their workplace was valued. When employees feel unvalued, there is a cost, with **Reventure estimating that disengagement costs the Australian economy between \$42 - \$52.8 billion a year.**

Practising gratitude at work drives real results. A recent study by email scheduling app Boomerang found that emails that were signed off "Thanks in advance", "Thanks", "Thank you", "Cheers" or "Kind regards" received the highest response rates — as high as 66%! To increase gratitude at work, employers can also promote the following actions:

- Expressing gratitude for a job well done out loud
- Being flexible around hybrid working or holiday leave
- Creating spaces for staff recognition such as a bulletin board or a company email.

PROMOTING A SAFE AND HEALTHY WORKPLACE

If there are high levels of trust and gratitude in the workplace, then it's generally going to be a happier, nicer and less-toxic environment.

Meanwhile, employees are less likely to experience bullying, harassment or discrimination — all of which can reduce performance within an organisation.

Unresolved conflict can also impact on how productive and engaged staff members are at work. In fact, according to the founder of the Mediation Training Institute, Daniel Dana:

- 60-80% of all difficulties in organisations come from strained relationships (between staff), not from a lack of skill or motivation.

Research has shown that those companies who actively try to promote a healthy workplace and experience low levels of conflict present the following characteristics:

- Team members often share emotional and personal conversations
- Employees talk to each other as individuals rather than just



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colleagues

- Every employee is kept in the loop and team conversations place a greater focus on how members of the group are feeling
- Conversations are monitored to ensure all team members participate in a roughly equal way to avoid a single person or a few people dominating the discussion
- Employees say that they feel included and that they are seen, heard and validated.

TAKE A QUIZ:

Google, regularly voted amongst the best places to work in the world, discovered that happy and successful teams can positively answer a selection of 5 questions that reflect the feelings of trust, gratitude, job satisfaction and psychological safety:

- Can we take risks on this team without feeling insecure or embarrassed?
- Can we count on each other to do high-quality work on time?
- Are goals, roles, and execution plans on our team clear?
- Are we working on something that is personally important for each of us?
- Do we fundamentally believe that the work we're doing matters?

So, what are the answers for your team?

At Converge, we can conduct a comprehensive workplace mental health assessment to help identify any presenting or underlying issues or concerns in relation to workplace mental health and conflict.

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