Your Organization's Work Culture: Questions to Consider

The following questions can help you inquire into the "internal" work culture that exists in your organization and consider how well it aligns with the values you espouse both internally and externally.

- Are relationships governed by rules or adaptive to the needs of those we serve/engage?

- Do people here show initiative or depend on direction?

- Which is more important: attention to detail or prompt action?

- Who makes decisions: those who are closest to the issue and/or know the most or those in a position of authority?

- Which is more important: getting the job done (right) or personal development?

- Do Jewish values inform how we treat one another or are they only applied in our outward-facing work?

- How do people treat one another around here? How should I treat others and how should I expect to be treated?

- Are employees treated equally or equitably or are some employees favored over others? If so, based on what?

- What kinds of behaviors are expected of everyone, regardless of job?

- What does it take to "get ahead?"

- What happens when you perform well? And when you perform poorly or make a mistake? How is "good performance" defined? What is considered "quality work"?

- How much collaboration is expected? Do we work as teams or individuals?

- How do we understand responsibility and accountability and their boundaries or limits? Does everyone stick to their own job responsibilities narrowly defined or do we help each other out in a fluid way?

- To whom or what is an employee accountable? To what are we committed?

- How hard do people work around here? Where are the boundaries of work relative to the other aspects of our lives? How many hours am I actually expected to work and how will my work effort be judged?

- How do employees find out important information about our organization, our work, or about change? Is communication relatively open and timely or guarded and "close to the vest"?

- What is the attitude toward risk? Is this a cautious place, an aggressive or daring place or somewhere in between?

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- What is our attitude toward change? Do we expect it as a normal part of how the world works (and expect to adapt) or do we view it as an anomaly (and seek to restore the status quo as soon as possible)?

- What is the attitude toward differences? Is this a place that wants everyone to act, look, and think alike? Or are differences valued, and in what way and in what circumstances?

- What does the space we work in telegraph about the way we are expected to work? Are we in this together or isolated? When is it okay to "drop in" and when is privacy necessary? What are the signals when someone doesn't want to be interrupted or disturbed? In open space/cubicles, how do we manage distraction and volume of conversation? Are there hierarchical differences in these behaviors (e.g. it's always okay for the boss to drop in with a question but others shouldn't)? If we work remotely, how do we work together or get to know one another? How do others know we're pulling our weight?

- How do we think about the time horizon of our work and our decisions? Are we more focused on immediate short-term results or long-term vision and strategy or something in between? Under what conditions should we consider each and what weight should we give them?