



BUILD YOUR CORPORATE CULTURE

MANAGERS (AND ESPECIALLY OWNERS) of businesses often lose sight of the fact that grass-roots staff are less concerned about the business than are the bosses. Their motivations and aims are often very different from those of senior management—and paying them a salary does not necessarily guarantee that they will always act exactly as management would wish.

For marketers, the problem is especially serious when dealing with the sales force. Salespeople usually work away from the company, and thus away from supervision: even though they are usually paid commission, this is no guarantee that they will actually do what they say they are going to do, go where they say they are going to go, and see the people they say they are going to see. In short, nearly everything has to be taken on trust.

The idea

Creating a corporate culture in which everyone feels committed to the aims of the firm will generate a social pressure on staff to do what they are supposed to do, when they are supposed to do it. This social pressure can be a great deal more motivating than money, or indeed anything else: the *esprit de corps* that makes soldiers go into battle is based on it.

Amway is the ultimate company for developing a corporate culture. Founded in the 1950s, Amway uses a direct sales force of over three million people worldwide (12,000 in Britain alone) to sell household cleaning products. Motivating and controlling such a diverse sales force would be impossible in any traditional way, so

Amway relies on its corporate culture—derived from American free enterprise principles—to ensure everybody is going in the same direction.

Salespeople are called ABOs—Amway Business Owners—which immediately provides a label suggesting independence. Motivational tapes and books are accompanied by regular meetings in which salespeople are given pep talks, often in an almost cult-like atmosphere. The net result is to build a feeling of being part of something big and important. This contributes to a sense of wanting to help the process along by selling more, by recruiting more salespeople, and by growing the Amway business.

Amway also supports a number of ethical and charitable activities, which further builds a corporate culture based on helping others to improve their lives. In turn, Amway salespeople can (and do) feel proud to say that they are working for Amway.

In practice

- Have a clear idea yourself of what your corporate vision is going to be.
- Communicate the vision consistently and frequently.
- Ensure that the staff can see that there is something in it for them in terms of self-esteem and the esteem of others.
- Help staff to realize the vision.