



# Documented culture helps people make a difference

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TODAY, MANAGEMENT PUNDITS CONTINUE TO trumpet the idea that workers are the most valuable asset of a company. Workers, they say, make the difference in the fortunes of companies. People-driven companies, they add, have the best chance of prospering in today's hypercompetitive business arenas.

The People Management Association of the Philippines or PMAP appears to have reached the same conclusion. The reveille for its annual conference this year is "*Sa Tao Magkakatalo.*"

In people-driven companies, belief in people is at the heart of the corporate culture. The corporate culture serves as a fertile ground for growing the belief in people and meshing it with the operations of the company. People managers must pay attention to corporate culture if they wish to nurture belief in people as a dynamic, driving and determining force in the life of the company.

Like a country's Constitution, a corporate culture can be written or unwritten. In my experience, a corporate culture adds greater momentum to the performance of a company when it is documented. While living examples and oral stories transmit culture most effectively, a written version makes it easier for members to grasp and review the culture. It is easier to compare actual behavior with written cultural imperatives.

The major components of a corporate culture can be divided into values (what the organization stands for), management (how the organization gets things done the

right way), and leadership (how the organization gets pulled in the right direction).

The most basic values of the company can be conveyed powerfully if they are stated briefly and simply. Take the creed of the ServiceMaster Company: "To honor God in all we do, to help people develop, to pursue excellence, to grow profitably." There is little else that needs to be said. ServiceMaster uses this creed to guide all its decisions.

As the second component of a written culture, management covers basic work principles and processes necessary to achieve competitive quality and productivity. For instance, the Plan-Do-Check-Act or PDCA Cycle is an essential process in attaining excellent results. It calls for the systematic involvement of management in problem solving and decision-making.

The third component of written culture is leadership. No organization can exist without a leader. If you prefer a simple model of leadership, you may want to adopt the elements of leadership described by Noel M. Tichy. A true leader, he says, should possess the following in abundance: courage, ideas, values, energy, and stories. I believe that this is a simple yet complete formulation of leadership.

A clearly documented corporate culture is accessible and binding on everyone, from the lowest to the highest ranking employee. Everyone proceeds from a common ground although they may be flying off toward different directions. Culture is anchor and freedom at the same time for a people-driven company.