Civility in the Chambers: Impacts on Employee Attraction & Retention

LEAGUE OF CALIFORNIA CITIES ANNUAL CONFERENCE
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Meet Your Panel

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Audience Question

- Who has consistently wild meetings?
- Wild Moments?
- Fairly mellow?

Why Civility Matters

- Prospective employees may hesitate to join an organization knowing that there is a lack of civility
- Employees want to feel respected and cared about
- They want to make a positive impact and identify with the organization’s values
Why Civility Matters (cont’d)

- When leaders behave disrespectfully, employees become less committed to their work
- Such an environment erodes trust
- Employees start looking elsewhere for employment opportunities

Cal-ICMA Talent Initiative

Three goals:
- Strengthen ability to compete for employees
- Increase the pool of talent for top jobs
- Engage local government in a conversation about talent acquisition and retention
If You Don’t Have the Right People, You Can’t Get Stuff Done!

Why Should You Care?

We Asked: What is Your Employee Value Proposition?

- Why Would A Talented Professional Want to Join and Stay With your Organization?

- Why Would A Talented Professional Be Reluctant to Join and Stay with Your Organization?
Key Findings

- Organizational culture (incl. political culture) is key to attracting & retaining talent
  - Culture > Money
- We can no longer rely on “stealing” talent; we need to grow our own
- Local gov’t has competitive advantage regarding meaning & purpose
Key Findings (cont’d)

- We aren’t telling our story
  - The story we tell accidentally often matters more
- Talent retention is about learning, challenge, & engagement
- Emerging leaders need to develop “soft” leadership skills
- **Elected officials have key role to play**

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Federal</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Local</th>
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<tr>
<td>Do You Trust Gov’t To Do What’s Right Most of the Time?</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>63%</td>
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All Eyes Are On You!

- Be mindful of how civility on the dais impacts an agency’s reputation
- Your employees are likely the most frequent viewers of your Council Meetings
- If you watched your Council meetings on video, would you want to work for your agency?
Stand Up For Staff

- Focus on policy, not people, when debating issues.
- When speakers belittle the City team, communicate that personal attacks will not be tolerated.
- It’s fine to disagree with and critique staff’s work.
- Stick to the content, not the person.

Help Staff Prioritize

- If everything is a Number One Priority, nothing is a priority.
- Be clear on where new projects fall among current priorities.
- Be prepared to temporarily suspend other missions if a key project needs focus.
- Be clear and consistent in your directives.
- Changing directives and uncertainty cause anxiety, delays, and turnover.
Manage Evening Commitments

- Night and weekend meetings are a given
  - But they aren’t always necessary
- Supplement public meetings with online engagement tools that can gather feedback 24/7
- Look for ways to allow staff, policymakers, and residents to spend more time with their families
- Show appreciation when they stay for late night and weekend events

Create a Culture of Appreciation

- Preparing a staff report takes more time and brain power than you might think
- Delivering a presentation to the city council is a big deal to new employees
- People perform better when they are comfortable
- When they look good, everyone looks good
- Participate in employee recognition events and other celebrations
Welcome New Faces

- Provide opportunities for staff at all levels to hone their public speaking skills
- Provides a chance to learn and develop skills
  - More interesting than the same few people every week
- Meet future leaders
- A simple acknowledgement can significantly boost morale
  - E.g., a special pin after employee’s first presentation

Fund Employee Development

- Employee training is a business imperative
- Instead of asking, “What if we train employees and they leave?”
- The question is, “What if we don’t train employees and they stay?”
- To serve the public, employees need the training and tools to be effective and efficient
- Training is especially important when employees are being asked to do more with less
Be Flexible

- Adapt to the changing needs of your workforce without compromising service to your community
- Some positions must have a set work schedule; others do not
  - Focus on attaining goals vs. set hours in the office
- Adaptable schedules can boost morale and allow for longer counter coverage
- Flextime can save costs and accommodate working parents
- Employees often put in extra hours at home
- Norm in the private sector

Panelist Discussion

BRACE YOURSELF
WAR STORIES ARE COMING
Tell Us About Your Civility Moments

- Examples of tough moments at the dais
- Problems and how they affected everyone
- The solutions that followed

Tell Us About Impediments

What are the things preventing you from promoting civility in your community?
Tips For Elected Officials

1. Conduct a conversation about your local government’s Employee Value Proposition
2. Ensure business-like Council meetings
3. Do not allow personal attacks on anyone
4. Encourage staff to take “smart risks”
5. Create a culture of appreciation

Tips For Elected Officials

6. Provide policy direction…and then let them implement it
7. Support and fund training – demand it!
8. Encourage internships and fellowships to attract new talent
9. Make meetings “safe” for staff
10. Encourage flexibility & wellness programs
Ending Quote

“If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more, and become more, you are a leader.”

John Quincy Adams

One Commitment

Starting tomorrow, what is just one thing I can immediately put into practice to promote civility in my community?
Resources

- Cal-ICMA Talent Initiative Website: [cal-icma.org/talentinitiative]
  - Talent 2.0 Report
  - Examples of Exemplary Programs
  - Stay Interview Questions
  - Best Practices Articles
  - (Coming Soon!) “Best Places for Talent Development” Recognition

What Questions Do You Have?

What Would You Like To Add?