
Literature and insights Editorial

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Do you fit?

If your workplace sometimes feels toxic, you might envy those who are able to operate outside it on a daily basis, e.g. roaming off-site in the course of their responsibilities. An attractive mid-point is being free to step away from your immediate physical environment when dealing with annoying people. That way you get to see some fresh faces and enjoy a different dynamic. Perhaps you do not have that option. And if you did, you may still be caught up in a general culture that reflects worrying approaches to and between staff and clients:

What is workplace culture, anyway? After addressing some well-worn phrases like, “it’s the way we do things around here”, Stephanie Buck says:

Most experts agree [...] that culture comprises a set of commonly shared values and group behaviors reflected in patterns over time. (Buck 2018, online)

Exciting, no? Well, no, but it matches my experience and likely your own. More specifically, she says that culture might be partly reflected in what staff behaviours are rewarded, for instance, but that is not necessarily easy to discover. Finding out what you’re getting into prior to being hired can be hard. Typically, you only learn after spending a period inside the new organisation, and earlier appraisals and recommendations may turn out to be mere rhetoric. Experience – yes, that again – is the best teacher, to coin a phrase.

What can you do when you feel that corporate culture needs enhancement? Buck points out (online, 2018) that there may be very little that an individual can do to improve the cultural environment of their workplace. Potential might exist for a small group to encourage change, however, and I have been part of such processes myself, setting up Communities of Practice dedicated to sharing knowledge. Even then, there will be limits due to the size of the group (and, therefore, its reach), competing demands on their time, their perceptions of personal benefits, and how quickly cultural change can be spread.

If the work culture still resists what seems to be necessary transformation, you need to sort out whether you fit. Leaving that employment may be a better option than the sheer frustration of enduring it when it’s really bad. You cannot change everything.

In this issue, Lee Parker offers a trio of haiku that succinctly skewers quite different attitudes to work. They range from the salesperson who cannot connect with a customer (ironically so, given the product), technology as an employee’s distraction from the real world, and a lack of ethics in the workplace. They all comment in some way on an aspect of work outlooks and corresponding practices. A further creative contribution is a joint effort by Ifeoluwa Tobi Popoola and Linda N. Masi, who contemplate both the lure and the effects of procrastinating, especially at work. For my sins (?), I studied some Latin at school and this word has always had particular appeal to me. I will confess that the act of procrastinating



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also appeals in itself, but I am recommending that you do not fall under its spell. Instead, keep writing, and sending me your creative work. Another jointly prepared piece, perhaps the product of a group involved in improving workplace culture (?) might be just the thing!

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Reference

Buck, S. (2018), "How to salvage a great job at a company with a culture you hate", Quartz at Work, December 28, available at: <https://qz.com/work/1503113/how-to-salvage-a-great-job-at-a-company-with-a-culture-you-hate/>