



Time to Celebrate – But How?

It appears that 2013 is rapidly coming to an end and many readers may be thinking about how your business might celebrate the end of the calendar year – or the beginning of a new one. I am fascinated by the wide range of forms of year end celebrations and I am equally concerned that too many businesses don't think enough about HOW to celebrate.

It seems to me that this is a critical opportunity to revisit the core values of your business and ensure that the style of your celebration is not only consistent with your values but actually enhances them. I hope that this month's article encourages you to reflect on the core values of your business, even if it is too late to alter your 2013 Christmas party plans.

The formula is really simple – identify the relevant core value(s) and then design the celebration to align with it. Here are five real examples, drawn from businesses that are either my clients or my alliances:

Example 1 - The core value of this business is excellence. Hence, a key element of their Christmas party is to reward great individual achievements. The awards ceremony is informal but it is serious and only a limited number of deserving people are acknowledged.

Example 2 - The core value of this business is client focus. Hence, important clients are invited to all of their major celebrations. New employees really get the message when clients are invited as well as staff. (And it's interesting how it impacts the behaviour at the party...)

Example 3 - Two of the core values of this business are fun and creativity. Hence, a key element of their celebrations is to play games. The games have to be fun and they have to be designed, initiated and conducted by members of the team. I hope it is obvious that the games are also respectful of every team member.

Example 4 - One of the core values of this business is balance. Hence, the partner of each member of the team is invited to their key celebrations. The leaders of the business believe that work already draws each member of the team away from their partner for long enough so that absence should not be extended any further.

Example 5 - One of the core values of the leader of this business is appreciation. Hence, a key element of his Christmas function is to give everyone a small present. The value of the gift may reflect the financial performance of the business but it's not the issue. What is significant is that everyone receives the same present, irrespective of their rank or individual performance.



Now if you are thinking “that wouldn’t work here” then congratulations – that’s exactly the point. These five approaches are only valid (and valuable) if the value is core to your business. What is impressive is that each business has been deliberate in its choice of its characteristic element. They didn’t just take the suggestion of the function manager or run a survey. They know exactly what type of culture they want to build and/or promote.

And if I can be provocative, let’s consider the alternative. What does a Christmas Party that encourages over-indulgence, insensitive “Kris Kringle” gifts and risqué jokes say about the business culture? Be very sure that poor choices or lack of thought in the design of your celebrations can also damage the culture of your business.

These are the best of times to reflect on the core values of your business and to deliberately design your celebrations to leverage those values.