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Culture is the foundation of a company; it can make or break performance, employee loyalty, branding, and reputation. Changing a culture is not easy; it takes time, fortitude and lots of work. Buy-in from staff, leadership, and colleagues is key to a successful transformation. Because culture is a company's foundation, ethics is the underpinning of a healthy culture. Ethics serves as a barometer to how staff and leadership conduct themselves and what the organization stands for. The following will underscore my experience of how culture and ethics intertwine to shape strong work environments.

Much of the information you will read is a conglomeration of my experience and what has worked for me over my 15 years of leadership practice. I have been exposed to many cultural issues throughout my career, but the longest running and most challenging is when organizational trust has been compromised. When trust is absent, the company is brittle. This creates room for apathy, disloyalty, and a high potential for a compromised reputation, which can directly affect financial performance. Addressing a trust issue is delicate but needs immediate action, because it is important to stop what is causing the mistrust and prevent further damage. Although immediate action is critical, designing a plan and gathering pertinent information are key to buy-in and long-term success.

When teeing up for a cultural change that involves trust issues, the very first thing that needs to happen is to observe the environment. Leaders can get a lot of information when they listen, observe, and hear what staff have to say. As leaders, we don't know everything, so tapping into resources such as long-term employees, newer employees, and your leadership team can unveil a plethora of opportunities. Taking time with colleagues can also shed light on cultural norms that are heavily engrained. Not to say the glaring issues won't stand out immediately, but looking and listening goes a long way and will serve leaders well before starting the work of a cultural shift.