

Articles

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Corporate Culture – When Values Collide

**Insights from Ivan Venegas, Managing Partner of IMSA Search Global Partners Chile and Founder of JobLine**

According to The Conference Board's *The Reimagined Workplace: Workplace 2024*, hybrid work remains stable, recruiting and retaining employees has become easier, and employee wellbeing indicators are showing improvement. In this environment, corporate culture continues to be a priority for visionary leadership. As companies define and reaffirm their corporate values, employees may find their personal values do not always align. What then?

Ivan Venegas, Managing Partner of IMSA Search Global Partners Chile and Jobline Chile Executive Search CEO, shares insights on what happens when an executive's personal values, management style, and conduct become out of sync with corporate norms and acceptable workplace behaviors. Venegas knows a thing or two on the subject. He spent more than 26 years in international managerial positions at one of the world's largest pharmaceutical companies as well as for one of Chile's biggest conglomerates, followed by over two decades recruiting senior executives for global manufacturing, IT, telecommunications, pharmaceutical, and FMCG/retail companies.

On Defining Values and their Impact in the Workplace

Culture and values matter. They are central to 'fit' between candidates and companies, and foundational to a successful placement. Values are more than what's written on the website or displayed on the wall. Values are a practice, a verb, an honor code put into action. The trust that's established between a company and its stakeholders – employees, suppliers, customers, community – is rooted in shared values and mutually agreed upon expectations. When that trust is broken, communications can break down, interrupting critical processes and negatively affecting business outcomes.

On Realigning Values When Navigating Change

There are times when corporate values and personal beliefs fall out of alignment. This may be catalyzed by a merger or new leadership hire. For example, previous management may have valued respect for differing opinions or acceptance of wide-ranging diversity, and long-term executives have spent their careers putting these values into practice. When new ownership/leadership prioritizes different values and behaviors, executives must navigate the new reality. It's a complex decision – realign one's values without compromising integrity, or face the prospect of leaving the company, especially difficult if one has been at the same company for years.

On Preventing a Values-Based Misfit

At IMSA Search Chile/Jobline Executive Search, we take preventive measures to avoid values "misfit." We insist on visiting clients' business locations, making on-site assessments about what values are in practice, and inquiring about practices which may not be acceptable and under what circumstances. We go further by contacting former executives, asking specific questions about values practices at the company. We also do a values assessment of all potential candidates, helping them to prioritize the importance of values, management styles, and behaviors in the workplace.

On the Role of Values in Attracting Leadership to a Company

We moved a Commercial Director from a company that is one of the largest in the world in its market to a company one-quarter the size. What motivated this senior executive to change companies were the values. He prioritized a positive work environment, respect for differing opinions, acceptance of diversity of all kinds, and an emphasis on high-performance teams and team-based bonus-sharing. The new company also had strong engagement in the communities in which they operated, also very important to this executive.

On Suggestions for Candidates

In today's job market candidates are already thinking about values as part of what constitutes fit. They ask about corporate culture, workplace behavioral norms, concern for employee well-being, and social/community responsibility. We ask them about their own priorities and what would constitute "non-valoric" practices that a company should not accept under any circumstances. We urge candidates to investigate all the sources they have about the culture and values of a company, including website, press, social media, and online rating sites like Glassdoor, Indeed, and Monster. We provide candidates with opportunities to improve relational skills to enhance job performance. These include how to build trust, how to influence social environments, how to manage and resolve conflict, all of which are part of good leadership and putting values into practice. And candidates beware – social media profiles and activity will be thoroughly scrutinized for anything that suggests they would be counter to the values and culture of potential employers.

About IMSA Search Global Partners

With 30 offices in 18 countries on 5 continents, our 200 Executive Search experts span the globe to identify the right candidates to successfully lead teams and organizations locally, regionally, and globally. <https://www.imsa-globalsearch.com/>