



The Flourishing Culture Podcast Series
"A Great Recruiting Process to Find Great Talent"
April 8, 2019

Peter Greer

Intro: Today's podcast is brought to you by BCWI's 360 leadership assessment.

Male: Welcome to the Flourishing Culture Podcast, where you'll learn how to build a flourishing workplace culture that drives the ministry impact of your organization, your church, or your company, brought to you by the Best Christian Workplaces Institute. Now, here's your host, BCWI president, Al Lopus.

Al Lopus: Hello, and thanks for joining us here on the Flourishing Culture Podcast. Today, we're continuing our new series on the "Eight Ways to Build a Flourishing Workplace Culture." Each week, we've given you a close look up at each of the eight factors that make up what we call the FLOURISH model, and it's a key to building a healthy workplace culture that gives a greater organizational impact in your organization. On the podcast today, we are going to look at the third of the eight drivers that make up the FLOURISH model. We call it outstanding talent. And my guest has plenty to share with you about how outstanding talent is a critical driver to help improve, even transform, your workplace culture. Today, we have the pleasure of talking with Peter Greer, the president and CEO of HOPE International, based in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Peter, welcome to the Flourishing Culture Podcast.

Peter Greer: Thanks for having me on.

Al: Really looking forward to our conversation, Peter. Let's start off and just give us a little overview of HOPE International and how you became the senior leader there.

Peter: So, HOPE International, I'm not the founder. It was founded by an individual named Jeff Rutt. So much appreciation and respect and all of what we're talking about today in terms of talent and finding the heart of service, Jeff embodies that in a powerful, powerful way. So our mission is we were created to be an organization that would try to figure out how we have employment-based solutions to poverty and how we very clearly want to support the local church and have Jesus Christ at the very center of what we do. So this idea of addressing spiritual poverty and material poverty through employment and a group-based-model methodology has really been at the core.

And we do this in 16 countries around the world, and we have three different tools. We do church-based savings groups where individuals gather together, mobilize savings, and that becomes their own investment fund. We have microfinance institutions, a more formalized way of doing the same thing of providing access to capital and saving services for those that traditionally have been excluded from accessing those services. And then we also have small and medium enterprises, trying to support the larger job creators in a community and help them grow in scale and impact communities as well. So, those are our three models that we use.

And just the way that I found out about it is I actually started as a fellow, or an intern, doing research on the intersection between the microfinance work and clean water and trying to figure out, is there intersection? How can clean-water systems and technology be used by micro entrepreneurs around the world to not just address poverty but also provide access to clean water? And the project was a great project, but even more than that, I got to know a fantastic organization. And I was in Kinshasa doing this research, and the president of HOPE International, Eric Thurman, was transitioning out of the organization at that time and asked me if I'd consider joining the organization after graduation. And so I've been here almost 15 years and so privileged to serve among an incredible group of colleagues and friends in this work that still has that same purpose: addressing material poverty and addressing spiritual poverty as we do our best to keep learning and growing and improving as an organization.

AI: I love that. Thanks for sharing.

What's one thing that you're incredibly grateful for about the people who make up the workplace culture of HOPE International? What comes to mind when you think of that?

Peter: Yeah. Well, I think about our founder, just as we were just talking about, and the question that I'm asked more than any other from him is, how can I help? Remember a couple of years ago, doing a little work on the weekend, we had a couple rental properties that provided support for HOPE International, and Saturday morning, we were on our hands and knees trying to remove some old things from the basement at this time and just working side by side, that there's no job that is for someone else. The approach for all of us is, what can we do to advance the mission?

And I think about Jesse Casler, our Chief Operating Officer. Not too long ago, I saw a little note on the sink that said it wasn't working, and I could tell it was Jesse's handwriting, and it was a note from him saying, "Don't worry. Will be repaired soon," or something to that effect. And so I think there's this wonderful sense that says, we'll do whatever. We serve a God who is willing to wash our feet. How could we not have that same attitude and approach, no matter what it is? How can we love? How can we serve? And a willingness to do whatever it takes to advance the mission of the organization. So, there's never a sense if something is on the ground of, well, that's someone else's job to pick that up. Or there's never a sense of, well, someone else will clean that up. It's just what we do, whatever it takes.

AI: You know, that really speaks to the creation of culture and a very healthy and, in your case, flourishing culture, and outstanding talent, having people that have that feeling is really a key background.

You know, in the next few minutes, I'd like us to touch base on three milestones or turning points in HOPE's culture transformation as you've worked with them over the last 15 years. And the first turning point involves the challenges that you faced and continue to face in confronting the true health of HOPE's workplace culture, the second involves action steps that have been taken by your leadership team to improve the healthiest culture, and the third turning point involves how HOPE International's ministry has been positively impacted by the flourishing culture that you've developed. How does that sound as a place to get started?

Peter: It sounds great. And just maybe a disclaimer of saying, we are still trying to figure this out, and I've been so, so appreciative of the Best Christian Workplace and the way that data has informed our discussion on some of these important topics. So, happy to jump in on these important topics, but we are still working on figuring it out as well.

Al: I think the world is changing fast. We're all trying to keep up. Yeah. So this is a great way to help us keep up, keep moving forward.

So, let's start off with the challenges. You know, as you became the president and CEO in 2004, what was going on that really caused you perhaps some cause for concern or just got your attention? What wasn't working? What came to mind?

Peter: In some ways I was given a great gift in that when I started with HOPE International, there wasn't a headquarters. There wasn't a place. We had a small number of U.S.-based employees that were working out of their home, and we were able to, as I was hired, to say, "We would like to have a presence. We would like to have a place. We would like to have a culture." And so it allowed us to start from scratch.

And I just mentioned Jesse Casler, but he was the first person I hired, and one of the fascinating things—double masters degree, working in financial sector—and he moved to Lancaster, Pennsylvania, to be my assistant. And on a piece of paper, résumé builder, that doesn't make sense, but he was excited about the Mission of HOPE International. And again, that attitude of whatever it takes. And I think that was really, in their early years, what allowed us to build a flourishing culture that the only people that joined HOPE International were people that said, "I want to be all in because I believe in the mission," and having that mission-first mentality, that belief that you'll do whatever it takes, that is a recipe for a healthy, a healthy and flourishing culture.

And then growing and making sure that we identified that. And as we grew to make sure that we're not just looking at the credentials or the résumés but still have the same intentionality to say, "Tell me why you believe in this organization's mission. Tell me what is it that resonates with your story and why, when you have so many other opportunities, why is it that you would come and join HOPE International? So still trying to determine that same heart of commitment, that same willingness to do whatever it takes, I think has been the building blocks of a healthy and flourishing culture.

Al: I love it that people believe in the mission and they're willing to do whatever it takes. That's a great start. You know, HOPE International surveyed with us in an April 2012 for the first time, and it revealed even at that point that your culture was flourishing—over a 4.25 is the way we determine that

in our questionnaire—and as you looked at your survey scores and the survey results, what were some of the takeaways that you and your team found and started to act on?

Peter: You know, one of the things that we've appreciated is that in some ways taking a survey like this can be overwhelming, that you have an overall score but there's so much more to unpack and to read the comments and to have a time and intentionality to say, "We want to listen well. And not just that but now we want to roll this out to our global team and do it in different places and have the cross-cultural aspects of this." And one of the things that I've appreciated is that our H.R. team has done a masterful job of saying of all of this information, what are the small number of things that we're going to really go after? So in some ways it frees us from—what you can feel perhaps is there's so many good issues that we need to address, it frees us from trying to do all of them, to say, "We're going to choose a small number of things, and we're going to dig in a little bit deeper."

And, you know, I remember one of the first years, our lowest score was on retirement plan and that, surprisingly, we didn't have a retirement plan. It wasn't even something and yet we have a relatively young workforce and saw that this actually could be a great gift to the staff, that this is something that we could do that would make a positive impact for years to come. And we talk about investing in entrepreneurs around the world, why are we not investing in our staff? And so on a very practical and concrete way, we were able to make some changes, we were able to introduce that, and that has had a very positive impact, from a very low score to now something that is higher on that. And so grateful for that.

And similarly, there's been confusion about project management, and in some ways, this was part of our story that when we were early on, everyone sat in the same room around the same table and decisions were made. And yet now there are departments, and there had not been a way of adapting communication. There had not been a way of thinking differently about project management. And so we've been able to make some improvements there and still have some improvements that we need to make in that area as well. So I think that's the gift of having this opportunity to have external assessment, external information, and then to use that information to make concrete, practical change in a small number of areas that over time if every year we make three to four concrete changes, I think the impact in several years is just going to continue to grow and positively impact our ability to have a flourishing culture and to impact families around the world, which is the core of our mission.

AI: Yeah. I remember that discussion around retirement plans, and I thought, here's an organization who believes in savings, and here's an opportunity to provide the opportunity for savings. And that really has—it's not a big driver of overall staff engagement, we're the first to say that, but it certainly does make a statement. That's a great example.

So, you know, Peter, let's talk a little bit about outstanding talent. And we define outstanding talent as having highly qualified people with the necessary calling, character, competence, chemistry, and contribution to achieve the organization's mission, and outstanding talent leads to high performance and sustainable organizations that meet their goals and make the mission impact that they're really setting out to achieve. And because of this, we know that your organization's success is highly affected by the fit, experience, and giftings of your people, even you mentioned the attitude of doing whatever

it takes as you recruit, hire, retain, and promote your people. Give us a story of a person who is fit, experience, even giftings defines outstanding talent for you at HOPE International.

Peter: Yeah. There are so many of my colleagues that I just have the utmost appreciation and respect for. And, Al, I am glad that I got hired by HOPE International in 2004 because if the same Peter Greer came here today, there is no way that I would be hired. The wonderful growth in the team and so, so grateful for my colleagues.

But, you know, I think about the staff in the U.S., and there are so many of them that have come and have this heart to serve, but when you asked the question, my mind immediately, though, went to our global staff and the way that they are all in in the mission. And I think about someone like Gideon. He's the managing director of our microfinance institution in Burundi. And Gideon grew up in a situation that's very similar to many of the families that we serve today. He has a firsthand experience of what it looks like to grow up in a place of poverty. He understands firsthand what food insecurity looks like. He knows the challenge of getting school fees. And so Gideon, through a remarkable series of events, was able to have an education and to grow and was able to get into commercial banking and had a great job, and yet he saw this organization, HOPE International, and he left what was a much more prosperous path financially to join HOPE International and to lead our microfinance institution. And the reason is because he said, "I know what my life would have been like. I know the impact on my family had we had some of these services when I was growing up." And so his heart motivation of the Gospel, his desire to serve individuals living in financial poverty, and his desire to, in some ways, make a move that on paper doesn't really make sense is because he too believes in this mission that we have. And so I love his example. I love his expertise and experience and the way that he is the first person that I thought of when it comes to outstanding talent and serving with HOPE International.

Al: Yeah. And that's like so many stories that we hear of people who move from the marketplace to serve in Christian-based organizations, that take significant pay cuts, even risk, to join because they believe in the mission, and that's something that you mentioned earlier, and that's really a key to outstanding talent is having them really believe in the mission.

I know that at HOPE, outstanding talent means you respect, trust, and empower your employees to fulfill your mission; that is, to invest in the dreams of families in the world's underserved communities as you proclaim and live the Gospel, which is a great statement. In your mind, why is outstanding talent so necessary to your people at every level, seeking to advance your mission every day?

Peter: You know, one of the wonderful gifts that I was given a couple of years ago was breaking my ankle, and it was not a gift on the family front, it was not a gift on a lot of sides, but organizationally, I believe that this was the turning point in my own heart because if I'm honest, I think there was a little bit of this myth of our own importance, this myth that, well, what would happen if I wasn't there? And then I collided with a goalie, and I was in the ER and double dislocation, multiple fractures. My ankle was pretty messed up. And the next morning, I was supposed to go to Dallas, and then this was kind of our busy event season, and a few days later, California. And even before I was out of the hospital, colleagues had stepped up, my flight was canceled, other people had stepped up who were going to take these events. And I got a text from a friend in North Carolina, and he said something that was so powerful. He said, essentially, that "Of course you were missed by those of us who care for you. But I

got to tell you, from the event, you weren't really missed." He was saying it was evident. Others can do the job equally better and equally as good, and I think what he really was saying is, "They could do it better than you," and I love that.

I think that is the ultimate measure of our success is not what happens while we're there but what happens when we're not there, and how can we get over this myth of our own importance? How can we earlier let go of more activities, and instead of these activities not being done as well, my experience is that when we let go, they actually are done better. There are probably other people within the organization who have more giftedness. And that started, I think, a very healthy conversation internally of succession planning of, how do we think beyond ourselves for all of us in every position, how do we actively invest in others that will be doing our job at some future point, and what does it look like to, again, pop the illusion that if we're not there, the work is not going to continue?

And so I think that's why you have outstanding talent at every level. It's because we want to be a place of internal promotion. We want to be a mission that extends beyond the competency of any one individual and to see this as not about one person or a group of people but seeing about what's going to be best to achieve the long-term mission that we believe in, and that means we have to think beyond ourselves.

Al: I just got back from a week of vacation, and on vacation I was reading the old Peter Drucker book *The Effective Executive*. That's been recommended to me many times. I've looked at it before, and over and over it just comes back to the truth in that book, one of them which is hire people that are more talented than you are. I mean, that's the key for any top leader, and so often that's not what we find to be the case. So that's a great story, Peter. Thanks.

You know, a second turning point in your culture transformation came when you took some calculated, even action, steps that involved outstanding talent. In the context of similar organizations, your scores in outstanding talent are the strongest of our eight drivers for employee engagement. And as we look at your scores relative to other parachurch and mission types of organizations, and your leadership insights in this area are what I'd like to hear about. What is it about what you're doing at HOPE that really cause such great scores, relatively speaking, in outstanding talent?

Peter: I really don't know.

Al: Oh, now, come on. You're doing something, Peter. Yeah.

Peter: I don't know that we—I could tell you the one area that I am so, so grateful for that maybe is a little bit different in terms of how we think about this issue of staffing and talent. Several years ago, Chris Horst, my colleague, one of the things that he designed was thinking about our internship program. And that was something that every once in a while you get a friend who sends a résumé, someone's graduating, or someone has a little bit of a break and they want to go in, and we were doing that in not a very structured way. And so Chris went out, looked at other organizations, and tried to figure what would it look like to have a great intern program. If we're going to do this, let's do it well. And that has grown, and it has become an area of not just for the summer experience, but it's become a really significant way for us to get to know staff and some of whom have become full-time staff

members with HOPE International, some we've been so privileged to see launch into other organizations.

And, I mean, this year I heard from our H.R. team that we had over 300 applicants for maybe 15 spots, which is just crazy, the number of applicants. And we take the internship recruitment every bit as seriously as we do the job recruitment. And so we're able to get an unbelievably talented group of interns, and every year, a few of them, maybe not immediately but in a couple years, some of them come back as staff members. And actually, if you look at our U.S. staff, I believe last numbers I saw, it's just over 30 percent of our current staff started as interns or fellows. I guess I'm included in that stat. That's how I joined the HOPE International as well. And they are so engaged, and I think part of the reason is because, to my knowledge, it's difficult to make a hiring mistake when you've had that much selectivity in an intern, and then you've worked together for that amount of time, and then you come on staff, and so we have an incredible group of intern alumni that have joined the organization. And so I think that's one piece.

Maybe the other piece is I so, so appreciate that our H.R. practices, when it comes to hiring, really are looking at a small number of things that simply cannot be trained. So I think about, just real simply, if you don't have the right attitude, if you don't have the right aptitude to learn, if you don't have the right work ethic, then it doesn't matter, your past experiences. It doesn't matter about some of the other pieces. And so I think a lot of our kind of engagement of current staff is directly related to the broader conversation about how do we recruit, how do we retain, and what does it look like to make sure that we are continuing to bring in people in the organization that have that heart commitment, head knowledge, and belief that we will do whatever it takes to advance this mission.

Al: Let's talk a little more about your internship. That's fascinating, Peter. And as you said, about 30 percent of your current staff are graduates of that intern program. Tell us, that's in summer internship? How is that structured? Just give us some high-level thoughts about that.

Peter: Yeah, sure. So we have a summer internship, and then we have a longer-term fellowship program, and so that 30 percent includes the fellows as well as the interns. But the internship program, it's unpaid, and yet we pay for housing, and food and housing. So we want to make sure that we're covering the direct expenses, and then we also have a four-day work week. And we allow and help individuals have a job that Friday and Saturday because we really don't want this to be at least a net negative for the summer. So we want to share that at least individuals are covering. And then it's real work. So we don't put interns just randomly; we have job descriptions. We do not have some sort of a quota system of every department has to have one intern. We only have interns where there's real work to be done, where we really need help and expertise.

And then there's a structured system of listening to the experience; of having book studies throughout the experience; and having a mentor on staff to walk with them, having a desire for them not just to know about their department but to have lunches throughout the summer so that they're being exposed to the broader organization as well and growing in their understanding of the gifts and skills that they have; and in a similar way to what you were just saying, we want all of them to grow in their specific understanding of their skills, their calling, their competency; and hopefully, this is used as a positive experience for them as well.

I was in Charlotte just last week and had an opportunity to connect with an intern who was here four years ago, and it was so much fun to hear an update and to hear how God had used this summer together to kind of clarify some things in her giftings and was used in a way to clarify where she was going to think about going next. And so I love that. I'm so grateful for the thoughtful way that the internship program has been developed and also for all of the interns that we've been so privileged to serve alongside.

Al: You know, I know of many organizations, they put on an internship program. They have a couple of people come in, it's not very well structured. You've, obviously, invested time and talent to really make that a positive experience not only for HOPE but for these individuals. Is there a group of people that are kind of responsible for this? Is there any suggestions you might have for others that are willing or interested in setting up an internship?

Peter: You know, I mean, we certainly have Alisa, who is on our H.R. team and doing a fantastic job, and this is one of her areas of responsibility. And then we have a system that allows it, hopefully as easily as possible, for all of us to follow the same steps in terms of recruitment and individuals, do video as part of the way that they apply for the internship to make it as easy as possible to involve very efficiently a number of people involved in those decisions.

But I would say, related to our first topic with rooting for rivals, that everything that we have at HOPE International is open source, and so if there's anyone, any other organization that has an interest, we would be more than happy to share with the process that we go through; the internship, what it looks like for us, because I really do think it's a great way to positively impact others. And again, looking at the number of people that have applied for internships at HOPE, that to me is an indicator that we need more of these types of opportunities, more opportunities for college students or college grads to get involved and to get a real experience of what it would look like to look in the different sectors or organizations and the places that we represent.

Al: I trust you're enjoying our podcast today. We'll be right back after an important word for leaders.

Female: Discover your key strengths as a leader, and identify your greatest development opportunities. It's yours with the 360 leadership assessment by the Best Christian Workplaces Institute.

Gain a true, accurate measure of your own leadership from a biblical worldview. Join the more than 1,000 leaders and their colleagues now putting their 360 insights and lessons to work every day. You'll receive a comprehensive 40-page report, development guide, and coaching session that will help you reinvigorate and transform your leadership for good. Start today by calling 206-230-8111. Or visit us at bcwinstitute.org. The Best Christian Workplaces' 360 leadership assessment. It's your first important step to transforming your leadership effectiveness.

Al: And now back to today's special guest.

That's great feedback. I really like the idea: the internships; the fellowship, as you mentioned; and it really gives you a chance to see how the person's wiring is, their calling, their character, the things that we've talked about. That's great. That's insightful. Thanks.

Also, your BCWI survey results revealed that the strongest of the outstanding-talent questions is effectively rewarding top performers. Now, many times Christian non-profits are surprised that that's actually kind of on the list. What is your philosophy around rewarding your top performers versus others in your culture, and does HOPE have a scriptural basis for this philosophy? What really is behind doing so well in this area?

Peter: Al, this is a thoughtful question, and I wish I had an equally thoughtful response for you on this one, and I hope that there are many opportunities for us to continue learning and growing in this. I can tell you a couple pieces. One is there's an amazing ability to have greater understanding when you just communicate what it is. And so I think about the way that our H.R. team created a document that talked about our philosophy on compensation. It's, in many ways, in many organizations, that can be kind of, is this a room where the lights are dim and people—or is it a dartboard people are throwing, or is it whoever complains the loudest, or how are those decisions made? And so for us, we're just really clear on that, that we're all here for the mission. But when it comes to that, that we do look at performance. We do think that that matters.

We look at internal equity, and we want to make sure there is no difference based on gender on that. So every year, we look at that as well. Is there internal equity across departments? Is there internal equity in how we think about overall compensation? And then we do look at the external market as well. We want to understand. Are we paying employees, are we compensating them based on others? And that's really important that when you talk about that external market to know who your comparison group is as well. And so for us, that means central Pennsylvania, Christian non-profit organizations. We are not comparing ourselves with San Francisco or New York. We're not comparing ourselves to the private sector. And we know that our colleagues and friends could get jobs there if they wanted to. So that's real important to know kind of who your comparison group is. So I think for me it begins with communication, begins with, this is how we think about that, and inviting conversation as well.

Again, we talked about our H.R. team, but I so appreciate even the way our H.R. team conducts, instead of just conducting exit interviews, they conduct stay interviews. What would it look like? Tell me how you're doing. And tell me are there any concerns that you have. And just the ability to invite honest feedback outside of an external survey, but to have a habit and a practice of saying, “We're in this together. We want to care for each other well. Let's just have a conversation. If there's something going on that's gnawing at you, let's get it out. Let's talk about it.” And so, hopefully, being an organization that beyond kind of rewarding top performers—I think that's a sub point in a broader conversation—let's make sure we're communicating who we are. Let's make sure we're inviting individuals to speak in where there are areas of discontent. And let's have the conversation.

Al: First of all, Peter, I just want to reinforce having a compensation philosophy that's spelled out really is helpful in this regard, and, as you say, performance is part of the outcomes that you look for, and having clear job descriptions and talking about individuals' development and performance is just part of that process. Yeah, that stay-interview concept, we spend so much time interviewing new candidates and investing in new candidates, if we could just reallocate some of that to making sure that we've got our current top performers on board and that they're really committed, and if there's anything that we can take out of their way to make them even more effective is a great conversation to have.

Recruiting and hiring highly capable people is another hallmark that you have. In fact, I was looking at one of your engagement survey results and open-ended comments, and one of your employees said HOPE gets the right people onboard and puts them in the right seat on the bus, to use some of Jim Collins's terminology. What are some of the differentiating practices that facilitates such a strong feeling among your employees? I mean, this is an employee saying this in an open-ended comment. So what brings that about where your employees have that view that you recruit and hire the best people?

Peter: Yeah, well, I think we have to give credit to Jim Collins for that and so grateful, again, for the way that that allows us to think about that, getting the right people and making sure that they're in the right seat. And this is, again, probably all downstream from, let's make sure our recruiting practices are thoughtful, are robust, and imagine how many issues we can avoid by that thoughtful recruiting process. And I think we all know that. When you don't get the right person, sometimes you know immediately and that hurts. So you want to avoid those situations as much as possible, not just for the organization but also for that individual. That's a terrible thing to go through when it's not the right fit. And so I guess being really, really thoughtful with that recruitment process.

And I guess the other side of that is I've learned a lot from our team, but not avoiding difficult conversations. If there is something that it's not a right fit, I've seen a lot of Christian ministries say, "You are a brother or sister in Christ. We love you. We know you're here for the right reason, even though it's not the right role. We just can't make that transition." And I just have so appreciated the approach that our team has had of saying all of that is true except for the last part. "You are our brother and sister in Christ. We will be together for all eternity. We are so glad for your heart mission, and we are so sorry that this is not the right fit." So the ability to have difficult conversations, the ability to make difficult decisions, hopefully in as grace-filled a way as possible. But I feel like we can't talk about recruitment and retention without also talking about, and are we willing to make some—have the difficult conversations where those are necessary as well?

And then, maybe just more concretely on kind of the recruitment process is so appreciate bathing everything in prayer, bathing that, saying, "God, would you please guide us," and praying for the candidates as well, and "Would they not say yes to this opportunity if this is not the right role for them as well." And then to think about inviting a team in and giving everyone on the team the ability to have veto power on that hiring committee. We want to make sure that if someone just in their gut knows that this isn't the right fit, that we have that ability to pull the stop button, no matter where we are.

And I guess lastly is, as painful as it is to not have the person in the role, that is less painful than having the wrong person in the role, so we're okay to come to the end of a search process and to say, "We didn't find the right person. Let's re-launch." And that's hard because when you get down to the end of it, if you didn't find that right person, it's—the question should never be, that's the best person that we found. It's got to be, that's the best person for that role. And giving ourselves freedom and flexibility, while we want to fill all positions within this number of days, to say if we don't, we're going to re-launch because it's that important for the long-term fulfillment of our mission.

AI: That's fantastic. And another tool that you have and I know that helps in this process, you've got a couple of acronyms that describe your culture. What role do they have in the recruiting selection and promotion process?

Peter: Yeah. Just think about—this was something that kind of developed early on, but this idea about what is the HOPE way? What is the culture? And in many ways, if you take it for granted, if you assume that it will always be there, that's the best way to assume that it will no longer be there in a very short period of time. And so this idea about what is our culture? We care enough about it. We know there's something special here. Let's write it down.

And so if anyone meets a colleague of mine at HOPE International anywhere in the world, I encourage you to say what is the HOPE culture? And my guess, my belief is that they'll be able to tell you about PASSION: prayer, allegiance, service, stewardship, innovation, optimism, nurturing, each with a tagline, each with a thought from scripture about how we want to live this out in the work that we do.

And then we celebrate that. We have a system online where we can nominate each other when we see individuals exhibiting that. And every staff meeting, we'll recognize one colleague who is going above and beyond and living out the HOPE culture. And so it's not just articulating it, but then it's celebrating it, and also making sure that when we look for future people, would they fit within that environment? Would they fit within that culture? And so that allows us to guide, yeah, not just celebration but also thinking about who we want to bring in to the HOPE team as well.

AI: Well, that's fantastic. I really like that idea of how you reinforce passion and the acronym and what that stands for in your staff meetings, and that's another hint that I had to say for our listening audience. How do you reinforce your values, and that's a great way to do it.

As we get towards the end of this, Peter, this is really a tight labor market. Retaining your best, most capable talent has really got to be a challenge, not only for HOPE International but other Christian ministries that are listening. How are you really able to keep your top talent?

Peter: You mentioned that you were reading *The Effective Executive* by Drucker not long ago, and I love one of the famous Drucker lines that you get what you measure. And I might add onto that—I'm sure other people have as well—but you get what you measure, and you really get what you celebrate. And so I think when it comes to this idea of retention, a couple of things: one is measure it. Let's look at how we're doing, and if there is some kind of change that's happening, let's make sure we're understanding why. Why is that happening?

And then celebrate it. When individuals hit certain milestones within the organization, we have additional things that we do. So two years, and you go to the country to see the work, no matter what your role. We want to make sure you understand what you are contributing to. Five years, we have a future fund, and invest in that individual's fund, whether it's additional money in their retirement-savings account to really give a little more fuel to that, hopefully. And then, the 10-year celebration, thinking about the dream fund. Is there something that you've always wanted to do, and helping them think through that and then provide resources to make that happen. And so celebrating, celebrating those milestones and doing that publicly as a team I think is an important way of doing it as well.

And then, hopefully, more than that, though, is just trying to decrease the proximity gap. Sometimes within an organization when you've been there a long time, you can focus on the work that's right in front of you and miss out on the bigger story. And so every year, we invest in bringing our global

leaders together, and that is a time for everyone to see and to hear firsthand from the team around the world what's going on. And so grateful as well for that.

But all that being said, I think the other piece is we know that there will be a time where colleagues are going to have a calling to another organization. And I think that's the last piece is we will not try to keep an organization at HOPE International no matter what. When someone has a wonderful opportunity where there is something that's happening, we want to send them off with our love, with our blessing, with our prayers, with our support in any way that we can. And that goes back to our rooting-for-rivals idea, that that's part of being a bigger movement, a bigger mission, that extends beyond HOPE International, that there are other organizations that have just as valid a calling and mission. And so when staff go off, we want to send them off with our blessing and to help them be successful in their new roles as well. And so we love—that has been—it's difficult to say goodbye to colleagues, but there is also a spirit of celebration and hopefully watching them go to God's next assignment for them as well.

Al: So, unlike many secular organizations, they have the wall of shame for people that go to another organization; at HOPE, it's more of a wall of celebration because they're actually out serving the kingdom in another role. I love that, yeah.

And tell us a story, Peter, about how—I know you've promoted some of your most highly capable employees into key roles. Anything come to mind there?

Peter: I'm writing down your idea. I think that's brilliant, of celebrating some of our former staff in their new roles. On that, I think that is a brilliant idea, Al. So, yeah.

You know, a couple of the internal stories—and you could go around. We keep track of how many internal promotions there are, and we open up our searches to external candidates, and that is certainly a place where a lot of our employees. But one of the things that has been so much fun is to see some of the individuals that we've brought in and then to watch them have more and more responsibility and more and more growth in their careers.

And so I think about Chris Horst. He started as the executive coordinator at HOPE International and talked as he was in that role, kind of re-launching our internship. And then he was sent to Romania and to figure out should we expand into Romania. And then came back, and now he is our chief advancement officer, overseeing a half of the organization on that. And then promoted consistently. And every single thing that he has done, he's done well. And then, maybe interestingly, when he went into the chief advancement officer from the vice president of development, the person to fill that role was Erika, who was also an executive coordinator, executive assistant, and grew in that. Was a regional rep. And so I think about the two of them, that Chris was promoted and then Erika was promoted. And while we did kind of look for external candidates as we do these searches, there is a wonderful talent pool of people that we hire because we believe in them, in their heart, in their capacity, in their attitude, their aptitude, their work ethic, and so it's been so much fun to watch individuals grow in their careers, given more and more responsibility with HOPE International. But I could go on. There's a number of other examples, both here in the U.S. as well as around the world of individuals that have grown in their role and influence at HOPE International.

Al: You know, one of the things I like about leaders: leaders are learners, leaders are readers. And I'm wondering if there have been any books that you found helpful in building fantastic teams with outstanding talent.

Peter: You know, the two that came to mind immediately. One was this book *Connecting*—it's an older book—but it's called *The Mentoring Relationships You Need to Succeed in Life*, Paul Stanley and Robert Clinton. And in particular, I believe it's Chapter 11, but they talk about this constellation-mentoring model that has had a profoundly positive impact on my life, where they talk about, don't just look for one mentor. Very rarely are you going to find that one person that has all of the expertise in all the areas that you want to grow in. And that they said, break it down into a constellation. And I did that early on with my time at HOPE of saying these are the areas that I want to grow in, and very specifically, to find these individuals and to ask them concretely, would you do a two-two-two model of mentoring with me? Would you meet with me two times a year, for two hours each time, for two years? And I will do assignments, I'll do anything to be ready. And that has had a profoundly positive impact and opened up some doors to some lifelong friendships as well. And so that idea of constellation mentoring has had a positive impact on me.

The other thing I'm reading just right now is this book called *Rest*, not written from a faith-based perspective but a fascinating book, and all about the way that our body and mind are created, and what does it look like to have healthy patterns of rest and to no longer celebrate workaholicism in Christian ministry, for many of us, as a badge of honor but actually see it to decreasing long-term effectiveness. And so I think that's had an impact as well and caused us to do things like we have a “no email on Sunday” rule. We're just not going to do it. And we will call each other if I see an email written on a Sunday. That's just organizationally we rest on that day and trying to have as much as possible that pattern of healthy rest at a bare minimum for us. That means one out of seven, that's a day that we're not thinking about HOPE.

Al: Great. That's a great story. Thanks, Peter. And I really like the two-two-two way of connecting with mentoring relationships. I'm going to go back and look at that. And I think for a lot of our leaders that are listening, that's a very compelling and interesting concept.

And, Peter, I've really enjoyed everything we've learned today, and this has really been fantastic. And I just love the thoughts of the way you've connected outstanding talent and some very concrete and specific action steps along the way, from just looking for people that have the heart, the right heart, that really believe in the mission, and then your PASSION acronym that you've talked about, internships and your H.R. practices, also the way you've developed a compensation philosophy, you have stay interviews. I mean, those are all individual things that we've taken away, but in light of all we've talked about, give us one final thought that you'd like to leave with ministry leaders and all of our listeners.

Peter: Yeah, maybe just the final thought is recruit well. How many of these issues, if you recruit well, just over time, if you have the right people, it's amazing what happens. And don't be lured by experience and really look for things that are the core building blocks that are going to be a far better predictor of long-term engagement and success than that. And then maybe lastly, just delegate and

celebrate. Delegate—keep finding ways to empower the team around you, and celebrate where you see the culture and individuals living out the type of culture that you want within a workplace.

Al: And one last question, Peter. Where can we learn more about you and your books?

Peter: Yeah, well, certainly, for HOPE International, just hopeinternational.org. And a little plug on that. If you go to hopeinternational.org/resources, everything that we have is available there, so if there's anything that could be helpful to others, we'd be more than happy to share that. And then for the books or for me, I do a little bit of blogging, and certainly information on the books is available at peterkgreer.com. The information is there.

Al: Peter Greer, president and CEO of HOPE International, based in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, my birth city, and serving the world. Thank you for sharing your wisdom, insights, and stories, and thank you for extending your ministry to the leaders who have been listening and benefiting from all we've shared today.

Peter: Well, we so appreciate you, Al. Really enjoyed our conversation. Thank you.

Al: This has been great, Peter. Thank you. And to our listeners, I want to thank you for listening to the Flourishing Culture Podcast and our new continuing series, the "Eight Ways to Build a Flourishing Culture."

Next week, we'll have another outstanding-talent discussion, the third of the key factors that make up the FLOURISH model.

Thank you for investing this time in your workplace culture today and your own development. And if there's an insight, story, or action step that you really enjoyed these past few minutes, pass it along to others so they might benefit as well. And please, review the show wherever you listen to podcasts.

This program is copyrighted by the Best Christian Workplaces Institute. All rights reserved. Our writer is Mark Cutshall; our social media assistant is Solape Osoba; and this is Al Lopus, reminding you that a healthy culture drives greater impact and growth for your organization. I'll see you again on the Flourishing Culture Podcast.

Male: For a free transcript of today's podcast, visit blog.bcwinstitute.org. Join us next week for another one-to-one interview with a respected Christian leader. The Flourishing Culture Podcast with Al Lopus is a presentation of the Best Christian Workplaces Institute, helping Christian organizations set the standard as the best, most effective places to work in the world.