



The Flourishing Culture Podcast Series

“How to Take Internal Communication from Poor to Engaging”

December 2, 2019

Bill Bush and Dave Sutherland

Intro: What are the communication practices that have facilitated rapid growth for Rock Point Church in Arizona? Today we're going to listen in on a conversation with both the lead pastor and executive pastor as they talk about how they engage their staff in a way that has built a flourishing culture. Listen in.

Female: This is the *Flourishing Culture Podcast*. Here's your host, president of the Best Christian Workplaces Institute, Al Lopus.

Al Lopus: Welcome to another episode of the *Flourishing Culture Podcast*, where our goal is to equip and inspire you to build a flourishing workplace. We are here to help you eliminate workplace distrust, improve your employees' experience, and grow your organization's impact. And before we meet our special guest today, I urge you to subscribe to this podcast. As a result, you'll receive our action guide. It's our gift to help you lead your organization's culture to the next level. To subscribe, simply go to bcwinstitute.org/podcast. Hit the Subscribe button, and receive our free action guide.

Also, if you could share this podcast with others, and rate it, it would really mean a lot to me. Thank you.

And now, let's meet today's special guest.

Bill Bush is lead pastor at Rock Point Church, a large and thriving church in Queen Creek, Arizona, and Dave Sutherland is the executive pastor, and together they are leading the way to building a flourishing workplace culture. And if you who are listening want to experience a greater degree of trust, unity, clear communication, and productivity amongst your employees, who feel tremendously engaged, love coming to work, etc., you're really going to get a lot out of these next few minutes. So, Bill and Dave, we're so glad to have you on the *Flourishing Culture Podcast*.

Dave Sutherland: Good to be here. Thanks for having us.

Al: Yeah, great. Okay. Well, let's just get started.

I've got to ask you right off, as your staff took the BCWI staff engagement survey for the first time last year, what was your first, immediate reaction inside when the survey results came back and revealed that you had a really tremendously flourishing culture? How did that feel?

Dave: Well, we've always known ourselves as the Island of Misfit Toys, so when we actually got these results, we really felt affirmation that we have a really great staff and a really great culture, and what we are doing is working.

Bill Bush: Really, when we got the results, it was kind of what I expected the results to be. And I kind of thought about it: it's like either we were doing well, or Dave and I were completely delusional. So either we were completely not self-aware or what we were doing was working because it felt like we had a great culture.

Al: Yeah, boy, that's great. So you were self-aware, and the reality that you thought was true was actually true. Yeah, that's great. And when you consider how the health of your culture has a lot to do with the effectiveness and impact of your ministry, what do each of you most desire for your people—your leaders, your teams, even your entire staff?

Dave: Well, really, Bill and I have had several conversations about this over the years, and really what we want is each person on our staff to be confident, and we want them to be confident in who they are and, really, what God's really gifted them in. God made us each uniquely, and we are different parts of the body for a reason. And so we really want to help them realize what their strengths are, lean into their strengths, and create an environment for them to be the best version of who they are, and also to help them be a better leader, not just for us, but for the Kingdom as well.

Bill: And then, what Dave just said, I completely echo. That's why he's the executive pastor. He was able to detail it out. But when I think of what we really want for the staff, as I'm reminded of what former President Ronald Reagan said about the United States Marines once when he was asked about him, he just said some people spend their entire lives wondering if they made a difference in this world; the United States Marines don't have that problem. And that's really what I want for our staff, our team. I want them to know, to be able to live out their calling and their dream in a way that they know that God used them to make a difference in the world, and they never have to wonder about it.

Al: That's great. Yeah. There are a lot of good reasons why pastors will take the staff engagement survey. What about you? What drew you to measure the health of your culture? You know, we feel that's really important, and it's not an easy thing for many pastors to say, "Yeah, I want to really find out how things are." What brought you to the path to measure the health of your culture?

Dave: Well, I'd love to say we've always had a healthy culture here, but we haven't. Not at all. In our internal communications, that's been a problem for a long time for us. And so we actually had a strat ops. So we do it strat ops every year where we identify as a leadership team what the two to four things every year that we're going to tackle, kind of the big rocks that we're going to go after. And from

that strat ops, we identified internal communication was really poor. And it's funny; we actually made the person that was almost the worst at it in charge of it.

But we did our own survey. And so we asked, one of the questions on our survey was, how do you as a staff member hear about what we're doing as an organization or what other ministries are doing? And we got, all of the responses were all over the place as far as not good. All of them. But the one that summed it up the best was from an employee that was an admin, and she said it all depends on how good I eavesdrop in the office or at church. And so that's where we're like, yeah, we need to do something about this. And we really decided we're going to get better.

We really focused on internal communication and our staff culture as a whole. And so we were intentional about it the last few years. And so after that, we decided to do the Best Christian Workplaces Survey and see if what we were doing was actually working the way we thought it was. And so really we became intentional on it, and when you become intentional, something has to change. And so we've learned that over the years. But the survey, it confirmed a lot of things. I mean, we had high marks in areas, but we did have a couple where they weren't as high as we wanted, so it identified some of those. But overall, we're super happy with where our staff is culturally, internal communication—and I don't know what else to say.

Bill: Well, I'll jump in. To summarize, we learned early on that competency, which is, a lot of people worry about with their staff, like, "They need to be more competent. They need to be more competent." Competency can be corrected, but culture kills—plain and simple. And we learned that our biggest issues that causes problems wasn't competency. Every now and again someone is just not competent, but when they're not competent, they tend to not cause you too many problems. It's more like, "Okay, we can either train you up or resource you out."

But, man, when you have cultural issues and your culture is struggling, it takes highly confident people, and they can go down a road of becoming like, what I say, Eeyores, Eeyore from Winnie the Pooh. And it's like, oh, you get a case of the Eeyores, and it doesn't matter how good you are, it kills. It kills everything. So that's kind of when we realized, we discovered, we had some of these issues. We said, "This is holding us back. We have a really competent team, but we're not getting where we want to go because of that." And then the problem is, when you have that problem, you lose the good people, and you keep the people that aren't good. And it's an expanding problem.

Dave: And now we recognize that we have a good culture, but we still need to grow it. We still need to go after it intentionally, and we do need to protect it.

Al: You know, the survey revealed how strong your people are in healthy communication, which is really interesting; that's kind of where you started with your strat-op plan to improve communication so that it wasn't just good eavesdropping that allowed people to know what was going on. And here at BCWI, we see healthy communication at work when leaders involve employees, they seek and act on their suggestions, they explain reasons behind decisions, and create an environment for open dialog. And I bet you've got a favorite story of this at Rock Point Church.

Bill: You say “favorite story” like, yeah, this is a fun moment. Yeah, you know what? The story is, basically, we kind of got to this point where we realized you got to say “the last 10 percent” in meetings. That’s a common phrase we use around here. Even when you’re in a meeting, it’s a tough meeting, we always go around the room, “Hey, did anyone every say ‘the last 10 percent’?” because I know there’s a lot of people will say 90 percent of what’s bothering them. And the problem is, that last 10 percent is usually the real problem. And so you keep having meetings that sound so good. We high-five each other. “Hey, we got through. We communicated so clearly. That was great.” And then everybody walked out of there with the real problem still tucked away.

And so one of our favorite—well, our favorite, like you said, one of our most powerful moments, and this was not too long ago, we went on a lead-team retreat. It’s our high level, our lead team. And Dave and I were talking about it, and we have a great team. But I felt like there was some, that culture kills things. Like, there was some issues with people. They weren’t quite—it just seemed like meetings would get a little bit more heated than they needed to be. People would talk to you about the meetings after the meetings. People were getting frustrated. And Dave and I said we got to map out—this lead-team retreat is where we look for the whole next year.

We had so much to do in three days, but we both looked at each other and said we need to have—to borrow an illustration from the old show *Seinfeld*—we need to have the old Festivus, where you have the “airing of the grievances” kind of a moment, where we said, hey—he brought up the idea, and I agreed—like, this is going to be weird for a planning retreat, but let’s take the whole first day and as much time as we need to kind of go around the room and say, “This is 100 percent about, if you have an issue with someone in here, this is the time to be honest.”

And we took turns with—and I went first. I said, “Tell me what you have an issue with me. If there’s anything I’ve done that’s frustrated everybody, I just want you to—let’s just go around and talk about it, and do it.” And what’s crazy is I offered to go first because leaders go first. But I’ll be honest: I honestly thought I was just going to be the example, but no one really has a problem with me. And I was shocked when one of our guys brought up, “Hey, you know, you are the most gregarious, inspiring leader, and all this, but sometimes when you get really frustrated, you just alter the way you go, and you get really command oriented,” when I’m usually not that way, “and it shuts down the room.”

Dave: Well, and really, it was the issue that he has thought about this and processed it, and the team hasn’t. And so he’s already way down the road, and the rest of the team is like, “We’re not where you are yet. We still need to process it, and that he would get frustrated through that.” And so we brought that up. And the hilarious thing was—and we got to a really good place. Every single person, I think, shed a tear. Every single person owned what happened. And we actually gave each other the permission to, “Hey, when I do this, talk to me about it. In private; not in the middle of a meeting. But help me get through this when we get back to doing our ministry at church.”

But it’s funny because the next day, we started doing all the thinking about the future and all that. We kind of turned that corner. And Bill did exactly what we brought up the day before, and we pointed it out—

Bill: Because I gave them permission to do it in front of everybody; and everyone else, do it alone. But if I'm doing it in a meeting, just cut me off. And one of my hands went up. He's like, "Remember what you said yesterday and invited us to tell you about this?" I go, "Yeah." "That thing that you do, well, you're doing it right now." And they do. Now, once they go, "Oh, really? I'm sorry. Here's what I meant." And so now it's just become part of our culture. We have no problem in our lead-team meetings, saying, "Hey, you're doing that thing." "Oh, really? Okay."

Dave: And we got real personal, there. I mean, it wasn't just business. It was, we're talking about our past and hurts, hang-ups that we've had and how to deal with them. But it was such an incredible retreat that we had. It really propelled our organization forward, I think, for a few years. And the thing that we really learned is the enemy really tries to drive a wedge between us, and it's up to us to intentionally help each other grow through it.

Bill: And I think a lot of guys are afraid of that because the reality is this is a three-day retreat to do some massive long-term planning. You don't have much time, and we spent the entire first day, 33 percent of our retreat time, doing that.

Here's what's crazy. We ended early because once we cleared that air, the next day we got so much further so much faster that by the third day, we went and messed around and had more fun.

Dave: But even before that, we say, especially now, we don't let things get unsaid. We are constantly saying, "Say the last 10 percent. Say what needs to be said here."

Al: Say the last 10 percent. That's an example, right there, of authenticity—the value that you are talking about—the transparency, the willingness to be vulnerable, and as Patrick Lencioni says, even naked, emotionally, in front of your team. And what a great way to have the leader lead off. And then it was even exciting, I'm sure, for the next day to have them point out exactly what they had pointed out the day before. Wow. Good for you guys.

Dave: And I used it as a sermon illustration, so our whole church heard about it. So then they now know one of our values.

Al: Yeah. Wow, that's great.

So when people feel listened to and involved—and authenticity is certainly a part of that—it motivates them to bring their best, to do their best. And your employees really feel highly engaged and involved in decisions that impact them. How have you created a culture where they are encouraged to, and especially your leaders, to receive input on decisions, not just to sit in a room and make the decisions there themselves?

Dave: So, really, this is something that I think we've gotten really good at. It is one of our core values, and a lot of people have this as a core value. But I think we do take it to that next level, the "let leaders lead." And so—

Bill: That's the actual core value. We let leaders lead.

Dave: Yeah, yeah. And to really, truly let leaders lead, you really have to resource them to be able to lead in the way that they need to lead.

Al: I trust you're enjoying our podcast. We'll be right back after this brief word about a valuable tool that can pinpoint the true, measurable health of your culture.

Male: What if you could get an upper hand on unwanted turnover, relationship conflicts, struggling morale, and unproductive staff, and, at the same time, increase the effectiveness and impact of your organization? You can with the Best Christian Workplaces Employee Engagement Survey. This popular, proven resource pinpoints the true health of your workplace culture and ways to improve it.

You'll get a detailed breakout summary of the eight essential ways your culture and your organization can flourish, all from a principled, practical, faith-based approach that works. Join the more than 800 satisfied organizations, churches, and Christian-owned businesses who have said, "Yes." Sign up online today at bcwinstitute.org. The Best Christian Workplaces Employee Engagement Survey. It's your first important step on the road to a flourishing culture.

Al: All right. Now, let's hear more from today's guest.

Healthy communication also includes some top-down communication. We've been talking about bottom-up communication in a lot of ways. What are some of the effective patterns of communication you've created at Rock Point? Do you have some examples of how you structure communication throughout the week or the month or the quarter or the year that might be helpful?

Bill: Does yelling and screaming count? The reality is I wouldn't say what we do is outside of the box unless you count we took something out of someone else's box and put it in ours. Then I guess it was outside of the box.

Dave: But, really, we identified a long time ago that we really want to lean into our young leaders because they want to change the world, and they have phenomenal ideas, and they are great leaders. So we really wanted to figure out, who are the young leaders on our staff? And so we created something that we stole from another church, and we created something that we named special ops.

So our special-ops team is a group of the next-level leader. They're not on our lead team. They're the next ones that might become on our lead team. And so we give them a lot of things to discuss. But what we tell them is they need to think like a lead pastor or an executive pastor. They have to wear that hat when they're in that meeting so they really look at what we're doing as a church. So it gives them a voice. We allow them to make real decisions that impacts the entire church. We allow them to discuss whatever they think needs to be discussed, and then they bring it to lead team. And if there's anything lead team thinks that we need to tackle, but the lead team doesn't need to make the decision, we send it to that team as well.

But what we really found is some leaders that we thought would be phenomenal weren't, and some leaders that we were like, "Yeah, we think this guy's going to be good," they were really good. And so actually, two people on our lead team right now were from that team a few years ago. And so that's an

area where they actually decide, they're running our staff meetings, and they're making real changes at our church. And they love it because they have a voice, and they are feeling like they're changing the world. And that's the feedback we get from them.

Bill: And then top down, more directly too, is what we do that's kind of. Our staff meetings, I learned a lot at staff meetings. They try to make it bottom up. That's a terrible location to do that at because you have too many people. It'd take 10 years. You get more than four staff people, and bottom-up communication should not happen at a staff meeting. That's a chance for the top down.

So what we do is our staff meetings are related in two different formats. We do it every month. One staff meeting, we have what we want to relate and we want to relay. The relate ones are, I think, a lot of top-down communication is let's go get relational with one another and get to know one another and build that culture. So we just do something fun.

For example, one of them, we did a cornhole—that game—we had a cornhole tournament for the whole staff. But when you showed up, you had to put your name in a hat, and you drew your partner. So you didn't get to pick your partner, so you just ended up with whoever it is.

Dave: Yeah. It was Cornhole and Lattes.

Bill: Cornhole and Lattes. We do that. We've done some other stuff. So that we consider part of top down because you just get to know people. You get to interrelate.

But then the other meeting, we do some worship together but we do some of the standard, give some quick stuff. But then I always have a teaching time where I went through our definition of leadership. We filmed that for some leadership development. But then now I've been going through our core values. Today I just talked about authenticity with our whole staff.

And those are a chance to do that top-down envisioning because they sit at tables, I get to be clear with them all at once, and then, also, I can stop and go to your table, "Why don't you talk about this for five minutes?" So it's the relay. But then I also want them to want to respond to it.

And sometimes I'll do top down. Like, even our core values. We actually got them in a—like, I did exactly what we just talked about. We brought them in in the almost format, but we weren't completely in love with the language and all that. We brought them in and had the staff all look at them, and we gave them all one or two of them at a table, and said, "How would you word this? Give us a simple explanation of it." And our final format was pretty much formulated by them in doing that. So we did a top down where we can get response also.

But you got to relate, you got to relay, and then the top down also is the way we divide it up. Everybody is a part of a team. We don't have any solo staff people floating around. They're a department of one. There is no.... So I can meet with the lead team, and the lead team, every director level in our church backs into someone on the lead team. So we just do that standard. We talk about it here, they go filter it through, and then staff meeting is a chance to make sure we're all on the same page.

Dave: Yeah, well, and we're talking about our core values and all this, and Bill's talking about authenticity. Well, right before that, we have somebody on our staff that was doing our devotional at the staff meeting, and she got so authentic. I mean, people were crying during the staff meeting. She gave her testimony, and she was basically saying, "Hey, you need to be you. You need to be real. That's what drives people in, not the facade that you put up." And then Bill gets up and talks about authenticity. I'm like, he should have just said, "What Tammy said."

Bill: Yeah. But I studied, so I'm staying.

Al: Exactly. You did the homework, you're going to deliver. I understand that.

Al: Yeah. A lot of what we've been talking about involves trust and this trust building. And you have such a great flourishing culture, probably in the top 10 or 15 percent of all churches. And you have high levels of trust and certainly a great workplace reputation. Where have you experienced the absolute importance of trust within your culture?

Dave: Yeah, we could have 15 examples here.

Al: You've talked a lot about them already.

Bill: You set the stage, and then I'll give a story.

Dave: Yeah. So, really, we have definitely experienced that absolutely if you don't have trust, you're going to fail, and that's top down, bottom up, whatever direction. And we constantly have to make really hard decisions and have hard conversations. And so we have, multiple times, we get to a point where we're like, is there trust there? And if there is, we can get through it. If there's not, we either need to figure out a way to get trust or it's not going to work.

Bill: Yeah. For example, this has happened a lot. And for me as a leader, what I've learned is, "Do you trust me?" is one of the most-powerful questions a leader can ask. And a lot of leaders avoid it. I think they avoid that question. They'll argue. They'll say, "Here's the vision. I need you to get on board. What's holding you back?" But we'll dance around it, but won't look at someone straight in the eyes and just finally say, "Hey, do you trust me?" And I think a lot of leaders, we avoid that question because we're actually afraid of the answer. It's like the old Sesame Street book, *The Monster at the End of the Book*, Grover was really worried about the monster at the end of the book, and it turned out he was at the end of the book. And I think a lot of times we don't want to ask that question because I think a lot of leaders, deep in our hearts, we're afraid of what they might say. And so there comes a moment when you're trying to lead, and if someone's just kind of not getting stuff to the side, it's just not—it's a tough moment. I think there are those moments that you kind of have to just look at someone and say, "Listen, put all this stuff aside. Do you trust me?"

There have been some key, pivotal moments in the history of our church that that was the question, that was that turning point, that crossroads, that thing. And one of the most recent, is someone on staff who had been there a long time, great at what they do, but we've let them come up into a higher level of leadership. And we knew it was a risk. They felt called. But they're great at what they do, but they

are not good at managing. They just weren't managing people. They can't manage people at all, and it was a colossal—and they've been here forever, and they're beloved. And so to try to have this conversation, we needed to redirect them. And you know you run that risk of hurting their feelings and all of that.

And as we started to share, I said, I looked at this guy in the face and said, "Listen," Dave and I went to him and we talked it out. I said, "We got to have a tough conversation, and it's going to be really easy for you to take the wrong way. I'm going to be super, just flat-out clear, brutally honest with you. You got to know I love you, and I just want to ask you this question. Of all of our years together, do you trust me?" Not do you trust the vision, do you trust the organization, do you trust God? All of those things we should trust. But I need to know right now if you trust me, because the reality is it doesn't matter if you trust all those other things. You can talk until you're blue in the face, thought you had an incredible discussion, but if people go away not trusting you or you trusting them, you really didn't get anywhere.

And so he did. He said, "Yes, I do." And then we had a really brutal three-hour conversation. At the end, I said, "You need to go think about this." And I had to be honest. I said, "Listen. In the end, I need you to go down this road, not that road, because I believe the road you wanted to go down is not going to end the way you want to. I think you're missing out not going down this other road. And if you trust me, I think you'll be happy. But if you can't trust me, we're probably going to be done." And he went and thought about it and came back, and because of the trust and because I invited him to trust me, he came back to Dave and I the next day and said not only, "I'm in," he actually thanked us. He thanked us for loving him enough to just be brutally honest in a loving way, a caring way, not a "I'm so mad at you. We've written you up, and here's your file, and you're in trouble," because we kind of get that passive-aggressive wait when I really think some guys, if you're listening to this podcast, some of you leaders need to sometimes, that tough—you keep having the same conversation over and over again. It's because you probably need to look someone in the face and say, "Do you trust me?" And then actually ask yourself the same question about them. Because if you don't have trust, then it doesn't matter what else you do.

Al: Yeah, that's the foundation.

Bill: You're done. You're done.

Dave: And the P.S. is he is completely thriving and happy now because he chose to trust.

Bill: Yeah. He chose to trust.

Dave: But there have been—Bill has asked that question, and there has been a response where it was, "Yes, I trust you, but I don't trust another person on the team." And we got to a point where that was a fork in the road.

Bill: Yep. And I had to say, "Well, listen. On my lead team is a lead team." And I go, "I can't have lead-team members that believe and trust me but don't trust each other. And there's not enough data for—I think there's some things that person does that you guys rub each other the wrong way. They do some

things they probably need to grow in. But, man, you are pathologically unable to trust this person right now.” And I finally—that’s with a person that goes way back with me, and I had to look at him in the face—we were going to a meeting where we thought we’d worked it out—and we got out of the car, and I looked before he got out of the car, and I said, “Listen, you realize none of this works if you can’t trust that person.” And he goes, “You know what? You’re right. Give me a day to think about it.” He came up the next day and handed me his resignation. And the cool thing about that is we stayed friends, and he’s back on our staff now. He’s back on the lead team, five years later, and we’re in a much better position now. So we did trust each other.

Al: And talking about trust and healthy communication, that brings me to one of my favorite words, particularly around, is it worthwhile investing in culture and relationships and communication? And the word I’m thinking of is *results*. Give me one of the biggest, maybe even a life-changing result going on in your culture with your people these days. Any results you can share with us?

Dave: I think the obvious result for us is we have had explosive growth. We have grown as a staff, as an organization, and that has really challenged us. But at the same time, we’re making an impact on this community. But from that, one of the things with growth means your staff needs to grow in numbers as well. And so this year, we’re in the middle of hiring 14 new staff members. And so hiring 14 new people on a staff of 60, that could change culture, right? That culture could change if you aren’t intentional about keeping it and growing your culture. And so that’s one that we’ve had to be super intentional with.

Bill: Yeah. I would echo that. That idea that when we first took the survey a year ago, we scored really awesome, and now we’re looking at all these staff add-ons, and I’m like, you know, if we get this wrong, we could really dilute and twist up our culture and cause us all kinds of headaches. And so one of the things that the impact is, our very success could lead to our very downfall. And that’s a scary thing. And it’s awesome that we’re impacting people, and it’s awesome that we’re starting to be known as a place people want to work at, and that’s great, but it’s scary. And part of the hard thing is we’ve had to stick to our guns in our hiring process because part of our process has been to really have the competency interview. The hiring director can figure that out. Then we send them through three rounds of cultural, like, these—we dip around them, and we put different people in the room. You don’t have to be a higher-up. We put people in the room that we know if you cut them, they bleed Rock Point. They just get it. And we want to know, just listen to these questions. Do you think they’re us? And we’ve overloaded that system right now, and so some people are getting mad, going, “Can’t we just cut the system down a little? Can we speed it up? Can we get this to get it done?” And we’ve had to stick to our guns and say “No, because every time we violate this and we cut a corner, we end up cutting ourselves.” So that’s been one of the things that I think it’s been life changing is to how this culture has led to impact.

Al: Isn’t that a great thing?

Let’s go to the question that a lot of people have, and that is from a personal perspective, maybe even a faith-based perspective, one distinctive quality of your culture that truly pleases God and delights you as well. Is there a thought as you bring a spiritual dimension to culture?

Dave: Yeah, absolutely. We have really learned a basic truth: God wants us to grow closer to Him and help others. That's the no, duh. But really, what we have learned is who we are today helped us to get here. But who we are today is not who will get us to where God wants to take us. So we need to grow. We need to grow in leadership. We need to grow spiritually, grow closer together as the church body.

And for me, I think one of the things that—I love how you said, truly pleases God and delights us as well, is a couple of our values that almost seem contradictory but they're not is we have a value that's fun. And what we mean by *fun* is we will laugh loud, hard, and often. And what we mean by that is, hey, we take God serious, we take the mission serious, but you know what? Sometimes you just can't take yourself too serious. And I think that helps with authenticity. I think that we're willing to laugh. You know, I grew up in a home that when everything got tough, they'd be like, you know what? Just laugh. What else are you going to do? And look at the situation.

And I think if you're trying to do something brutal and hard, but you're with a team that's willing to make the best of it, you're going to get further. And so we have this idea of fun that really lightens it. But then we have another value. It's called effectiveness. And what we say with effectiveness is we put effectiveness before excellence. Now, it doesn't mean we don't want excellence, but excellence is a tool; effectiveness is the goal. If you put excellence first, you're just going to be excellent, but you don't know what it's for, "Oh, we're going to make the best video. We're going to have the best band. That's going to be the smoothest communication of a sermon," great, that was excellent, but was it effective at reaching what you were supposed to do? And what I realized is when you put those two together, that's been super awesome for our culture because when you really look down, deep down, what do people really want in their life? They want to know that it made a difference, and they want to enjoy the journey. So if we can have fun and pursue effectiveness, we're not about excellence of always produce, you got to be perfect, authenticity, we put that transparency above perfection, when now free to be us. We're free to enjoy our journey and not take ourselves too seriously, but go after really having an effectiveness. And I've just discovered that that really draws people in. I mean, it does. And I think that pleases God. It sure makes it a lot more fun for us. I mean, we like it.

Al: Boy, we've just learned so much today. And Bill, Dave, let's wrap this up. Is there anything that you'd like to add to what we've talked about?

Bill: Well, two things that I would say is when it comes to this idea of culture first and then how you keep going is I would say this: I talk about sticking to your process when you hire because they go, "How do you have such a good culture?" I think what really transformed our culture wasn't this "on the outside in." It was more like who you hire. Start to put a team around it to you. So know your process. So really, what I like to say is, know who you are and then hire yourself. You need to know who you are and hire yourself. I mean, look for who's going to fit and who's going to be, because then culture fits. You're not fighting, you're not giving all this training on "you better be these core values." You find people that are those core values. And then along with that is when it comes to keeping your team on course, on feeling inspired and wanting to be a part of it, I think we have a statement around here that says we can do anything, but we can't do everything. So picking the right things.

And then, finally, my last thought here is if this is the last question, the last thought I would say is, really, if you are a leader, especially at the top end like me, the main guy or in that really high level, but

any level of leadership, I think to really build a good workplace and build a team that likes what they do is you need to reconfigure what you think your job is as the leader. I think that you need to think of yourself as a bulldozer, not a barrier. You need to be a bulldozer, not a barrier, meaning, in other words, you need to be a gate crusher, not a gatekeeper.

And I think a lot of leaders, they think that their job is we have this position, we have this, we've taken this ground, and now we've built our fence around it. And I have a gate, and my gate is supposed to keep the right people on one side of the gate and the wrong people on the other side of the gate, when what we're really called to be as an organization is to empower people to go run after their dreams, run crazy, and expand, and go where God wants them to go, and go for it. And my job as the leader is not to be the control-freak keeper of the gate. My job is to be the bulldozer that crashes through the gate, and we become the bottleneck. And I go, an organization will not get behind you until it's not about you. And if you can't let go of that and encourage leaders to do that, you're going to bottleneck it. You're going to hold it up.

And you know what's crazy is even Jesus said that when we are the church, and we go out and go for it, He said that the gospel, that even the gates of hell will not stop it. Well, what's funny is we as churches think that we have to put up our walls, put up our fences, protect our culture because the world's coming after us. Well, I don't know about you. My dad was a combat veteran of World War II, Korea, Vietnam. And he never once said, when we are in the thick of combat, we really thought we were in trouble when the enemy sent their gates into battle. They don't go, oh no, they're sending their gates into battle; we're in trouble. Gates are a defensive thing. They're about not expansion; they're about protection. And so what Jesus was saying is we're supposed to be on the offense. We're supposed to go crash the gates down.

Well, what happens when we as leaders set up a system of leadership that we're about protecting territory instead of expanding and freeing people to go? We're acting more like Satan than we are like God wants us to be. And so I think my bottom line would be, be the bulldozer, not the barrier. Learn how to be the—and when you break down fences and you break through barriers, guess what your team wants to do? They want to get behind you. They want to follow the way. That would be my last word on this whole thing.

Dave: And for me, thinking about staff and culture, really, a church, we are a relationship business. We need to take care of our team, not just as a business but personally as well. We need to really look at how they are as a person and care for them as a person. We want to put people in healthy, sustainable roles, not ones that they're always stressed out or always on the edge. And, you know, I really think one of the things we need to do is add value to our team. So I have, and I know a lot of leaders have, an open-door policy. I've actually heard things that you should limit your open-door policy. Well, I believe in that open-door policy to where I really try to invite people in that need help. I don't tell people, "Hey, you need to meet with me so I can help you get through this." They come into my office, and I try to add value. I try to help them get through whatever issue it is that they're dealing with. But I also take part of every conversation that I have to try to relate to them. I ask them about their family and to build that relationship. The better I know them and the better they know me, the better the business is.

And some people really separate that personal with business. And we've learned as an organization, we can't do that. Like, I care about the people here. I want to make sure they're paid right. I want to make sure their benefits package is good. And they're my friends. I know what they're going through. So we had a lot of staff that have young kids, and they're paying for child care. And Bill and I, we don't have kids in child care. We have older kids, or adults. But we know that's going on. And so for spring break, fall break, and summer break, we have child care for our staff, that we pay for. And the impact that that has on staff is huge. But that's a way we know what they're going through. We want to help them. We want to take care of them. We want to create a culture where they feel valued and have a voice.

Al: And it really makes a big difference. Well, thanks very much, Bill Bush, lead pastor, and Dave Sutherland, executive pastor, at the Rock Point Church in Queen Creek, Arizona, thank you for investing yourself to everyone who's listening and benefitting from all you've shared with us today. We really appreciate it. Thanks, guys.

Dave: Really, really appreciate taking the time. And hopefully, this is helpful to someone out there.

Bill: It was fun. Thank you.

Al: Okay, well, thanks very much. All right.

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