THE 8 DRIVERS OF A FLOURISHING WORKPLACE CULTURE

Using Scientific Tools to Build Flourishing Workplace Cultures and Engage Employees in Christian Organizations

A White Paper Presented by Best Christian Workplaces Institute
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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The following white paper introduces the research conducted by Best Christian Workplaces Institute, used to understand Christian organizational culture and help workplaces flourish. This document answers questions like: Why does organizational culture matter? What is employee engagement? What does it mean to become “Certified?” And what are the first steps towards improving a culture? The contents of this document are organized as follows:

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WHAT DOES A FLOURISHING CULTURE LOOK LIKE?

1.1. Imagine This . . .

You walk into the office, and you are immediately greeted by your manager and colleagues. Their warmth and support are genuine and show up just as strongly during high-pressure situations.

Throughout your day, you engage in multiple tasks that enable you to use your spiritual gifts and talents, and you allow yourself to be absorbed by meaningful and important work. You believe in the work your organization does so much that you would recommend their services to your own family and friends. You are consistently involved in decision-making, and you are surrounded by people that encourage your development.

When conflict arises, you know that the people involved will stay focused on asking the right questions that are conducive to the overall mission of the organization, and together you will find a solution without blame.

1.2. From Vision to Reality

All organizations can create a culture that is healthy and conducive to human and spiritual flourishing—regardless of where their culture starts. However, before an organizational entity can make a change it is important to understand the current state of affairs, including areas of strength, and areas for healing and reconciliation.

The Best Christian Workplaces Engagement Survey helps take the temperature of organizational culture. With eight culture factors that spell the acronym FLOURISH, our survey measures the culture of Christian organizations and provides important data that can aid the healing process and Christian spiritual growth.

“If our culture is strong, the spiritual and emotional health of our staff will be strong as well.”

— Joni Eareckson Tada
Joni and Friends
2.1. The 8 Drivers

To understand how cultures flourish, Best Christian Workplaces divides culture into its fundamental building blocks. Our Engagement Survey captures eight drivers of culture to understand strengths and areas for growth across a variety of unique workplaces.

**F** Fantastic Teams

*Flourishing cultures cultivate and demonstrate* cohesive teams that effectively engage in passionate, open dialogue. Fantastic teams exemplify a spirit of partnership and collaboration—not “me” but “we”—to achieve shared goals and objectives within a department, across departments, or organization wide. Fantastic teams create consensus, direction and momentum to establish, grow and sustain a flourishing culture.

**R** Rewarding Compensation

*Rewarding compensation programs provide* economic resources in return for an employee’s skills, time, and effort. Fair and competitive compensation plans provide a peace of mind and a sense of satisfaction that an individual’s personal and family financial needs are met. The extent to which employees feel “taken care of” by their organization can have a profound impact on their feelings of dedication towards the organization.

**L** Life-Giving Work

*Life-giving work means* work that has significance, purpose, and meaning. Work is life-giving when the skills and spiritual gifts of employees are leveraged in a way that gives energy. Employees have a sense that they were created or called to do the work they are doing and that the work is important, worthwhile, and fulfilling. They are trusted and respected by others and experience a sense of independence and decision-making. As a result, they experience the feelings of purpose, joy, and even fun at work.

**I** Inspirational Leadership

*Leaders inspire organizational excellence* by authentically living out Christian values (like humility, compassion, and integrity), exhibiting the Fruit of the Spirit, earning trust, and connecting with others in a way that achieves meaningful outcomes. As a result, their operations are well run, employees feel secure, and the organization is continually improving and reflecting Christ to the world.

**O** Outstanding Talent

*Organizational success is built* on the caliber of the people an organization attracts, retains, and promotes into key technical and leadership roles. Outstanding talent is described as having highly qualified people with the necessary calling, character, competence, chemistry, and contribution to achieve the organizational mission. Outstanding talent leads to high-performance and sustainable organizations that meet their strategic and operational objectives.

**S** Sustainable Strategy

*Sustainable strategy describes* the process used to achieve the organization’s vision and provide a solution to the need the organization has set out to remedy. Strategy generally involves setting goals, determining actions to achieve the goals, and allocating resources to execute actions. In flourishing cultures, a strategy is sustainable if the organization is able to meet the needs of those they have set out to serve in a high-quality manner and over time.

**U** Uplifting Growth

*The purpose of uplifting growth* is to improve the performance of individuals, groups, and the organization overall to meet the challenges of a changing world. Most significantly, growth comes from job-related experience, along with interaction with others (managers, mentors and coaches), and from formal education events. Learning new things increases an employee’s engagement and allows the organization to maintain and improve its effectiveness.

**H** Healthy Communication

*Communication is an exchange* of information between individuals for a purpose. In organizations, communication is effective when leaders involve employees—seeking and acting on their suggestions—and explain reasons behind decisions to create an environment of open dialogue. Organizations that practice healthy communication value diversity and experience an environment of mutual accountability, innovation, and unity.
2.2. Creating the Flourish Model and Measuring Organizational Culture

Subject matter experts created the original culture tools and employee engagement survey questions used by Best Christian Workplaces Institute.

Culture is measured using 51 survey questions, which ministry partners answer with their level of agreement, from “Strongly Disagree,” to “Strongly Agree.” After years of collecting data on these questions, the numbers were statistically analyzed using a factor analysis procedure guided by principal components analysis. This analysis suggested that the survey questions generally “clustered” into the eight groups described in Section 2.1.

The Best Christian Workplaces survey databases contain engagement data from hundreds of thousands of employees who work in various industry sectors and live across the United States of America and in countries around the world.

The map (below) depicts the number of employees surveyed by state:¹
3.1. What is Employee Engagement?

In his letter to the Colossians, the Apostle Paul wrote, “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters” (3:23).

This instruction from Paul reflects the spirit of employee engagement, defined by the early engagement scholar William Kahn as, “the harnessing of organization members’ selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances” — we would also add “spiritually” to this definition.

Employee engagement is about authenticity; it is about bringing and investing oneself into work. This investment is not merely the giving of time and skills; it is not merely “showing up.” Engaged employees have high energy, great enthusiasm, strong commitment, and a passion for their work, organization, and reflecting Christ to the world.

3.2. How is Engagement Measured?

Best Christian Workplaces captures employee engagement with a 4-question dependent variable that targets each of the four engagement components. For example, commitment is captured with the statement, “I would prefer to remain with my organization even if a comparable role at a higher pay level were available in another organization.” Engagement questions are answered with level of agreement, from “Strongly Disagree,” to “Strongly Agree.”
4.1. Flourishing Culture Statistically Predicts Employee Engagement

Across all industry sectors, multiple regression analyses reveal that the Flourish Factors predict 70.6% of the variance in employee engagement.

This is a high percentage in human factors research and suggests that the Flourish Model explains the majority of what engages employees. As a comparison, task variety accounts for 28.1% of the variance in engagement and having a proactive personality only accounts for 18.5%.

4.2. Certified Best Christian Workplaces

It is important to understand the strengths and areas for growth in an organizational culture before trying to make improvements. The Best Christian Workplaces Engagement Survey is used to build understanding and help accomplish our mission: to equip and inspire Christian leaders to build a flourishing workplace.

When organizations move to a place of flourishing, they are highlighted as a “Certified” Best Christian Workplace.

Numerically, “flourishing” organizations are defined as those with an average total culture and engagement score of 4.25 and above (“healthy” ≥ 4.00). The total culture and engagement score is derived from 55 questions (51 culture, and 4 engagement). A list of certified organizations can be found at:

bcwstitute.com/bcwlists.html

4.3. Industry Sector Trend Analyses

Across industry sectors, the average total culture and engagement score is 3.98 (SD = .65). This means that many organizations fall short of a vision of flourishing. However, there is variability between sectors, and with no sectors averaging below 3.75, this is a story of opportunity for those willing to take it.

The graph (below) shows sector total culture and engagement averages:
4.4. The Factors That Matter Most

Improving culture can be a challenge, and not all aspects of culture or organizational initiatives are equally important drivers of employee engagement.

Best Christian Workplaces Institute research provides practical tools for our ministry partners and industry leaders. This allows us to come alongside, encourage, and support those walking the road to flourishing. One of these tools is an analysis of the factors that explain the most employee engagement variance in relative terms.

Best Christian Workplaces uses relative importance analyses to determine the top culture drivers of engagement (and if you’re a “stats-wiz” this also helps us to overcome the issue of multicollinearity in multiple regression).

Johnson’s Relative Weights Analysis suggests that Life-Giving Work and Inspirational Leadership tend to be the most important drivers of employee engagement. In other words, leadership actions (like working with humility) are likely a more important first step than team actions (like conflict resolution training).

The figure (left) depicts the relative weights of the eight culture factors across industries (higher percentages indicate greater importance):

— Brian Stanton
Redeemer Presbyterian Church
WHERE DO I GO FROM HERE?

5.1. Learn
On the Flourishing Culture Podcast, Best Christian Workplaces President Al Lopus interviews leaders who share practical insights and strategies that can be implemented today. Hear success stories from our ministry partners, who share how their cultures grew and their organizations became flourishing workplaces:

blog.bcwinstitute.org/podcast/

Find us on social media and join the conversation:

5.2. Connect
Meet President Al Lopus and the rest of the Best Christian Workplaces Institute team:

bcwinstitute.com/about.html

5.3. Grow
Start the journey to flourishing today.

Join more than 900 faith-based organizations who have used the Best Christian Workplaces Engagement Survey to improve the health of their ministry and organizational culture:

bcwinstitute.com/survey.html

“
We’re going to continue to use [the Engagement Survey] as long as I have breath and I’m leading. It’s just a valuable tool for us.
”

— Glen Elliot
Pantano Christian Church
6.1. About the Authors

Al Lopus

Al is the President and cofounder of Best Christian Workplaces Institute, where he has conducted the broadest- ever employee opinion survey of Christian workers. Al is a recognized author, speaker, and consultant, who helps Christian leaders and organizations flourish. He publishes a weekly blog highlighting a Best Christian Workplace and the Flourishing Culture Podcast, featuring tips from Christian leaders on how to build a flourishing culture. Previously, Al served for 21 years in several leadership roles with the global human resource consulting firm, Willis Towers Watson.

Matt Magill

Matt is a Research and Culture Consultant at Best Christian Workplaces Institute. He manages and analyzes performance data from BCWI participants and ministry partners. Matt is also a doctoral candidate at Seattle Pacific University, where he is currently writing a dissertation in pursuit of his Ph.D. in Industrial and Organizational Psychology. In this role, he has managed and supported research projects on a variety of topics, including critical success factors for human resource initiatives and work-faith integration.

6.2. Notes and References

1. Statistics used in this report are based on data extracted from the Best Christian Workplaces Institute data warehouse in July 2017 and September 2018.
5. Special thanks to Dr. Amy Nagley, Ph.D., for prior reporting on these topics.
Our Vision

Christian workplaces set the standard as the best, most effective places to work in the world.