



### **The Flourishing Culture Podcast Series**

“How Flourishing Culture Leads to Happy Customers and More Revenue”

April 16, 2018

Troy Meachum

**Female:** 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 welcome back to the Flourishing Culture Podcast. We often receive feedback about the encouragement our listeners feel and the ideas they receive from our podcast. That’s why we choose guests who are actually certified Best Christian Workplaces, and today is no exception. We have the pleasure of talking with Troy Meachum, the president of ACR Supply Company, North Carolina’s leading HVAC and refrigeration wholesale dealer.

Troy is relatively new to the BCWI family and is part of our growing base of Christian-owned businesses. I believe you’ll find today’s discussion encouraging and practical as you seek to improve the health of your culture, whether you lead a church, a ministry, or a business.

Hi, Troy, and welcome to our podcast.

**Troy Meachum:** Thanks so much for having me, Al.

**Al:** I’m looking forward to our time together. To help us get to know each other better, tell us a little bit about your background, ACR Supply, and what led you to your current role.

**Troy:** Well, we are in the HVACR distribution business, a company my father started way back in March 18, 1977. It’s a funny story behind that. It was my 16th birthday that day, and we were headed

out for a big birthday dinner celebration. My father received a phone call from his current boss at that time and said he no longer had a job. That was the day ACR Supply was born. I guess the rest is history.

I joined my dad a few years later right out of school in 1980. The first five years were pretty rough. I was one of those teenagers who knew everything, and you could imagine what that was like. I'm still shocked to this day that my father and our vice president, Lee Blakely, didn't fire me at some point, but thank the Lord they kept me on.

Through a series of just dramatic events that happened in my life, including my father kind of putting me out there for a sink-or-swim moment to open up our first branch location in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, in 1984. Just a lot of things began to come together. One thing I realized I did not want to do... I wasn't a believer at that time. I accepted Christ in '88. One of the things I understood is, "I do not want to be a failure. I don't want to be a stereotypical son of the boss." I wanted to really make my father proud, and I wanted to do the best job I possibly could. The rest is history!

**Al:** What a journey, and what a great story. You know, Troy, it's highly unusual for us to have an organization survey for the first time and be recognized for its flourishing culture. You guys have a flourishing culture. That's the highest category of the BCWI culture index, the benchmark that pinpoints the health of an organization's culture. Right off the bat, ACR Supply Company is already in the top twentieth percentile for companies we survey. Congratulations!

**Troy:** Well, thank you so much. It's pretty humbling to hear that. I had no idea we'd score that well, but we've been focusing on having a healthy work culture for a long time. You know as well as I do, Al, it doesn't come by accident. We really have been laser beam-focused since 1997 in creating a culture where everybody gets up each day, and they want to come to work.

That really does sound easy, but you know as well as I do, it's really hard. It can be very challenging, but also it can be incredibly rewarding. It's probably been one of the most challenging things I've done in my career. I could tell you there's a long story about how all that began, which maybe I'll share later on in the podcast. It's been a fantastic journey and very rewarding.

**Al:** Well, I think it's interesting, Troy. You've been on this culture journey for 21 years if you started back in 1997. Oftentimes organizations will ask me, "Well, how long will it take to actually change the health of our culture?" I would say, "Well, this is at least a three- to five-year journey."

**Troy:** At least!

**Al:** You've been on it for 21 years. We're looking forward to learning more about it. You know, building a healthy culture is something you've focused on again for 21 years. You even have a page on

your website that highlights the kind of culture you have. Tell us what's behind your desire for a great company culture.

**Troy:** Back in 1988, I accepted Christ as my Lord and Savior. As a result, God began to rapidly transform and change me and really my outlook on life. I began to understand for the first time it really wasn't about me. It was about the Lord using me to make a difference in other people's lives and most importantly to make a difference for his kingdom here on earth.

I began a journey of understanding really for the first time that my work was my ministry. It's kind of neat. I used to think work and ministry (after I accepted Christ) were like two different things. About nine years into that after following Christ, we had this real, I guess you would call it a watershed moment for our organization.

As my thought process was changing, I began to understand my work is my ministry. My ministry is my work. We had this meeting with my father and our vice president, Lee Blakely. We began to set a trail that day about where we were going to go, how we were going to get there, and what we needed to do to create that culture.

I'll expand on it later, but one of the things we decided on at that meeting was to develop our first mission statement. In that mission statement, we included the phrase "a healthy work environment." At that time, I didn't know what it sounded like. I thought I knew what it was like. What I realized was, "I'm not sure we have a healthy work environment." That just began a whole process of implementing things and putting them in place (and I'll share later on) that really helped us begin to get to the culture we wanted.

**Al:** Yeah. Wow! So it was that conversion experience where you began to realize work was your ministry. Ministry was your work. Then all of a sudden, you began to realize, hey, you have people who rely on you! Yeah!

**Troy:** Very much so. They're depending on me to do the right things every day. Most importantly, to create a culture they're drawn to and of which they want to be a part.

**Al:** Yeah, well tell us how you discovered the Best Christian Workplace Institute. What led you to actually measure the health of your culture with a survey tool?

**Troy:** Sure! Robert Bortins is a friend of mine. I'm a fellow member of C12 with him. He is actually in a different group than mine, but I had heard he had been through it. I talked to him about it, and he said it was very valuable and brought a lot great insight in his organization where they could really focus on specific areas, continue to help grow their culture, and become a healthy culture and a flourishing culture.

When I heard that, he encouraged us to take a plunge and jump right in. So that's what we did. That's when we made the contact with you guys, with your office. I'm really glad we did. A lot of great feedback came from it. Robert was the one who encouraged me to do that.

**Al:** In fact, we just recorded a podcast with Robert. It came out a couple of weeks ago. Your employees completed the Best Christian Workplace Institute Employee Engagement Survey, and it revealed the true health of your culture by accurately measuring where ACR Supply stood in light of our eight factors every culture needs to flourish.

The survey pinpointed a number of specific, proven strengths such as *inspirational leadership*. Your employees really appreciate how the company is well-managed. It's changing for the better. But even more significant is the way your leaders demonstrate Christian character, including integrity, compassion, humility. Give us a favorite success story, strategy, or even action step you've taken to demonstrate inspirational leadership and build it with your people.

**Troy:** Well, I'll tell you, Al, one of the most memorable moments for me in the whole transformation that took place in our company is something I briefly mentioned earlier. It was in 1997 when my dad and our vice president sat down at a local conference room and began to really brainstorm. Lee had been challenging me, "Man, Troy, I still have another 10 or so years left. I know you have a lot longer than that. We need a direction. We need a vision. We need to focus on planning. We need to focus on our people."

It was at that meeting we developed that first mission statement I mentioned earlier about the healthy work environment. I really began to understand at that time, as I said earlier, "These people are depending on me to do the right thing." What we did was as we worked through that day... It took us like a whole day. You've been through those meetings before, right?

**Al:** Oh yeah.

**Troy:** We spent a whole day trying to define what it is, why we pick our heads up off the pillow each day, and what it is we're trying to do. I'll tell you it's like anything, Al. You take, and you build these mission statements. You put them up on the wall. You want everybody to change and be like that.

Honestly, you can put anything on the wall you want to, but if leadership is not living it out every single day, then people are going to ignore it. They're going to think you're a hypocrite. We began to understand, "If we're going to create a healthy work environment, we need to continue to work on getting the right people on the bus, getting the wrong people off the bus, or getting them in the right seat."

After a long period of time (after several years after this meeting), we began to really focus on putting the right tools in place, getting these right team members on, getting the wrong team members off the bus. About the second or third meeting I had with our long-tenured team members who were not contributing to a healthy work environment... You understand what I'm saying.

**Al:** Yeah!

**Troy:** I would identify, say, "Okay, listen. I love you, but here's what's broken. Here's what we're going to do to fix it, and here's what the future has to look like. If we can't get from *here* to *here*, I really do love you (I care deeply about you), but you can't stay." I love the phrase, "Change people or change people."

If somebody really wants to grow and change professionally, spiritually, financially, any other way, I'm all in. Count me in. I'll invest all kinds of money, time, and effort to help them grow and change. What I realized was we couldn't continue to sanction the incompetence of that negative behavior... whatever behavior it was... that was contributing to an unhealthy work environment. When we began to act on that, Al, that was a big one for me, when we started acting on that.

I had guys who had dramatic change in their life. I had guys stand in my office with tears in their eyes, saying, "Nobody every told me how big of a jerk I was until you did. Now the help you got me through *this* tool or *that* tool, through helping, counseling, whatever, my relationship with my wife is better off now. My relationship with my kids is better off." I even had one guy accept Christ in my office. He just radically changed his life.

The part that really had the most impact on people is when we decided and we took serious this culture thing, this whole healthy culture or flourishing culture thing. We started asking people to leave. We treated them with dignity and respect. We loved them out the door. You can still call some of them to this day, and they'll tell you they were treated with dignity, respect, and loved on, but they couldn't stay.

About the second or third time we did that, our culture did a radical transformation. It almost did a 360 overnight. People began to say, "He's really serious." I said, "Yeah, I'm serious! First and foremost, I want to glorify God in how we do what we do, but we have to spend the rest of our lives together."

**Al:** Yeah.

**Troy:** "Who wants to be miserable? I don't want to be doing a death march to work every day. Do you?" Everybody connects with that. They get that. They understand that. That's been our journey. That's how it started, and we still do that to this day. So it works out pretty well.

**Al:** That's great, Troy! You know, I really like what you said, "Leadership is living it out every day." That really is true. We've used that terminology "culture busters or culture builders." That's exactly what you're describing. You were putting behaviors and describing behaviors that were culture *busting* and also describing behaviors that were culture *building*. You were saying, "Hey, we need culture builders. We're not going to pay culture busters anymore."

**Troy:** That's exactly right.

**Al:** Yep. Yep!

**Troy:** I'm with you.

**Al:** Oh yeah. The old saying, "Either they're going to change the people or change the people." Boy, that's exactly true. The flourishing factor "uplifting growth" is another area of strength you have at ACR Supply. Your employees feel like they're encouraged to develop and take advantage of opportunities to learn and grow. They also receive recognition for doing a good job. Give us a favorite company-wide practice you've used to honor your employees.

**Troy:** You know, I really believe, Al, if your people aren't growing, your company is not growing. I've never met an individual who is growing professionally, spiritually, financially who is unhappy. It's not natural. It doesn't happen. We spend a lot of time pouring into our team members. We have a number of ways we do that, but one of them is we developed probably about six or seven years ago a three-year leadership development program. We call it Future Leaders. Every year is different, but it's three years of curriculum, interaction, some workshops.

Over 60 percent of our people have been through that now because they want to grow as a leader. The way that works is we don't just take anybody. A leader has to nominate one of their team members, and that team member who is nominated then has to write an essay about why they want to grow as a leader.

They submit that to me, and an ad hoc committee and I get together, review that. Then we accept them into the program or not. I guess a quote I'll use from one of our team members, Scottie, said, "It's hard to go through this program, and it not change you." Most of it is content driven. We use all kinds of materials. We have an executive coach named Robert Ferguson who helps us as well.

The second year is actually one-on-one time with me. I spend 50 percent of my time doing one-on-one mentoring and coaching. Most of it is around this program. Like I said, the second year of the program is I meet with every single person in the class. There are usually about 15 every year. I'll meet with them individually one-on-one, and we'll cover the content for that given month.

We meet all year long (11 or 12 times that year). That one-on-one time has proven to be invaluable for just helping people grow in all these areas, for helping me grow. I mean, I learn something every time I'm around one of our team members. It also helps develop a deeper level of rapport and a deeper level of trust, which is just phenomenal. It's instrumental in helping with this flourishing culture.

**Al:** How many people would go through this at a time? Is it one at a time, or how many?

**Troy:** Yeah, the class size is usually somewhere around 10 or 12 to 15. If you start getting above that, it's too big.

**Al:** Yeah.

**Troy:** So we've had to hold some people back at times who weren't ready, or we had too many in the class. It was one of those things, when we started it several years ago, people were like, "Oh man. I'm not sure I want to do that." Then if you know the Millennial generation, now there's this phrase called "FOMO." It's called "Fear Of Missing Out."

**Al:** Yeah, right.

**Troy:** About the second or third year, people were going through it, really seeing change happen, and really beginning to buy in. They just seemed more engaged in what we were doing, happier. All of a sudden, everybody was wanting to be a part of the program. So it's pretty awesome. You know, I don't care if everybody goes through it. If everybody wants to grow as a leader... We believe leadership happens at every level wherever you are in an organization. It's been pretty phenomenal.

**Al:** This is really a great conversation, Troy. Tell us a little more about the content of this program. You have 90 employees. You're doing this three-year leadership development program, 10 to 15 people in every class. What do you cover over this three-year period?

**Troy:** Sure, okay. I'll talk to you about year one. We go from September through May. We meet once a month. It's a three-hour classroom-style workshop. It's not lecture. It's mostly interactive. Robert Ferguson, our executive coach, leads a lot of that. It's on conflict resolution, better communication, leadership skills, everything under the umbrella of leadership. Those are interactive workshops he works on.

In addition, what I do is I will also do some coaching using some John Maxwell material that we'll read, listen to, or whatever. Then I'll meet with them one-on-one during that same time frame and coach them through that. Once again, it's just content-driven. That's how that works.

Year two, as I said, we'll meet in January (whoever has been approved to go through the program), and we will go over what the agenda for the year looks like. We read a book a month, and we cover a

leadership video a month. They'll read that content. They'll watch the video, and they'll bring their notes with us. We set up our calendar for the entire year at that meeting.

I'll meet with them one-on-one at Starbucks or just some coffee shop. Then we'll walk through that stuff together. I pray for them then. The agenda for that meeting is pretty structured. I just love on them, encourage them. Then we push each other, and we learn from each other. We just grow. The content is phenomenal, so I have a great list of books we use.

Year three is kind of what we call our "leadership year three light." It's not quite as intensive. We cover the book of Philippians. We cover that. We meet once a month via conference call. We cover the book of Philippians, which is one of my favorite books of the Bible. We also read a book every quarter. Then we also listen to some type of audio cast, podcast, or something like that that's content-driven. On those conference calls once a month, we'll go around, and everybody will be sharing what their big takeaways were from the content we covered that given month.

**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.

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**Al:** All right. Now let's hear more from today's guest. Troy, you just said you spend 50 percent of your time mentoring and coaching people on your staff and your team. That's a goal you have?

**Troy:** Yes! That's a very specific goal I have. I have a wonderful leadership team who is taking care of most of the day-to-day. You know, I spend about 40 or 50 percent of my time doing my either day-to-day stuff, leadership stuff, or whatever, but about half my schedule is one-on-one mentoring time. When I have all three of these programs going at the same time (and sometimes they are), it's a busy schedule. But here's the secret of that. It's all intentional. It's all scheduled. There are no exceptions. We're all committed to the process.

Unless somebody is providentially hindered, we don't change and move around. They have to actually sign a covenant, Al, at the beginning of each year that they are committed to do the work and that they're going to show up on time ready and prepared to share. That's how we do that.

**Al:** Yeah, that's a great story. No wonder you're doing so well in the *uplifting growth* category. You know, in your debriefing with your BCWI consultant, Cary Humphries, I'll bet you found some more opportunities to improve your culture. Give us an example of some of the action steps you plan to take as a result.

**Troy:** We did, and we really are. I'm excited about that. I think I already have scheduled (or either a process of scheduling) some focus groups working with him or somebody on your team with different team members or different groups of teams in our organization to help us. One of the areas, which I think everybody is struggling with right now, is the whole health insurance process and what all is happening there.

We have some people who are really unhappy with what's going on in that world. I totally get it. I understand. I'm the same way. We're trying to find the right formula for that. A lot of people expressed concern about that, and I totally get it. We're already starting that process. We actually are working right now to try to put a better process, a better representative, in place, which is more, I would say, team-member friendly than what we had in the past few years.

Another area I was going to tell you about was our 401(k) retirement plan. Actually, we're actually in the process of making some changes already with that based on the feedback we got on the survey. One of those is people wanted the opportunity to match some funds in their 401(k), so we're doing that.

Another one is (and I could go on with a lot of things we want to work on) we have hired a young, wonderful rock star HR director. His name is Kyle. We have never had a full-time HR person. Our CFO (Jeanne Brzezinski), other people, and I would take care of that. This whole thing about making sure... Several people made reference in the survey, "We just want to make sure we're hiring competent, right people who fit the culture."

If they're expressing that, then we need to do a better job. That's what we're doing. We're continuing to focus on that. Kyle is really taking that ball and running with it, taking us down the road to where we're hiring more people who fit into our "Humble, Hungry, and Smart" culture. As Dave Ramsey would say, don't allow crazy in the building.

**Al:** Yeah, that's right! That's right! Also, Troy, I know you're a member of the C12 Group, the popular, prominent nationwide peer advisory group for Christian CEOs and business owners. Why does tackling the health of your culture matter to you from a faith perspective?

**Troy:** Well, C12's mission statement is, "To change the world by advancing the kingdom of God in the marketplace..." As a follower of Christ... I already told you about when I accepted Christ in 1988. I really understand that one day I'm going to be held accountable for how I stewarded over all the resources God put under my care.

Our purpose statement (what we call our “BIG” purpose statement) is, “Build relationships, Impact lives, and Glorify God.” As a result, my heart’s desire is we really care deeply about our people. We care deeply about the outcome. So it matters how we as leaders live out our faith in the marketplace each day.

We’re on display every day. Whether we believe people are watching or not, they are. They’re watching how we treat our team members, how we encourage them, and how we hold them accountable. My faith and my mission mind I have should overlap and all of it be melted together with my work in the marketplace every day. It’s no different. I should be the same guy on Sunday morning as I am on Monday morning. That’s what I really focus on (trying to live out my faith in the workplace each day).

**Al:** I love the way your purpose statement is much broader than keeping people cool or warm through HVAC systems. It’s “Build relationships, Impact lives, and Glorify God.” That’s fantastic.

**Troy:** That’s exactly right.

**Al:** Well, here’s something I’ve been waiting to ask, Troy, in our conversation. Tell us one of your favorite before-and-after stories about how your culture changed and improved for the better.

**Troy:** It’s pretty easy, but I have a lot of them. Almost 15 years ago when we began doing the survey and then acting on those results, we tell our team members it’s our scorecard. It’s like getting a report card from school. “You’re going to tell us how we’re leading ACR Supply. We cannot fix what we don’t know is broken.” Again, I said it earlier. I learned a long time ago you never ask somebody their honest opinion and then get mad at them for telling what they think. We take their feedback, and we act on it.

One of the most important questions on the survey we do is the last question. It says, “Did leadership take into consideration all the thoughts and ideas from the previous year’s survey and act on them?” This year we got 100 percent agreed on that question. So that makes me feel good that people know not only are we *asking* them for their feedback but also we’re *listening* to their feedback. I think when they understand we actually do care enough to actually act on their suggestions, that really helps build that culture of loyalty and that flourishing culture you’re talking about.

**Al:** Yeah! Yeah, and I love your comment. It’s such a natural thing where you get feedback that you don’t like that you can actually get mad at them for telling you. We’ve experienced leaders saying how they are hurt by the feedback. Oftentimes that leads to anger of one way or another or deep disappointment anyway.

**Troy:** Right.

**Al:** Well, you're right. How you communicate that how much you appreciate the feedback is one thing. You know, you can't get mad at them.

**Troy:** Right!

**Al:** You're right!

**Troy:** One additional thought on that. I'm certified to teach a class called Crucial Conversations. You may have heard of that. I'm not sure. Anybody who is hired in an HR spot goes through that course, and I teach that course to them. It usually takes about 14 to 16 hours for the course; that's how long it is.

One of the things the course teaches you is, many times in life, we're going to run into situations where conflict is going to come up. Somebody is going to tell you a different opinion, sometimes even in an angry or upset way. They're going to tell you, really even attack you at times, giving you their strong opinion.

When you can take and turn that person from a villain into one of your best contributing team members because they care deeply enough to tell you what's going on and what they're thinking, and even though it is maybe passionate... Sometimes maybe it's not even done the right way. You turn them from a villain into a partner, into a comrade. You're excited. You actually look at that person differently, going, "Thank you for telling me. I'll do everything I can to fix this and work on this problem."

If you can change that mindset... Because many times when people come at us with something we don't like or we don't agree with, we get defensive. I'm a guy. I do that all the time, and I try to get better at it. But when you can do that and you make that shift in your head, it really does help turn that person from a villain into a valued partner.

**Al:** You know, another thing you're impressing upon me is the learning culture you've got in your organization. Here you are as the president, the leader. You're teaching these courses. You're taking time to take the courses and learn it yourself, but then you're teaching it to all of your leaders and employees. That really does exemplify leadership and learning at its core.

You know, I'll bet, Troy, you have another favorite story about how building a healthy culture caused your people to come alive, to enjoy their work, give their all, and really flourish as a team.

**Troy:** I'm going to kind of go off script a little bit and just share just a personal story I think I had alluded to earlier. It's one that really touches my heart, and it really is special to me. We had an individual a number of years ago (one of our team members). His name is Wayne Bullock. One of his daughters was tragically killed in a car accident on their prom night. She was actually with a relative. It was just a really tragic, tragic event.

Through that process, you can imagine what that was like. It was their only daughter, and they had loved her. It was a pretty horrific time. If you know stats about marriage when those types of things happen, usually it's very rare that marriages make it through a time like that. They were struggling, and I began to really love on him and encourage him the best way I knew how.

One of the things he did was he went through that Crucial Conversations course. I was just mentoring him, loving on him at that time, and trying to help him any way I could. We got to one of the sections. This course has been so impactful on so many people. The stories are running through my head, but one of the things that happened with Wayne was he got to one of the sections, the modules, asking yourself, "What do you really want?"

"Start with Heart" is the name of it. The question there is, "What do you really want?" That whole section really spoke to him. He went home, sat down with his wife, and he said, "Honey, what do you really want? Let me tell you what I want." Obviously, the right things: a healthy marriage and a great relationship. He wanted to move past this, and so on. That was kind of a launch pad for his wife and him to begin a healing process. You never get over that.

**AI:** Yeah, right.

**Troy:** Never! But it at least began a process of going down the right path in a journey toward being able to heal, repair, and just make it through that incredibly difficult time. That was another time. You look back on it. You go, "These things we're doing really are making a difference in trying to build this healthy culture and help people really."

Wayne has been with us now 30 years. He has been recently promoted, just a phenomenal team member, and just really he gets it. He understands this whole culture thing. He is helping me now drive that culture. It's been really exciting to see. He is very close to me, and I'm close to him.

**AI:** Yeah. That's a great story. Thanks. You know, at the Best Christian Workplaces Institute, we believe a healthy culture is a true and worthy end in itself. You've explained several stories that help to support that. We also believe, though, a healthy and flourishing culture leads to organizational growth and greater business impact. How has growing your culture influenced ACR Supply's impact and outcomes?

**Troy:** Well, as I said in that watershed moment (that meeting my father, our vice president, and I had in 1997), we were in business 20 years at that time. That's when we had that meeting in '97. We were just a small distributor with three stores. I don't remember an exact number, but we had probably 30-35 team members at that time.

We began to really focus on these things I've been talking about on the call and trying to get all the right people on the bus or wrong people off, putting all the right processes in place, screening process, hiring and recruiting, and all these growth things we've been talking about. In 1997, we were right around \$4 million in gross revenue. Today we're right at \$29 million. We've really grown and also grown to 90 team members.

I really believe with all my heart that we're able to impact more lives, touch more communities. We do a lot of work in the communities where we are for the kingdom and just bring a bright light to the marketplace. That's what growth is about. It's about furthering God's kingdom and using this opportunity we have in the marketplace with these businesses to really have an impact. I guess also you could say we're providing a great living for all these families who are part of the ACR family as well.

**Al:** You know, there's a lot of research out there that links engaged employees to satisfied customers who become loyal. Then more loyal customers lead to revenue growth and profitability. Gosh! It certainly sounds like that's what you've experienced at ACR Supply.

**Troy:** Yeah.

**Al:** Tell us where culture starts, where you start to talk with new employees about culture.

**Troy:** Well, in that orientation process, I sit down with every single new team member. I paint a very clear picture of the culture we're trying to drive and create inside of ACR Supply. We used to hire people and just put them out there on the front lines without doing any type of training, any type of orientation process at all, specifically around culture. We knew what we wanted, but we weren't communicating that.

Now I'll sit down with every single new team member for a couple of hours, and we do culture orientation, this interaction thing. I don't lecture them. I just talk about what we're doing, how we're doing it, and why we're doing it. As a result of that, I really believe with all my heart that they get it. They're out there.

We're not perfect. You know, we have days we probably don't do a great job with our culture and maybe we don't represent well to our customers and even vendor partners. But for the most part, I would say the majority of the time our team members are that light. They are out there interacting with our customers. They're interacting with our vendors on a regular basis, understanding what our role is and what our purpose statement says.

I think as a result, Al, it drives loyalty. I really believe we are making an impact in their lives. I hear stories all the time. Somebody will call me and say, "Hey, so-and-so's wife has just been diagnosed

with cancer, and he asked me to pray with him. So back at the office, we prayed. I'm going to put him on the prayer list."

I actually have a prayer folder I pray for our requests from our team members and customers. I do that every Tuesday morning. They'll send me that request. I think a lot of this is just filtered down throughout the organization in the way that is true caring. If we're going to do what the Bible says about treating people like we want to be treated and loving on them unconditionally, even the difficult people, then we need to live that out every single day.

I think because we are doing that, our customers get it. They understand. When they're on the rooftop, found a part they need, or they're under a house or whatever (they're working), I think the first thing that comes to their mind is, "Man, I really like so-and-so over at ACR Supply. You know, I think he really cares about me." It may not be that. It may be more subliminal. It may be more subconscious, but I think that's what happens. As a result, I think we have driven a lot of customer loyalty over the years because people know we truly care about them as people.

**Al:** Well, Troy, this has really been a great discussion. We've learned a lot today. I really appreciate the fact that you've been on a 21-year journey. I love to hear you describe how coming to faith has really made a difference in the focus of your life and how work has become your ministry. Ministry has become your work. How you've come to realize leadership is living it out every day. That's something you really strive to do. That's obvious in our conversation.

I loved the whole discussion around your three-year leader development program and the way you've really built a learning culture there at ACR Supply and that you actually spend 50 percent of your time coaching and mentoring your team members and the fact that you have this purpose statement to build relationships, impact lives, and glorify God. You've just exemplified how you do that, including your Tuesday prayer list of employee and customer needs. This has really been a great, great discussion.

Troy, given all you've experienced in the ongoing transformation in the health of your culture, give us one final thought you'd like to leave with leaders.

**Troy:** Sure! I just think as leaders we are the culture kings. We lead organizations culturally, and we can't expect our people to behave and do one thing when we're doing another. I have a saying I'll use a lot. Sometimes it makes people mad, but it's true. It says, "Fish begin to stink at the head every time." If you have a stinky culture, there is nowhere else to look but in the mirror. It always comes back to leadership, every single time.

As followers of Christ (especially as believers), we have to make sure we're doing everything we can to create organizations where God's light is shone brightly across the marketplace and where people are

not doing a death march to work every day. That's my focus. That's what I want to do. I build relationships, impact lives, and glorify God.

If I focus on those things every day, I don't have to keep a bunch of rules. You know? If I'm glorifying God in the way I treat our team members, our customers, vendor partners, then I think God will be pleased. I know and you know we all work for an audience of one.

**Al:** That's a great summary. Troy Meachum, president of ACR Supply Company in Durham, North Carolina, thanks for sharing your wisdom, insights, and stories. Thanks again for extending your ministry to the leaders who have been listening and benefiting from all you've shared today.

**Troy:** Thank you so much for having me, Al. I appreciate it.

**Al:** This has been great. I want to thank you, our listeners, for joining us on the Flourishing Culture Podcast and for investing this time in your workplace culture. If there's a specific insight, story, or action step you've enjoyed in the past few minutes, then please share it with others so they can benefit as well.

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**Male:** For a free transcript of today's podcast, visit [blog.bcwinstitute.org](http://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.