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How Search Firms Are Managing the Culture Game

Culture fit is hardly a new concept. Well before the rise of various models and frameworks to evaluate organizational culture, companies recognized the risk of hiring a cultural mismatch — such as the lone wolf in a company that values collaboration. New employees, especially leaders, who clash with the culture are often ineffective, and are likely to quickly depart for a friendlier environment.

"As appreciation has grown for the power of culture to influence individual, team and business performance, many leaders are looking for more systematic approaches to evaluating culture, personal fit and culture impact," according to a report by **Spencer Stuart**. "With this insight, they can make better decisions about hiring and promoting, improve the success rate of leadership transitions and ensure that they develop future leaders who are able to positively influence culture." The report was authored by veteran search consultants Alexander Hiller, Dimity Hodge and Jesse Price.

Culture analysis is a critical action for a company to take — and a complex one, as well. The Spencer Stuart culture approach is based on the insight that an organization's culture is defined by where it falls on two dimensions: how the organization responds to change and how it views people.

Three Myths

"Organizations can range from highly individualistic to highly interdependent, placing greater value either on autonomy and individual action or on collaboration," said the report. "Similarly, an organization can be more or less open to change — focused on maintaining consistency and predictability at one end of the spectrum or emphasizing flexibility and creativity at the other. We use this framework, which includes eight distinct cultural styles, to evaluate organizational culture and understand how an individual executive is likely to align with — and shape — that culture."

Culture can feel elusive for companies. Absent a methodology or common language for evaluating their current culture and defining an aspirational culture, organizations can fall victim to a few common culture myths. "This can make it harder to select the right people or equip hires with the guidance and support they need to succeed in a new context," Spencer Stuart said. "According to our research, a lack of culture fit (rather than lack of skills or experience) is responsible for 68 percent of newly hired executives failing within their first year."

Spencer Stuart presented the three most common myths recruiters encounter when seeking the right candidate to fit an organization's culture:

Myth No. 1: Someone "like me" will be a good fit

When considering candidates for a role, a common pitfall is confusing likeability or "sameness" with culture fit. In the absence of a framework for assessing how a person aligns with the culture, Spencer Stuart said that it can be tempting for interviewers to rely on considerations such as whether candidates share their interests or backgrounds. A manifestation of this is the so-called 'airport test': Could I pass hours stranded in an airport with this person?

BY THE NUMBERS
Culture and Brand Top Advantages When Recruiting

Nearly **two-thirds** (61 percent) of respondents said that organizational culture was the most important recruiting advantage for global organizations, followed by possessing a leading employer brand at **26 percent**.

Source: Korn Ferry

On its face, the idea of personally liking a new hire to a team seems logical; leaders want to interact with people who are going to make their jobs easier — or less onerous, at least. But likeability and personal interests are not the same as culture style. "Assessing culture fit and impact requires a deeper look at the person's style and how it compares with the current organizational or team culture," the Spencer Stuart report said. "It's essential to evaluate the fit relative to where the culture stands, as well as where it should be in order to achieve the intended strategic and operational plans."

The report said that recruiters should ask themselves these questions: Does the individual prefer highly stable environments, or does he thrive in more flexible and open *(cont'd. to page 2)*

environments? Is the leader collaborative, or does she prefer to work independently? "Without assessing these factors, a company can end up saddled with an affable leader who simply isn't up to the job," Spencer Stuart said. "Or worse, the new hire doesn't fit in with the company's culture despite the hiring team's personal affinity for the leader."

The Spencer Stuart report also said that organizations undergoing change will want to hire or promote leaders who will draw the best out of the current culture while aligning with future aspirations.

Myth No. 2: We know a candidate's style because we know the work history

Certain companies, and business units, have a reputation for being hard-driving or collaborative or hierarchical, while others are associated with attributes like creativity or analytical rigor. "It's tempting to conflate these attributes and assume that all individuals who work at these companies or in these functions will have the same personal style," Spencer Stuart said. "These assumptions can keep organizations from accurately assessing how individuals might fit with the current or target culture when hiring or moving them into new roles, or exploring other skills that could be harvested or utilized."

"There can be a sense that an individual's culture preferences are hardwired by their current organizational culture and they can't adapt to a new organization," one client told Spencer Stuart. "So, someone from GE will be hardwired to drive results, for instance. It's easy to think, 'That's who they are, and that's how they'll always be.'" Similarly, she noted, a candidate with a great deal of technical experience might be seen as myopic and "not viewed as a change agent because they can't look end-to-end across the organization, when that might simply not be true."

It's important to separate what truly motivates and drives a person from how they adapted to navigate a particular culture at work, the Spencer Stuart report said. "A person might exhibit a certain style in one environment in order to succeed, even if that style doesn't come naturally," the report said. "Having a more nuanced and data-based view of candidates opens up more possibilities, allowing companies to make better decisions and support the leaders they hire, as well as provide input on which natural qualities they could tap into to drive performance or change."

Myth No. 3: A new leader will change everything

When a company wants to transform its culture, it's only logical to believe a new leader will help achieve

this goal. However, Spencer Stuart said that for companies without a clear and explicit understanding of their culture, bringing in a new leader to drive change can be like "tapping in the dark."

Some companies, for example, try to take a "shortcut" to evolving culture by bringing in someone from a radically different organization that represents the direction key stakeholders have in mind — such as a company eager to achieve a digital transformation hiring an executive from **Google** or **Amazon**.

"Rather than taking the longer, and more difficult, path of in-depth analysis and gradual change of their business model and processes, the hope is to reinvent the company in one fell swoop with one person singlehandedly leading the way," the Spencer Stuart report said. "Unfortunately, a quick fix is rarely an effective one, and the prevailing culture almost always wins when there is a mismatch."

Search Firms Stepping Up

With culture shaping now seen as one of the most important drivers to achieve competitive advantage among companies, many search firms – including the global leaders as well as the boutiques – now offer some variation of it. It includes human capital management, business transformation strategy, leader engagement, talent optimization, organizational development, HR transformation, and leadership and talent management.

To bolster its leadership in the space, Spencer Stuart recently reached a definitive agreement with global professional services firm Aon to acquire certain businesses within its talent practice, specifically its culture and engagement, leadership development and advisory, and related products and services. This led to the creation of a distinct entity known as Kincentric: A Spencer Stuart Company.

"This is a further step on our journey to extend our leadership advisory capabilities for our clients," said Ben Williams, CEO of Spencer Stuart. "As leaders increasingly focus on leadership, culture and engagement to drive change and positive outcomes in their organizations, together Spencer Stuart and Kincentric are uniquely positioned to engage with boards and the C-Suite more deeply on these critical levers."

Meanwhile, **Egon Zehnder** formalized an agreement to purchase a minority stake in Zurich, Switzerland-based **Sinequanon** (SQN), a firm that uses AI and advanced analytics to improve workplace culture and performance. The investment in SQN signals Egon Zehnder's intent to build on its 55 years of experience shaping leadership and culture through SQN's combination of advanced technology and a human approach to leadership. The companies will work together to disseminate SQN's "Living Analytics" platform and "Flow Operating System."

"We hear consistently from clients that culture change is one of the most challenging aspects of leadership," said Jill Ader, chairwoman of Egon Zehnder. "In SQN we have found an innovative partner to deliver integrated services to our clients by marrying both human leadership insights and pioneering technology. We strongly believe the best consulting services we can offer our clients combine technology and humanity."

Hiring for Cultural Fit?
Here's What You Should Know

Working with talent acquisition and HR leaders, you often hear this: "We hire for cultural fit, first and foremost." But what does that mean, and how is that fit assessed? "Well, sometimes it's whatever a hiring manager wants it to mean and that can be a big issue, leading to poor hiring decisions fraught with bias or even legal liability," said Nick Misener in a report by recruiting firm **David Alpin Group**.

"Properly defined corporate culture and values can empower employers to make faster and better hiring decisions," he noted. "Before I go too far, let me clarify that I'm not definitively saying cultural fit is more important than targets, results, capabilities, competencies and performance. Hiring can be a complex process that requires the assessment and weighing of multiple criteria. However, fit itself is a significant factor in that equation." So where do you start?

"First, you should look at why hiring for cultural fit is important for your organization," Mr. Misener said. "Stakeholder buy-in or sponsorship is essential in this process. I think most companies and organizations can agree that if an employee's values and motivations don't align with their own, it can become a big issue. Alternatively, strong cultural fit can inspire performance and increase loyalty."

What Is Cultural Fit?

What is culture fit? This is the question that employers should ask, and make decisive efforts to define. Broadly speaking, cultural fit means that an employee's beliefs and behaviors are in alignment with their employer's core values and company culture. For each company that can mean something inherently different.

Hiring for cultural fit starts with being able to clearly articulate what the organizational culture is. What are the aligned values, beliefs, behaviors and experiences that make up the organization's environment? Some organizations will approve the creation of a company mission statement and company values. Mr. Misener noted that a poorly defined culture, or a definition that doesn't match reality is equally problematic.

It is important to reflect, therefore, and ask yourself these questions:

- Does the culture you articulated match reality or is it wishful thinking?
- Are your company values actionable or do they live in an employee handbook / on a plaque on a wall?
- Do they influence business decisions and bring people together or are they essentially lip service?

"If the answers to any of the above questions make you pause, there's likely a misalignment between what you said your culture was compared to what exists – and that causes strain," Mr. Misener said. "You'll bring on the wrong people and potentially turn away the right people for your business. Your hiring decisions, policy and direction as a company will be, more than likely, inconsistent or worse."
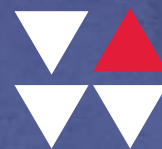
SPOTLIGHT

What Makes a Great Culture?

If you want to truly inspire people to produce great work, creating a strong, vibrant company culture remains a core focal point for any business leader, according to a new report penned by **Odgers Berndtson's** Elizabeth Stewart, who serves as the firm's head of executive assessment and development in London.

A few decades since management guru Peter Drucker coined his famous adage: "Culture eats strategy for breakfast," it has never been truer in the age of flexible working, inclusivity and (seemingly) overnight tech moguls.

Digital disruption means companies need to be agile and ready to transform business models. And, of course, they are required to be adaptive to the increasing influx of a younger generation of employees, who no longer seek lifetime employment at any one company.

"Great cultures start with an obsession for customers and products," says Robert Bruce Shaw, an organizational and leadership performance consultant and author of Extreme Teams: *Why Pixar, Netflix, Airbnb, and Other Cutting-Edge Companies Succeed Where Most Fail.*

Mr. Shaw admits that although iconic companies like Amazon and Tesla are "not perfect...they do model what is needed to have a strong culture." He explains: "Amazon is customer obsessed while Tesla is product obsessed. A customer or product focus inspires a relentless drive to deliver extraordinary results in the targeted area."

Yet even the most customer/product-centric companies with dizzying growth trajectories and enviable valuations are not always buoyed by a strong culture.

"High growth companies are always at risk of failing to scale in a productive manner," suggests Shaw. Firms need formal and informal safeguards to prevent self-destructive acts "to avoid making the mistakes we see in firms such as Uber and Facebook."

In a survey by start-up **Comparably**, Uber employees rated their culture much lower than their peers at Airbnb, Pinterest and Dropbox, three of the next closest US tech companies by valuation.

The Odgers Berndtson report notes that despite a series of celebrated hires, such as a dedicated 'culture fixer' in the form of Frances Frei, a Harvard academic, Uber has yet to fully emerge from the shadow of its culture troubles. These hires covered intense competitiveness bordering on being cutthroat and accusations of racism and sexism that spawned a slew of senior exec departures in 2018, including its top finance executive Prabir Adarkar, HR chief and ex-Googler Liane Hornsey and marketing executive Bozoma Saint John.

Cultural Quake

There's no one-size-fits-all when it comes to great culture. Take the Amazon acquisition of Whole Foods, a transaction that one Harvard Business School case study likened to "the corporate equivalent of mixing tap water with organic extra virgin olive oil."

Amazon's focus on data-driven efficiency to drive its product mix and enforcing strict employee discipline to generate cost savings was a complete antithesis to Whole Foods, which always prided itself on its personal touch and on being what Whole Foods Market founder John Mackey described in his book Conscious Capitalism as "business that can elevate humanity." This "culture quake" caused wide enough chasms that in 2017, Whole Foods dropped from Fortune's best companies to work for list for the first time in two decades.

A CEO needs to be a living model of the culture he/she aspires to lead and must diligently emulate key behaviors and values in a way that is authentically true to himself/herself.

Follow the Leader

Consider some of the world's finest companies with cultures that have stood the test of time, those that have been in business for close to a century. For example, in the cases of Goldman Sachs or Marriott, the founder/CEO epitomizes the culture and defines it for years to come.

"A CEO needs to be a living model of the culture he/she aspires to lead and must diligently emulate key behaviors and values in a way that is authentically true to himself/herself," advises Ms. Stewart. She believes persistence in emphasizing the right cultural behavior will continue to be influential in the long-term. "Your role as a cultural leader is, more likely than not, the primary vehicle for establishing your leadership legacy," Ms. Stewart says.

Keep to the Fundamentals

Consistently great companies also place human values like trust and camaraderie at the core of their culture, not words that are more reminiscent of business jargon like performance and speed. This is the view of Ed Frauenheim, director of research at Great Place to Work Institute, which regularly publishes annual lists of the best workplaces cultures all over the world.

"Companies who keep these fundamentals at the forefront when it comes to defining, nurturing and reinvigorating their culture will be the ones attracting the most talented, passionate, and dedicated employees. Ultimately, the ones who stay ahead of the curve," concludes Ms. Stewart.

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INSIDE LOOK

How AI is Changing the Culture of Work

Artificial intelligence is poised to become one of the most important business disruptors of our times. But too often people look only at the potential downsides of machines simulating human intelligence and overlook the positive impact and value that AI stands to deliver, particularly when it comes to organizational culture.

A new white paper report by **Walking the Talk**, a global culture transformation firm based in Amsterdam, says the changes that AI brings will be substantial, and that to take best advantage of the technology and to keep ahead of the competition, organizations must embrace a culture of innovation.

Organizational Culture

"What is clear to everyone is that AI is not about eliminating jobs, but about eliminating tasks of jobs, and about creating jobs that are more human – in other words, jobs that machines can't do – or can't yet do," said Humberto Branco, executive director at Walking the Talk.

Walking the Talk said it foresees two main angles in which AI will impact organizational culture. The first one is that AI will help to manage culture. It can help, for example, to conduct a current culture assessment. "The purpose of AI is to analyze vast amounts of data to extract patterns," said Mr. Branco. "By analyzing behavioral data sets, organizations will develop a good picture of their culture. We can picture a world where data is fed from many sources such as HR data, exit interviews, induction processes, performance management, business processes, leadership forums, and discussion threads to extract real-time behavior patterns to build an almost daily picture of the culture."

It can also identify the target culture. "AI may be able to predict the best target culture based on hundreds of thousands of external and internal information sources," he added. "To do this, it could simulate various scenarios of behavior change and measure the resulting business outcomes."

Mindsets and Behaviors

AI can also serve to develop a culture plan. Beyond behaviors, AI will be able to identify systemic issues and their consequences, avoiding many of the current risks and facilitating the development of a culture plan. "It will help focus on the right culture change levers, better predict impact on culture and on the bottom line," said Jerome Parisse-Brassens, executive director at Walking the Talk. "AI will also help identify culture influencers in the business as well as those resisting new sets of behavioral and management standards."

And it can measure culture itself. "Whether it is to measure business outcomes or behavioral shifts, AI will play a significant role," said Mr. Parisse-Brassens. "AI's power and intelligence comes from the data at its disposal to analyze patterns, so having tools to collect behavioral shift will still be necessary. The second angle is that AI will directly influence the mindsets and behaviors of people at work through the systems that will be implemented."

Industry Trends

ManpowerGroup Appoints Chief People and Culture Officer

Companies continue to look to build internal brand awareness and set their sights on establishing and driving their own unique cultures. Recently, **ManpowerGroup** named Michelle Nettles as chief people and culture officer. Previously, she was chief people and diversity officer at Molson Coors, and a member of the executive leadership team responsible for strategy, talent optimization and culture.

"Michelle is an impressive people leader with extensive experience in global HR and a proven track record in driving a diverse and inclusive culture across multiple countries," said Jonas Prising, chairman and CEO of ManpowerGroup. "Her vision of employees as consumers together with her passion to broaden and deepen people's skills and drive strong leadership capability is a great fit for ManpowerGroup as we continue to digitize and transform our business."

At ManpowerGroup, Ms. Nettles will lead HR and culture across the organization's 80 countries and territories and across its family of brands and functions – Manpower, Experis, Right Management and ManpowerGroup Solutions. "I'm delighted to be joining ManpowerGroup at a time when talent and skills are top priorities for organizations, communities and individuals around the world," said Ms. Nettles. "The purpose of this company – to help people find meaningful work and have sustainable careers in the future – is such a powerful one."

"It deeply resonates with who I am and the role of human resources for organizations and society," she said. "I'm excited to be a part of delivering on this mission and joining a talented team committed to unlocking human potential, growing our people and our business and creating even more value for clients and candidates in the communities in which we operate."

Wilton & Bain Names Leader of Global People and Culture Practice

London-based executive search firm **Wilton & Bain** has expanded with the addition of former Odgers Berndtson consultant Tim Baker as a partner and leader of the firm's global people and culture practice.

"As we continue to grow our business globally the people and culture practice plays an important part in our success," said Lisa Peacock-Edwards, managing partner. "With Tim joining we can be a true partner and advisor to existing and future CHROs as they look to drive change and growth within their businesses. Tim's track record is exciting as it continues to build on our vision of thought leadership, market insights and advisory practices in Europe and the Americas."

"In addition to technology, data and digital transformation, organizations also recognize that having the right people and culture drives commercial results and competitive advantage," said Mr. Baker. "With a track record of working in partnership with organizations that are going through growth, change and transformation, Wilton & Bain have brought insight and experience to some of the world's most prominent businesses. In addition to technology, data and digital transformation, organizations also recognize that having the right people and culture drives commercial results and competitive advantage," Mr. Baker continued.

7 Ways to Improve Employee Engagement

Creating a culture of engagement is critical to business success. When executive teams are engaged, managers are 39 percent more likely to be engaged, and this drives engagement among all employees, found a Gallup survey. Plain and simple increased engagement impacts the bottom line. A new report by **Acertitude's** co-founder and managing partner Kevin O'Neill offers leaders seven ways to improve employee engagement.

1. Identify the Right Leaders

There are a million potential answers to the problem of employee disengagement, but solving it begins with identifying people who are most likely to be engaged from the start. The basis for finding the right people is having a rigorous and validated recruiting process. "A simple-yet-effective practice to begin an interview is letting candidates know that a final step in hiring will be for them to arrange references with former bosses and colleagues," said Mr. O'Neill.

2. Tune Into the Unspoken

Mr. O'Neill directs interviewers to connect with what really inspires a candidate. "The magic is not just using your ears to listen for the words that are said. You need to use all your senses to capture not only the substance, but the candidate's essence, the spirit that brings life to people." Changes in body language, energy, and tone of voice can provide a well of insights. Subtleties such as whether a candidate leans in, makes eye contact, or speaks brightly and repeatedly about a particular experience can indicate their intrinsic motivators and engagement level.

3. Visualize the Future

Interviewers should invite candidates to imagine how both the candidate and company could grow together in the coming years, stressing the importance of the candidate's role in building that dream. "Is there a trajectory where the candidate's career and this company's opportunity intersect?" Mr. O'Neill asks. "It's being able to see that. So many people get trapped in today. The magic is taking people on a journey to what the future could hold."

4. Define Roles in a Cultural Context

Cultural fit is the ultimate baseline for engagement. People need to fully understand what role they play in the organization and the way things are done inside it. "Handing over a job description isn't enough," Mr. O'Neill says. "Job descriptions are typically black ink on white paper, so naturally people focus on what is written in black. But when hiring, we can't forget about the white space — the unwritten rules of engagement — which can be more important to integration and improved employee engagement."

5. Connect at a Human Level

When people at every level connect the work they are doing to the mission of their organization, that is employee engagement. Leaders must focus on making everyone's work significant. This drives heightened emotional commitment and turns a workforce into a powerhouse. *(cont'd. to page 9)*

Inside the Numbers

5 Ways to Engage Employees

Engaged employees are rare. Gallup's most recent global research finds only 13 percent of employees worldwide are engaged at work. According to the latest State of the American Workplace report, just 33 percent of employed residents in the United States are engaged at work. Gallop offers five ways to engage workers:

1. Use the right employee engagement survey

2. Focus on engagement at the local and organizational levels.

3. Select the right managers.

4. Coach managers and hold them accountable for their employees' engagement.

5. Define engagement goals in realistic, everyday terms.

"Connecting your employees to the client interactions and events that happen outside the office motivates them," said Mr. O'Neill. "I advise executives to bring enthusiasm back to the office and remind people of the important part they play in the bigger picture. Storytelling brings your employees' jobs to life."

6. Fail Forward

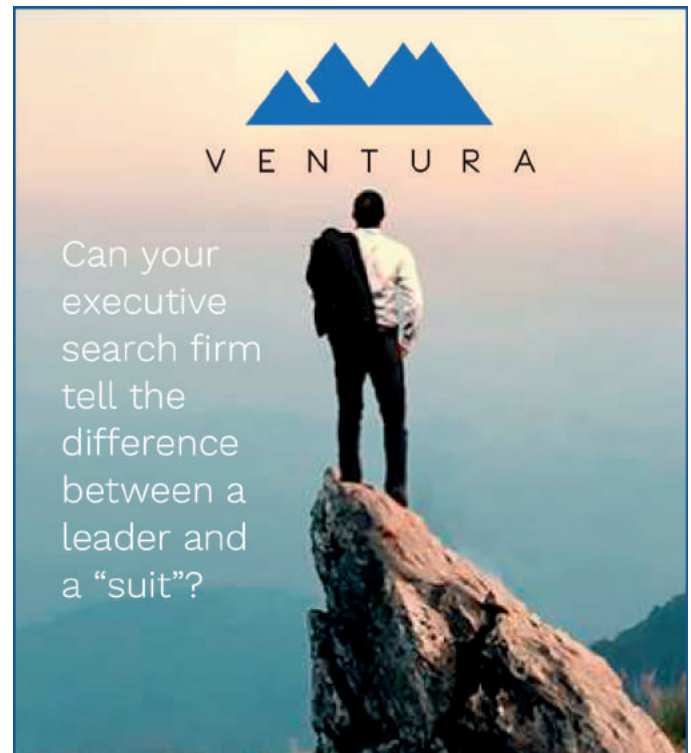Paradoxically, if you want your team members to be successful, you have to let them fail.

Mr. O'Neill advises leaders to give employees the freedom to align their work with their passions and dreams and then trust them to take appropriate risks and color outside the lines. "Encourage small failures so they get the opportunity to course-correct, learn, and grow as individuals. Not only will you challenge their minds and show that you believe in them, but the self-exploration could also lead to your next breakthrough. Failures are the incubators for growth in almost every organization. "The only thing I've learned from winning is that I like to win," Mr. O'Neill adds. "Everything else I've learned comes from my failures."

7. Recognize Contributions

When a team inevitably achieves, it's vital to give them the recognition they deserve.

It can be as simple as a public thank-you or an uplifting email. It is especially important for executives to show appreciation. Nearly one-quarter of employees say the most memorable recognition comes from a high-level leader or CEO, according to Gallup's analysis. "The highest calling of humans is not to make money," Mr. O'Neill believes. "What fills the void for people is to be in a place where they can be of maximum service to others — knowing that you are where you are supposed to be, doing what you're supposed to be doing, in order to achieve the highest good. Money is just a trophy."

Mr. O'Neill cautions against seeking a fast, easy answer to the question of how to build an engaged workforce. "Employee engagement is more a way of thinking and acting over time rather than any single action," he says. "If you build your approach to engagement around these basic principles, you'll tend to have a committed team that performs, one that delivers the superior results that we're all after."

Report Reveals Industries With High and Lowest Engagement Levels

Just in time for Labor Day, which pays tribute to the achievements of American workers, an analysis by **Korn Ferry** underscores which industries have the most engaged and least engaged employees.

The analysis is based on engagement surveys from 139 companies and 1.3 million U.S. employees across 15 industries. It reveals that overall, 71 percent of the U.S. workforce is engaged.

When considering specific industries, consumer goods, insurance, and financial services industries rank highest, with an average of 74 percent of respondents engaged. The communications field and consumer services (e.g. retail, hospitality, leisure) also ranked high on the list at 72 percent each.

The high-technology industry is at the bottom of the engagement index, with only 64 percent of employees engaged. Also ranking low on the engagement scale are life sciences at 66 percent and public sector/not-for-profit at 67 percent.

"Full-time U.S. employees work nearly 50 hours a week – equivalent to almost six working days," said Mark Royal, senior director in Chicago with Korn Ferry. "When you consider that nearly a third of employees are not engaged, that's a lot of time wasted for both those employees and their employers who are not getting the full impact of their potential."

> Many factors go into creating a culture of engagement, including empowering and developing employees to make a meaningful impact on the success of the organization.

Additional Korn Ferry research demonstrates that an engaged workforce has a significant impact on the bottom line, boosting revenue growth up to two and a half times, depending on the level of engagement.

"Many factors go into creating a culture of engagement, including empowering and developing employees to make a meaningful impact on the success of the organization," said Royal. "When this happens, employees will stay on the job and be productive, and their employers will reap the benefits."

"Leaders who are successful in keeping their best people will need to foster a positive view of future company prospects and opportunities for individual growth and development, focus on structuring work environments to support employees' success in their roles and leverage employee input to promote high levels of effectiveness, and reinforce the balance between what employees contribute and what they get back from the organization in return," said Dr. Royal.

Talent Industry Predictions...

Larry Shoemaker, President – Cornerstone International Group

Executive recruiting firms are recognizing that success in one organization will not guarantee success in another. This helps to account for the findings of some surveys that up to 60 percent of new hires are gone by 18 months. We are among those who see the most likely cause being poor alignment of an individual's expectations with the culture and vision of the company. That's why, after skills and experience, we view culture fit as the primary go/no-go evaluation. It used to be we spent 80 percent of the search effort in locating the most suitable person.

John Doyle, Executive Vice President – Slayton Search Partners

Corporate culture is defined as encompassing core values, beliefs, and principles. It is very difficult, if not impossible, to transfer from one company to another. It is built over time and cultivated purposefully. For years, companies have used various assessment tools to predict which candidates are the best 'culture fits,' but the results are far from perfect. The tools aren't always the problem. Oftentimes, it's an inability to accurately describe the existing culture within the company. Even within the same industry, cultures vary widely from company to company. One reason culture fit is more important now than ever is the expectations of millennials in the workforce.

Michael Morell, Founder and Managing Partner – Riviera Partners

Culture alignment and fit has always been significant, but has received more focus in the past few years, due to the fierce war for talent. Culture is core to everyone and aligns groups around values, motivations, interests and passions. Cultural alignment allows everyone the ability to feel connected, understand perspectives and develop meaningful relationships. Culture ensures alignment to successfully achieve a common vision and purpose with the least amount of friction - and companies WIN when people are aligned.

Dale Jones, CEO – Diversified Search

'Culture fit' has become the latest catch phrase in executive search. Companies big and small are figuring out that the new wave of executives reaching management are from generations that view their careers through a lens of personal reward much more so than prior ones have; if they don't like the culture, they leave. Companies have become much more attuned to unearthing the 'bad apple' in the interview process, weeding out those who do not exhibit the spirit of a collaborative and congenial culture. Behavior that was either tolerated or ignored 25 years ago is now completely forbidden, which has been one of the biggest drivers of increased loyalty and productivity in American business.

.... More Talent Industry Predictions

David Windley, CEO – IQTalent Partners, Inc.

Recruiting and hiring for culture fit has become more significant because corporate culture is becoming more important in the modern organization. More and more companies are realizing that a purposeful corporate culture that aligns with their business model or way in which they compete can provide them with a competitive advantage. In the modern networked organization, corporate culture is the glue that shapes behavior across the enterprise.

Tom Wilson, VP of Executive Search – Frederickson Partners

Search firms and internal recruiters have had increasing capabilities to source, identify, and reach qualified candidates for some time now. Having more candidates to choose from does not make an executive recruiter's job easier, though we can pretty much assume we will find a qualified candidate for most roles. Therefore, the importance of understanding - and specifically selecting for – an organization's culture becomes extremely important. The best recruiters will be the ones that are most adept at selecting not only for the skills that a role requires, but also on how someone will fit into a new culture.

Peter Polachi, Partner – Polachi

Cultural fit has become more important than ever for successful companies. Gone are the days of renegade leaders who are tolerated but not embraced. In this age of digital transformation and the much belated recognition of the need for inclusivity, companies are utilizing behavioral assessment tools to assure cultural fit. Many companies are using sophisticated researched based methodologies like The Predictive Index to assure cultural fit success. These tools are applied for all new hires from entry level to the corner office.

Bob Damon, Partner – Ventura Partners

Culture fit has always trumped the resume for success in any role. However, culture fit is even more critical today for a couple of reasons. One is that organizational structures have morphed from traditional lines of authority with clear "chains of command" to matrixed organizations where influencing skills are significantly more important than title. The second reason is related to the changing demographics of the workforce. The millennial generation doesn't like to be "told" anything, so influencing skills become the number one factor in guiding that generation to embrace the business strategy.

Steve Potter, CEO – Odgers Berndtson US

A toxic culture leads to unhappy employees and high turnover. For a services business that is in the business of relationships – with clients, contacts, and colleagues – a toxic culture can signal the death knell of a firm since it can ultimately lead to low profitability and growth rates. Inversely, a positive corporate culture can result in a stronger brand with more satisfied, creative, and productive employees.