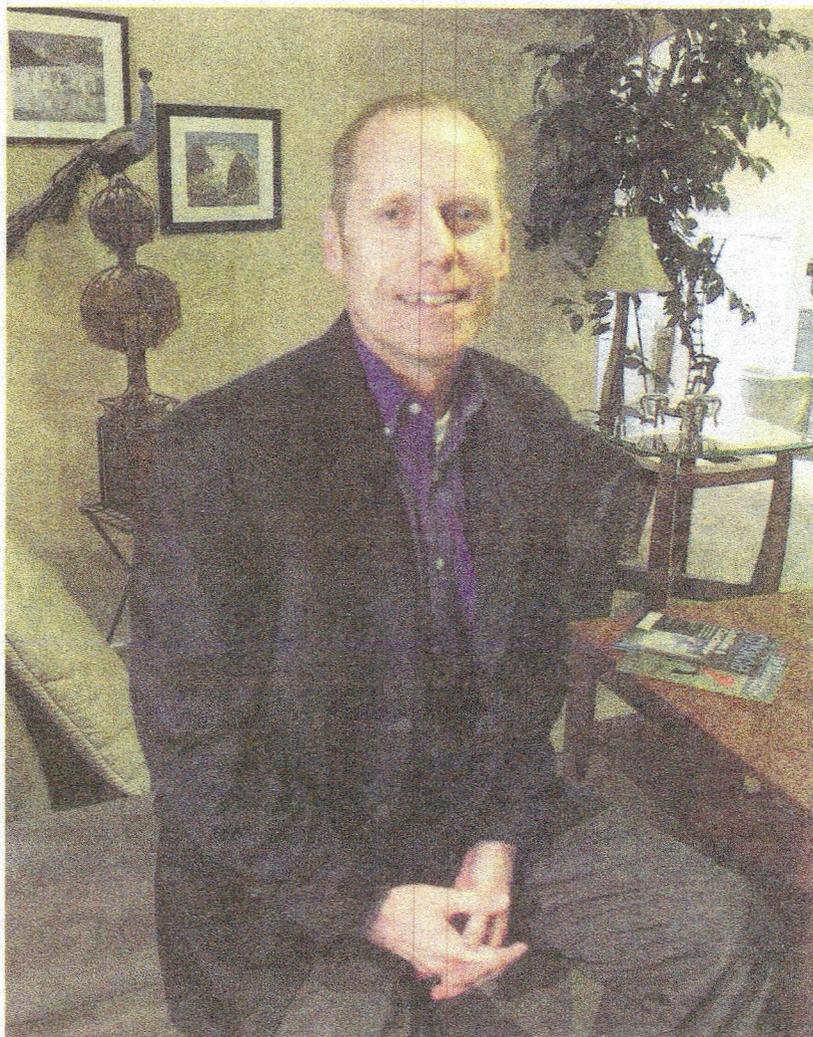


It all starts with shaping a vision

Planning imperative to fostering a good workplace culture

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MIKE MAPLE
THE COMMERCIAL APPEAL
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WHEN IT COMES TO CREATING A GOOD workplace culture, Bill Burtch has simple advice: Plan it.

One of the biggest mistakes companies make is letting corporate culture evolve unchecked, failing to shape a vision, a mission and values.

"You've got to take an active role in defining it and then shaping it," said Burtch, who, as founder and president of Memphis-based Harmony Coaching and Consulting, has been in the corporate advice business for 13 years. "That goes from small business up into the larger organizations."

While things like pay and job security top the list of factors that employees consider most important, less tangible attributes — like supervisor relationships, communication and recognition — fall within the Top 10. That's according to the Society for Human Resource Management, which surveys U.S. workers annually on job satisfaction and engagement.

As economic conditions improve, workers are likely to explore other employment opportunities — making employee engagement, talent management and retention of top performers paramount for human resources professionals, SHRM noted.

"Fostering an environment that treats all employees equally, as well as one that encourages communication between all levels of workers, can be an effective means of earning trust from employees and increasing their satisfaction with their jobs," SHRM's job satisfaction survey said.

Respect and relationships were themes that emerged among the employees at some of Memphis' Top Workplaces, according to survey results provided by WorkplaceDynamics LLC.

"I am allowed the freedom to think creatively and the encouragement to grow professionally,"

wrote an employee with St. Agnes Academy-St. Dominic School, a top-ranked midsize employer.

"My boss makes me feel appreciated," wrote an employee of Methodist Le Bonheur Healthcare. "She is an excellent mentor and I feel fortunate to work for such an intelligent and dedicated woman."

Employees also mentioned the power of an organization's mission.

"Even on my worst day, I feel like I have made a positive difference in the life of a child," wrote one St. Jude employee. "Everybody who works

here cares passionately about the kids and the mission of St. Jude, and I really feel like even among the various disciplines ... we all strongly feel like we're on the same team."

That ability to make a difference is key to creating a desirable workplace, especially for younger workers, Burtch said.

"The millennials that are coming into the workforce, they want to do work that's meaningful," he said. "Companies need to define how they're impacting the world in some cases, not just how they're increasing shareholder value."