

WHAT TO FIX IN 2026?

What story does your company culture tell today

Saucon's ongoing theme of What to Fix in 2026 turns attention to a word that has been used increasingly in post-COVID times, Culture. Culture has become the definition of what Companies as well as the industry represents.

"Culture is an integrated pattern of human behavior which includes but is not limited to—thought, communication, languages, beliefs, values, practices, customs, courtesies, rituals, manners of interacting, roles, relationships, and expected behaviors of an organization whose members are uniquely identifiable by that pattern of human behavior."

Fred E. Jandt,

An Introduction to Intercultural Communication

What does your culture look and feel like today?

Much of the industry is in the thick of the busiest time of the year. Has your culture shifted during the busier times, or the slower times? Are things allowed to happen in busier times to get the job done or simply get through the day that typically would not let happen?



Culture needs to remain consistent and viable.

Culture is built on vision and mission statements through company policies and procedures. These goals must be reasonable, sustainable and consistent throughout the year.

Exceptions made during seasonal shifts in business cycles can destroy a culture that took decades to build. If there is a company policy or disciplinary action that cannot be exercised with every employee in the company equally, without favoritism, then this policy or discipline



“Monitoring and tracking of telematics data is another critical piece of infrastructure to implement and rely on in mitigating risk.”

must be revisited and adjusted to be fair to all. Employees must be held to the same standards and expectations or be made aware of changes in the policies and procedures for the Company to move forward.

Many of the employees interact with others from other motor coach companies to know how it is to work at other companies. Let the culture speak for itself and let employees simply be the messengers of the great work environment provided.

Do you have employees working for you today that you would not have considered or hired just a few years ago?

Many companies are finding themselves in this situation. The workforce has changed dramatically in the last five years, bringing far fewer qualified candidates and less than desirable work ethics. Hiring this new standard of employee brings more risk than companies have ever accepted before.

How can the additional risk these new employees bring to the company be mitigated?

Companies need to first determine what that new risk looks like. Is it inexperience, bad habits, not understanding the expectations of the company or the passengers? These reasons encourage a review of current driver training programs to emphasize or add additional facets of training that address the risk companies are assuming. Training needs to be an ongoing process and not a once and done mentality. Annual recertifications and remedial training immediately after a near miss or incident are critical to the mitigation process.

The details are in the data. Use the data to see exactly what the risk factors are and what trends or patterns appear in the data. This will help to develop training plans and topics for driver meetings as well as a starting point when considering a driver incentive or performance-based awards program. Companies need to use the data for positive reinforcement and not solely for negative reasons.



“Culture in many ways is the reputation not only with employees, but also customers and community.”

How do you know what your culture is today and is it where you want it to be?

The terms cultural shift and cultural tide are great animations of how the culture can stray from expectations. Culture in many ways is the reputation not only with employees, but also customers and community. Have the number of customer concerns increased? Have the number of thank you and driver praise notes decreased? Has vehicle reliability been subpar? All these points as well as many others may well be symptoms of the culture and the overall reputation starting to shift or drift.

How have you contributed to your culture lately?

Have you been in the office at the time all employees were there? Has time been taken to sit down and say thank you for all the hard work? Has time been taken to listen to what employees are feeling or potential ideas that

may make processes more efficient? Are there times to roll up your sleeves lately and do tasks normally outside of your responsibility? Sometimes just being present and employees see a willingness to pitch in to get the job done goes a long way in building or repairing a fractured culture.

Your culture doesn't need to be fragile.

It needs to be real and unique for each company. Anyone can buy a bus and move people around. What makes a company different than all the others? It could be clean, new buses. It could be a new terminal or a new contract. It may be the prestige of moving certain groups.

But in the end the only thing that makes a company truly unique are the people. Take time to learn from them as they are also learning from you.

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For more information on this topic or if you have suggestions for future topics, please reach out to Mike McDonal at mmcdonal@saucontech.com.