

# Creating a Positive Work Culture



**DECAL**  
**Thriving Child Care**  
**Business Academy**

## How to ensure that your child care business is a happy and supportive place to work

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Imagine that the business you work for supports and accepts you enthusiastically. Your contributions are valued, and your well-being is prioritized. You're happy to go to work and you care about your job because your employer clearly cares about you. Now, imagine that you work in a place where you experience the opposite—you aren't recognized for your work, the structure is overly rigid, and any ideas for improvement are ignored. You are scheduled regularly to work overtime to make up for a lack of staff, making it difficult to balance your home and work responsibilities. You're much less enthusiastic about your job and your quality of work suffers as a result.

As you can imagine, a positive work culture can deeply impact your employees, both in terms of personal well-being and quality and productivity in the workplace. Creating a supportive culture is an essential part of the operations of your child care business. When staff members feel valued and supported at work, they are more productive and more likely to remain working for your business, which improves the quality of your business and services provided. The work culture at your business reflects the attitudes and values of your organization and a negative work culture can quickly lead to the downfall of your business.

This guide will discuss the best ways to create and sustain a positive work culture and why it is important to your business.

### Why Is a Positive Work Culture Important to My Business?

Work culture impacts many aspects of your business and it's important to understand the ripple of positive effects that comes from having a positive work culture at your child care business. Like you imagined earlier, entering a workplace where you feel welcomed, valued, and cared for makes you happy to be at work! This type of environment will in turn increase the quality of your services and make your business more stable.

- A positive work culture **fosters a sense of belonging, purpose, and fulfillment** among employees and creates a sense of community among those involved in

your business. When employees feel valued, supported, and appreciated, they are more likely to be satisfied with their jobs and actively engaged in their work.

- This then **improves retention rates** as employees are less likely to look for opportunities at other organizations. This will save you time and money, as you will have to spend resources less frequently to recruit and train new employees.
- When employees stay working for you for longer, they also have more space to cultivate and advance their skills, which further **improves the quality of your business**. It is also important to recognize that a positive work culture improves the health and well being of your employees and prioritizes a work-life balance. This means providing personal and professional support, which helps employees perform well and consistently in their roles.
- A positive culture is also highly desirable to employees and can be key in **attracting top talent** when you are recruiting new staff. A welcoming, friendly environment will draw individuals who seek those aspects and gives your business a competitive edge over other child care businesses who do not value a positive work culture.
- In addition, it will promote collaboration, teamwork, and effective communication among staff. When employees feel comfortable sharing ideas, working together, and seeking help when needed, it can lead to **greater productivity and efficiency** and encourages innovation and creativity. Employees who feel safe and empowered to explore new ideas may even have new ways to improve your business, making it a better place to attend and work for all!

It is important to also understand that a negative work culture can have disastrous effects to your business across all areas. When employees work in a negative space, they are less likely to remain at the business for long, resulting in high turnover rates and decreased morale and productivity. A revolving door of new caretakers then negatively impacts the children in your care, as they may not be comfortable with new staff and cannot create bonds with individuals who work with them for a short period of time. Very quickly, a negative work culture can destabilize your business and create many challenges that are very difficult to overcome.

## **What Makes a Work Culture a Positive One?**

Creating a positive work culture takes some time and effort but is well worth it for the ways it enhances your child care business! To start, **supportive leadership** is a key component, as it fosters trust between you and your employees, provides them with guidance, and empowers them as they learn and grow at your business.

- Along with leadership, **clear communication** is necessary to being a supportive leader and creating a positive work culture. Communication promotes transparency and understanding and is also necessary to the operations of your business—you should be clear about policies, expectations, etc., so employees are equipped with the knowledge they need to do their job well.

- **Respecting and recognizing staff** for a job well done is also important, as it increases morale and motivation and gives them an incentive to do well in their role and feel as though their efforts are appreciated.
- Giving employees **opportunities for personal and professional growth** also adds to a positive work culture as it demonstrates an interest in the career advancement of your employees, while increasing the quality of your business over time.
- Additionally, **encouraging collaboration and support** among members of your team helps create a sense of community at the workplace, which is important in creating a welcoming environment where people feel respected and valued.
- Finally, one of the most important aspects that create a positive work culture is encouraging a **healthy work-life balance** among employees. This shows a genuine care for the wellbeing of your staff while ensuring they have space for personal growth. This instills a sense of loyalty and commitment among employees, as they feel valued and respected by their employer. A healthy work-life balance also reduces burn out and fatigue in employees, which will help them recharge when needed and stay productive and eager to work.

## What Are Common Mistakes I Should Be Aware Of?

When focusing on creating a positive work culture at your child care business, you should be aware of some aspects that are commonly overlooked that are impactful to the culture of a business.

- **Disregarding the importance of breaks:** Taking regular breaks throughout the day is important in preventing burnout and maintaining enthusiasm for the job during an employee's time on the clock, and it is necessary to have a comfortable space for employees to decompress. While you likely put effort into ensuring a comfortable and safe space for the children in care, be sure to extend that to any break room or spaces that are for staff only. An unclean, unsafe, or dated work and break space can lead to a negative culture, and it is important to ensure that spaces are conducive to caring for children, relaxing during breaks, and other job aspects.
- **Poor work-life balance:** Poor work-life balance in employees can have very negative effects on the work culture and quality of your business. Overscheduling employees leads to more stress, less energy to be productive, and feelings of being undervalued. It is important to recognize when you need to hire more staff and to make efforts not to schedule your staff beyond their expected hours. Additionally, having written policies and clearly communicating your expectations to employees that support a work-life balance is important in upholding this. Consider including policies that support a work-life balance like a generous PTO allowance or child care benefits.
- **Failure to collect and address feedback:** Feedback is key to both your personal development and the development of your business. Not addressing or acknowledging feedback can lead to feelings of alienation and resentment in

staff, as they feel they are not being valued or listened to. It is important to create an environment where your employees feel comfortable sharing feedback with you, and their input is welcomed. As the individuals who spend the most time at your business, they likely have great observations and ideas to help improve your child care business!

- **Micromanaging:** Constantly hovering over employees, scrutinizing every detail of their work, and not trusting them to do their jobs can create a toxic work environment. Micromanagement undermines autonomy and creativity, leading to frustration and demotivation among staff. Encourage independence and trust among your team members, allowing them the freedom to make decisions within their roles while providing support and guidance as needed. Trust that you have effectively set your staff up for success during the onboarding and training process.
- **Lack of clear expectations and policies:** Without clear guidelines, employees may feel unsure about their roles, responsibilities, and the standards expected of them which can lead to confusion, inconsistent work, and a dislike for their place of work, which in turn contributes to a negative work environment. Establishing comprehensive policies, procedures, and a handbook can provide clarity and consistency across your child care business. Clearly communicate these expectations to all staff members and ensure they have access to the necessary resources to understand and adhere to them.
- **Punitive management practices:** Adopting a punitive approach to managing employees, such as reprimanding or punishing them for mistakes or shortcomings can foster fear and resentment in the workplace. This then discourages communication and innovation among employees. Instead of focusing solely on discipline, emphasize coaching, mentorship, and constructive feedback to support employee growth and development. Encourage a positive culture of learning from mistakes and provide opportunities for training and skill enhancement.

## Are There More Resources That Can Help?

You should be constantly growing and developing to best serve your business. Exploring learning opportunities is important, and there are a multitude of resources that can help. Additionally, put yourself in your employees' shoes and think about what you would need to feel supported and valued at work. Maybe you would like some team bonding activities to feel closer and more comfortable with your coworkers or a floating mental health day to be used when you feel it necessary. Even small things can have a big impact on the work culture at your child care business.

- **Networking and connecting with peers** in child care is a great way to learn and grow personally and in your business. Join the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) or if you're a family care provider, the National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC). These organizations can connect you with other business owners and provide important resources in the child care industry. Even

just grabbing a coffee or chatting over the phone with another child care business owner can be helpful, and having friends in the same position offers a unique chance to exchange tips and learn from one another on fostering a positive work culture.

- **Listen to feedback from those involved in your business.** Feedback from families and employees can present you with opportunities for growth, concerns you may not be aware of, and innovative ideas that you may not have considered.
- **Check out our other resources** on a variety of topics. We have guides on becoming a stronger leader, writing policies and procedures, and offering benefits that can help you cultivate a positive work environment at your child care business.

## **Additional Resources**

**If you have questions or need help, assistance is available.**

[GaPDS Website](#)

[DECAL Thriving Child Care Business Academy Website](#)

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