



The Growing Organization Playbook

25 Best Practices for Building a High-Performing Workplace

Introduction

Growing organizations don't usually struggle because of one major people issue.

Instead, hiring, leadership, accountability, communication, onboarding, and employee experience all work together. When one area weakens, the others often follow.

This guide highlights 25 best practices I've seen make the greatest difference over more than 35 years of helping organizations strengthen leadership, improve performance, and retain great people.

Don't feel like you have to do everything.

Instead, use this guide to identify where you're strong, where you have opportunities, and where to focus next.

FOUNDATION & CLARITY

1. Lead with Purpose and Values

Employees want to know their work matters.

A clear purpose and a handful of meaningful core values should guide hiring, leadership, decision-making, and accountability.

Best Practices

- ✓ Reinforce your mission and values regularly.
- ✓ Share examples of employees living the values.
- ✓ Recognize behaviors that support your culture.
- ✓ Help employees understand how their work contributes to the bigger picture.

2. Create Clear Roles and Expectations

Confusion creates frustration.

Every employee should clearly understand what success looks like.

Best Practices

- ✓ Maintain current job descriptions.
 - ✓ Review responsibilities regularly.
 - ✓ Reinforce expectations during one-on-one meetings.
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HIRING

3. Hire for Both Skills and Fit

The best candidate isn't always the one with the strongest résumé.

Look for the skills, behaviors, values, and potential needed to succeed.

Best Practices

- ✓ Define dealmakers and dealbreakers before interviewing.
 - ✓ Train interviewers.
 - ✓ Use behavioral interview questions.
 - ✓ Don't ignore red flags.
 - ✓ Assess alignment with your core values.
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ONBOARDING

4. Start Before Day One

Onboarding begins before the employee arrives.

Great onboarding improves retention, productivity, and engagement.

Best Practices

- ✓ Prepare everything before the first day.

- ✓ Create a positive first-day experience.
 - ✓ Assign a buddy.
 - ✓ Provide a structured onboarding plan.
 - ✓ Check in frequently during the first 90 days.
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LEADERSHIP

5. Develop Better Managers

Managers have the greatest influence on the employee experience.

Investing in leadership development often produces one of the highest returns an organization can make.

Best Practices

- ✓ Coach managers regularly.
 - ✓ Hold managers accountable.
 - ✓ Develop coaching and feedback skills.
 - ✓ Promote servant leadership.
 - ✓ Select leaders for leadership ability—not just technical ability.
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EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE

6. Create a Coaching Culture

High-performing organizations don't wait for annual reviews.

They create frequent conversations that encourage growth.

Best Practices

- ✓ Hold regular one-on-one meetings.
- ✓ Teach coaching and feedback skills.
- ✓ Conduct stay interviews.
- ✓ Set meaningful goals.
- ✓ Focus on employee strengths.

7. Recognize Great Work

Recognition doesn't have to be expensive.

It simply needs to be genuine, timely, and specific.

Best Practices

- ✓ Say thank you often.
- ✓ Celebrate accomplishments.
- ✓ Encourage peer recognition.
- ✓ Personalize appreciation.
- ✓ Celebrate milestones.

8. Foster Teamwork

Healthy teams communicate well, trust one another, and work toward shared goals.

Best Practices

- ✓ Build psychological safety.
- ✓ Clarify team expectations.
- ✓ Address unhealthy behaviors.
- ✓ Create opportunities for connection.
- ✓ Celebrate team successes.

9. Support Well-Being

Employees perform best when they feel supported as whole people.

Best Practices

- ✓ Offer flexibility where possible.
- ✓ Promote mental and physical well-being.
- ✓ Encourage healthy habits.
- ✓ Ensure policies are fair and consistent.
- ✓ Educate employees on benefits and resources.

10. Help Employees Grow

Growth is one of the strongest drivers of retention.

Best Practices

- ✓ Offer development opportunities.
 - ✓ Create career paths.
 - ✓ Use stretch assignments.
 - ✓ Encourage mentoring.
 - ✓ Develop succession plans.
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11. Communicate Frequently

Poor communication creates uncertainty.

Good communication builds trust.

Best Practices

- ✓ Communicate consistently.
 - ✓ Explain the "why."
 - ✓ Use multiple communication methods.
 - ✓ Encourage feedback.
 - ✓ Evaluate meetings regularly.
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Quick Self-Assessment

How many of these best practices are consistently in place?

- ☐ 21–25 — Strong foundation
- ☐ 16–20 — Good progress with opportunities
- ☐ 10–15 — Several priorities to address
- ☐ Fewer than 10 — Significant opportunity to strengthen your people practices

Where Should You Start?

You don't need to tackle everything at once.

Focus on the few improvements that will have the greatest impact on your organization.

If you're unsure where to begin, a **People & Performance Snapshot** can help identify what's working, uncover opportunities, and prioritize practical next steps.



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