



Carlos Brito

Sustaining an Ownership Culture: How to Achieve Results Together

Carlos Brito, Chief Executive Officer of Anheuser-Busch InBev, one of the world's top five consumer products companies, opened his World Business Forum presentation by telling attendees that corporate culture can remain the same across geographical regions, and it's important not to dilute a winning culture as companies grow. If you have the right high-performance culture, which makes for a high-performance company, you can, and must, have a "company way" of doing things, a way that can be recognized no matter where in the world the office is located.

Dream Big But Stay Humble

It takes the same amount of energy to dream big as to dream small, so invest your energies in big dreams.

The key is to stay humble. Remember there are always companies doing it better. Stay on the lookout for those doing it better and borrow ideas from them.

One Company One Culture

Don't dilute the culture. All the offices should look and feel the same. Brito said there are three elements necessary for a sustainable high-performance culture:

- **Dream:** Aim higher. Hire people who want to be best-in-class, who are inspired by what they do.
- **People:** Attract, develop and retain high-performers. Give growth opportunities to people who are delivering, are cultural ambassadors and are willing to take on new responsibilities. Allow people to speak up without fear. New ideas can be painful. Truth must be valued
- **Culture of ownership:** Procure people who are invested in the company, people who plan to be



around for a long time and treat the company like it is theirs. Owners make better decisions.

Be a High-Performance Leader

Be unselfish. It's not about you. It's about the company and what you leave behind. A leader needs to know just enough about the details to ask good questions and put forth the right challenges.

It's All About People

People are the only sustainable competitive advantage a business has. It's people who understand the consumers and execute the brand. You have to hire people who, with the right training, will be better than you. Don't worry that someone is going to take your job. You're only a good leader if you have a good team. Treat your best people the best.

Face the Brutal Facts

Talk about the good and the bad with the same urgency and clarity. If people only talk about the good news you don't know what's happening in the business. Employees with an owner's mentality face brutal facts.

Reward Results, Acknowledge Efforts

Acknowledge those who work hard, but remember effort doesn't always produce results. Consumers only buy results. Bonuses are for results.

Keep the Right Amount of Pressure

If people are too relaxed they are not focused. When there is too much pressure, they are panicky; no one can produce their best when they are feeling that way. When there is the right amount of pressure, people learn faster, work harder and produce more. Pressure can be good if the leader is able to apply it properly.

Welcome Healthy Conflicts

Consensus is an impossible science. Alignment is what's important. When people challenge and are challenged, a better environment is achieved for creating ideas and positive outcomes. Just make sure that when the meeting room door is opened, people are on the same page.

The Consumer is the Ultimate Acid Test

Never lose sight of who is paying for your products. Consider what a consumer would say in a budget meeting if they could comment on how you are spending the money they pay for your product. If you could not justify the expense to the consumer, maybe you should rethink the expense.

No Shortcuts

Most companies have professionals who are there for a few years, not owners who will be there more than 20 years. Owners are thinking about the company, not short-term goals. It comes back to the people. Invested employees who think like owners don't take shortcuts.

Brito closed by saying to never compromise on who you are, to treat your business like a sports team. In sports, results matter. Contributions matter. Treat the star players like stars; it's fair – they aren't like everyone else. Find people who truly care about the company; apply the right pressure, and reward them when they come through. ■