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Danone Simpson has more than 17 years' experience in all lines of insurance. Danone has built an agency focused on employee benefit and property & casualty programs for the commercial and nonprofit sectors. Under Danone's leadership the firm has partnered with over 100 carriers in order to find the perfect insurance solutions for their clients. Danone has been presented multiple awards in the Los Angeles and San Fernando Valley Business Journals, including being selected a Trusted Advisor in Insurance and one of the Top Twelve Women Owned Businesses in Los Angeles. Recently Danone was selected by *Forbes* magazine to be represented in the Women of Power series for Southern California. She sits on the Valley Village Fund Development Board of Directors and was honored by Make-A-Wish of Greater Los Angeles as founding member of Women for Wishes. Danone received her Masters of Business Administration from the Graziadio School of Business at Pepperdine University.

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Building a Culture of Leadership

Investing in corporate culture is investing in your bottom line

Internal Branding in Harmony; Adding Value to Others

Developing a brand takes understanding of what makes the organization unique. Collin's SMaC (Simple, Methodical and Consistent recipe) creates a replicable and consistent success formula from a defined set of operating practices that frames every decision from top down and rarely changes over time; however company culture cannot be espoused—inspired, but not espoused. It can take a company off track if the SMaC, mission, vision and values are not living inside every employee creating a culture that moves the organization towards its goals. It is important to begin with the end in mind—the journey of purpose defining the employee's daily actions towards serving customers. Stephen Covey shares in Joe Calhoun's book, *The One Hour for Growth*:

"In an hour or so, you can create a draft of your Business Growth Plan including your Vision, Mission, Values, Objectives, Strategies, and priorities that fits on a single sheet of paper. It will help you grow your business by better serving your customers, employees, and business owners. Most businesspeople, including your competitors, don't take the time to plan well. It's a weakness for them – and an opportunity for you."

A mission statement must not only be on the wall, but on the website and on every internal document employees see. And all in one sentence, please. It is surprising to see how many organizations do not have their mission statement on their website or employees cannot recite it.

What Is the Outcome That You, as Leadership, Desire?

Is this a deep passionate desire? Does everyone on the leadership team, the

supervisors, and staff carry the torch for the same purpose? Is this purpose (mission) in their DNA? Is this just a job? Do your business partners [such as insurance brokers] have the same DNA? Or are they simply vendors showing up at renewal or when you call them? Are they filtering your message to your employees and their families, and trying to keep costs down? Are they educating them on benefits, wellness and safety through TEAM (total ER/ER Appreciation Management™)? Assisting your HR department with training, claims, compliance and culture, passionately serving your employees who serve your clients? Or are your employees and service providers merely showing up? Ring that bell, sound the alarm to move their passion towards your mission. Or, should you incentivize them to move on, if they are not a fit for your company culture? Zappos, for example, offers employees \$2,000 to quit if they are not committed to the mission.

Change Belief, Change Behavior

The seed of greatness is in every human being. Many are still living what they were told. Paul Martinelli states, "When an individual changes their belief, their behavior changes." What we believe may have come from family, teachers, bosses or friends—habits formed in our subconscious. Mentoring programs and training can change these past rules when the belief changes, thus the importance of a leadership culture – the mysterious glue that holds employees together marching towards the same mission.

Employee engagement is not a buzzword. Organizations are only a vision without employees, yet statistics show a lack of presentism. Habits are anchored, but inspiring change through great leadership lessons and practices can change bad

habits. Without leadership the ship will not sail in the right direction.

Internal Brand

Do you brand your mission with your employees? Companies spend thousands to millions of dollars on their external brand, yet when asked, “What is your internal brand?” a pause fills the room. While performing a culture survey for Raytheon, I admired their Wall of Innovation where they display inspiring messages and innovation contests with large rewards.

Find the passion for the people you serve, adding value to them. Be that person about whom others say, “I succeeded because this person believed in me.” Define your internal brand to fulfill that prophecy, bringing your employees along on the journey with you. I tell my employees, if you don’t have a heart for service you will not last here. I don’t know why, but you won’t. It is important for them to understand we create a montage

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of services that fit our clients’ personalized needs hand in glove from consulting on the right products to cover the assets—from employees to buildings—transferring risk from legal liability to insurance products, helping to create a safe and well culture. Our motto is “Together We’re Stronger,”

because all we do takes a team, well-oiled with purpose, fueled by caring. We passionately believe our clients are stronger with our firm beside them. Our taglines are “We care for our client’s employees as though they were our own.” “We put the star in HR,” because it is never about what we do for HR, it is about them serving their own. “We are the wind beneath their wings,” because we support our clients’ mission. “Our mission is to further your mission.” We proudly display our plaques from the LA & SFV Business Journals: “Trusted Advisors,” “Fastest Growing Company,” “Largest Insurance Brokers,” “Employee Benefit Consultants,” “Best Places to Work” but more importantly, it is the framed client’s missions on our walls that matter most.

Leadership with purpose using coaching and celebration opens us up emotionally to a different belief system to create successful sustainable organizations. Then strategize deep on the bench with succession planning to leave a legacy.

