Name of Speaker: Flavio Martins

Title of Lecture: Creating a Culture That Makes a Difference

Date of Lecture: 9/12/13

Introduction

Flavio Martins, the speaker, is originally from Brazil but moved here to the United States over 20 years ago. He graduated with his bachelor’s degree in IT from Utah Valley University. Later, he went on to finish his masters degree. He has been with DigiCert for roughly 8 years and is currently the Vice President of Customer Support. The lecture focused on building a winning culture, by surrounding yourself with the right kind of people and instilling the right values.

Summary

The lecture began with Flavio’s introduction of DigiCert. DigiCert is an internet security provider. These services include SSL certificate management, document signing, and digital authentication services. In his position as the Vice President of Customer Support, it is important to not only have good products and services, but the right people to help the customer manage those products. Thus, his lecture was mostly about culture and people.

The first topic was “obsess over the customer and not the competitor”. In other words, he is saying that by worrying more about taking care of your customers you will build loyalty. You will always have competitors so worry about what you can control which is by providing solutions to the customers. Next he discussed the idea of metrics. This simply put, means establish your metrics and go and achieve them.

Next he spoke of Autonomy, and how it is important to allow employees the autonomy to do as they see fit. He spoke about providing solutions to customers that may be adjustments to the standards. He talked about work schedules and how they are different in India, and the Philippines, or Tokyo. His main point was that now we are in a global economy serving people all over the world. What works for one person or company many not always be the best solution for another person or company. He also made mention that time off policies are changing as well.

The fourth topic was about being super selective when finding members of your team. He gave an example of a qualified individual he did not choose because he wanted that person to realize that the team is greater than the individual. It is important to make sure that employees fit the company culture

The final topic of discussion was the idea of work, life, and balance. He said there is no such thing as balancing work or life, but rather finding a balance as work and life. In other words he’s saying that work is part of life and what you have to have is a life that you liver where you feel comfortable with how much you work.

Reflection

Overall, I thought that Flavio Matins five thoughts on building a culture that makes a difference were valid; however, the actuality of applying these ideas a bit impractical. It is important to obsess over your customers, but being competitive also means understanding your competitors and knowing what you need to do to be better than them. I agree, it is a fantastic idea to think that you will know what direction to take you business only by customer feedback; but customers don’t always know what they need.

Autonomy is also an interesting concept. The way I felt that he presented it was to mean that he trusts his employees to do the right thing every time. With regards to a vacation policy, or break time it is easy to use social norms to govern those ideas. However, because lower level employees don’t often have the overall picture of the business, how can they know what to do every time? They can’t, therefore they are given guidelines, or standards, and thus I wonder if the employees really have that much autonomy?

I like the idea of being super selective, but business is something you do now. In other words, you have to provide what the customer wants in a timely manner. With being super selective, that takes time. Being too selective could cause missed opportunities. We’ve all been in work situations where the person doing the job wasn’t ideal. Often times it is frustrating but business is still being done.

The idea of a work and life balance is fantastic, but why is it up to the company rather than the employee to make that balance? With companies like Google, or Adobe, they focus on being fantastic places to work by providing things that make it “easier” to balance life while at work. However, a different perspective might show that they are providing these services as ways to keep employees at work longer.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I think that the points Falvio made have some validity; however I’m not sure of their practicality. I appreciate that he shared what has worked for them at DigiCert, and can see that all company cultures are not the same.