

Treat Co-Workers Like Family for the Best Work Culture

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David Schramm,

family scholar at Utah State University, has never taken a business class, but he believes his findings from a recent study should be shared with business students and CEOs alike.

Schramm, assistant professor and Extension family life specialist, recently noticed that several billboards on the freeway used language that resonated with the area of family science.

"I saw billboards that said things like, 'Welcome to the family,' 'Welcome home,' and 'Think Family,'" he said. "I was curious as to why businesses would use 'family' in marketing messages, so I started researching."

Schramm, also known as USU relationship specialist "Dr. Dave," said that humans have at least three fundamental needs for surviving and thriving. They include safety, satisfaction and connection.

He recently examined data from the top 346 best places to work in the U.S., according to Inc.com., where more than 139,000 employees rated their workplaces in 2019. Schramm examined each of the company's 100-word summaries answering the question, "Why we think we're a great place to work." He discovered that the 15 words used most frequently aligned precisely with the three fundamental needs for human flourishing.

The terms "culture" and "team" dominated their descriptions, Schramm said. There were words like perks, fun, values, and the ninth most frequently used word was family.

"It suddenly hit me that the secret sauce to top workplaces is meeting the three fundamental human needs, and treating employees like family," he said.

Schramm notes that strong families are characterized by gratitude, time together, fun, kindness, trust, empathy, recognition and open family discussions. Ironically, through his research and visits to top businesses, he discovered that the same qualities are found in the best workplaces.

Schramm's advice for graduating students and those considering a different job is to invest time doing their "happiness homework" on the company.

"Consider culture along with compensation and positivity as much as a paycheck," he said. "The key question to ask yourself is, 'Does it feel like family?' After all, with one-third or more of your adult life spent at work, it's worth the investment."

Schramm has worked closely with businesses and leaders, providing training and presentations on implementing family fundamentals into work culture. He recently gave a TEDx talk in Florida entitled, "Family Fundamentals: The Secret Sauce for Booming Business." Click here to watch link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pmz7z4hyM9E>.

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