

MEDIAKIM

LEADERSHIP & CULTURE

Culture Is What You Tolerate

Culture is not your values poster or your mission statement. It is the worst behaviour you are willing to walk past. What you tolerate, you teach.

A MEDIAKIM INSIGHTS RESOURCE PACK

Published 25 February 2026

Every business says it has values. Far fewer actually live them. The gap between the words on the wall and the way people really behave is where culture actually lives — and culture is built not by what you announce, but by what you are willing to tolerate. The standard you walk past is the standard you accept.

> **“The standard you walk past is the standard you accept.”**
>
> **— David Morrison**

Values are proven in tolerance, not posters

You can print integrity, excellence and respect on a beautiful poster. But if the rude top performer never faces consequences, your real value is results excuse behaviour. If sloppy work ships without comment, your real standard is sloppy is fine. People do not learn culture from statements; they learn it from what gets rewarded and what gets ignored.

What you tolerate, you teach

Every time a behaviour goes unchallenged, you have quietly taught the whole team that it is acceptable. The reverse is also true: every time you uphold a standard — kindly but clearly — you teach that it matters. In a small business, where one person can shift the whole atmosphere, this is not a soft issue. It is the difference between a team you are proud of and one you tolerate.

- Define the few behaviours that genuinely matter — then actually uphold them.
- Model the standard yourself; culture is caught from leaders first.
- Address slips early and kindly; what you ignore, you endorse.
- Reward the behaviour you want to see, not just the results you want to get.

> **THE MEDIAKIM VIEW**
>
> The same principle runs through brand and culture alike: what you consistently allow becomes who you are. Standards held quietly and faithfully, over time, are what turn a group of people into a business with character.

The bottom line

Stop measuring your culture by your mission statement and start measuring it by what you let slide. Decide the standards that matter, model them, and have the courage to uphold them. What you tolerate, you teach — so teach well.

Sources

- Lieutenant General David Morrison — the standard you walk past is the standard you accept.
- Patrick Lencioni, The Advantage — organisational health and values lived out.

TAKE YOUR BRAND TO THE NEXT LEVEL

Want this done properly?

You can absolutely build on this yourself — that's why we wrote it. But if you'd rather have your brand, website and profile built as one considered system, that's exactly what we do. No obligation — just a conversation.

www.mediakim.co.za
info@mediakim.co.za
+27 72 925 2470

Mediakim (Pty) Ltd