

Core Values Fuel Growth of IAPP

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Founded in 2000, the International Association of Privacy Professionals (IAPP) is a not-for-profit association that serves 11,500 members in 70 countries. IAPP helps privacy professionals around the world better manage and protect the data that their organizations communicate and store.

More than just a professional association, the IAPP provides a home for privacy professionals to share experiences and enrich their knowledge through training and collaboration.

In 2000, current CEO, Trevor Hughes, was the sole employee at a small office in York Harbor, Maine. IAPP now is 60 people strong and located in Portsmouth, New Hampshire at the Pease International Tradeport.

By all accounts, IAPP has a thriving culture, characterized by passionate professionals dedicated to the organization's mission of improving the practice of protecting data.

We can see the roots of IAPP's current culture in the values that shaped Mr. Hughes' decisions when he was just starting out. For example, there were times when he needed to leave the office to attend one of his son's school events or to take one of his children to a doctor's appointment. He recognized that as long as he delivered excellence at the end of the day, the hours of eight to five weren't sacred. It was clear to him that in order to live a full and balanced life, the workday would have to be both flexible and accommodating.

Values are the foundation on which an organization builds its rationale for making decisions. Probably the most critical decisions an organization makes are hiring choices. Values inform whom the "right" people are: what excites them, what effort they bring to the cause and how they conduct themselves while at work.

These values remain the same through changes in the organization management, personnel, politics, technology, etc. They are at the core of the organization and they underlie the way an organization operates.

These "core values" also articulate what the organization stands for, explaining why they do business the way they do. They guide other decisions such as how to orient or teach

new hires, what constitutes outstanding effort and performance, and when to fire.

IAPP's core values and savvy management have helped fuel and guide its rapid growth. They are catchy, as you'll see below. And, they are supported by an explanation so there is no confusion about what they mean.

When visitors enter the IAPP office, they cannot help but notice IAPP's values. Poster sized pictures of employees exemplifying each highlighted value, make it impossible to ignore what IAPP thinks is important. IAPP's core values are:

Smart, Fun, Get-Stuff-Done - We are curious, we grow personally and professionally, we like diverse and interesting employees. Fun matters, so we take time for it. We pitch in beyond our roles; adaptability matters.

Whole People - We are whole people and balance in our lives makes the IAPP better. We give and expect flexibility. We deliver excellence at the end of the day.

Nice Matters - We communicate a ton. We try to demonstrate humility. We expect friction and use trust and respect to move forward.

Okay is Not Okay - We do the big stuff exceedingly well, then exceed expectations on the details. We listen to our members and customers. We test and learn. We expect, and learn from, mistakes.

No Margin, No Mission - We are a "nice hybrid": a non-profit with a strong entrepreneurial/start-up attitude. Growth is vital to our success. We do more and better each year. We expect and drive change.

When taken seriously, core values provide a foundation for making decisions and, over time, become the bedrock of an organization's culture. A culture based on strong values is a competitive advantage and is the only sustainable competitive advantage an organization can hope to achieve. Everything else can be relatively easily copied.

There is one other interesting aspect of IAPP's culture that is allowed by their core values. They are extremely dog friendly. When you visit their facilities it's common to see several dogs in the offices. We believe this is a subtle selection mechanism. People who appreciate dogs are attached to the organization whereas folks who don't like canines self-select out.

In October of 2012 IAPP was recognized as the "Coolest Mid-Sized Company for Young

Professionals" by *Business NH Magazine*. In accepting the award, Mr. Hughes said, "We are smart, fun and we get stuff done. That's our phrase (and a core value) and we really mean it. We hire people in that image."

IAPP is poised for continued growth as privacy issues become ever more important in a world dominated by electronic communications. With their firm foundation of core values, we are convinced they will continue to attract employees, partners and clients who buy into their values.

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