

Charge into the Storm

CultureShoc, like its mascot the buffalo, helps companies “get out of hell” by tackling issues head on.

BY GEORGE HAHN

No matter a company's size, issues are going to arise. Oftentimes, problems are buried or pushed under the rug and covered with a temporary Band-Aid. Because the root of the problem hasn't been resolved, it continues to pop up again and again. That only causes more headaches for leadership teams and employees alike. It's barriers like these that keep individuals from finding their job meaningful and fulfilling.

Ron Kaminski wants people to know working hard doesn't have to suck. He loves what he does for a living: He gets people out of hell.

It sounds a bit dramatic, but it's like this: Imagine a company's culture represented by a drawing of two overlapping circles. One circle is hell yes, and the other circle is hell no. Where the circles overlap is just hell.

“Most companies live in the overlapping middle. Our job is to get them out of hell,” says Kaminski, founder of CultureShoc, a Cleveland-based team leadership and high-performance culture development firm.

According to CultureShoc's own cul-

ture, companies need three things to be successful. They need:

1. Alignment and engagement to a shared vision.
2. Traction in a culture of high accountability and disciplined execution.
3. A healthy team with an open and honest environment of high trust.

CultureShoc works with businesses that know they're lacking in one, two or all three of these things. In Kaminski's words, “It's about helping a company reconnect with the reason why they exist and stay laser-focused on what they can do better than anyone.” Anything that doesn't align with a company's core focus must go. And once you can get clarity on why the company exists and what it does better than anyone, the rest is simple. Not necessarily easy, but simple.

Born in Brunswick and raised in Mentor, Kaminski graduated from John Carroll University in 1999 with a degree in marketing. Right out of school, he went to work for a company that implemented enterprise resource planning software during the lead up to the Y2K scare.

He was doing well, but he had no love for the software business. He did, however, discover a passion for the people and working with the teams that implemented the software. When clients started asking for help with their team building, a service his company didn't offer, Kaminski saw an open lane and took it.

Kaminski founded his business with a partner as a team-building company in 2003. (On the day he resigned from his job, his then-wife announced that she was pregnant with their first child.)

Over time, the company naturally evolved into a more fully formed agency.

In the beginning, he admits, there was a lot of fear behind his decision to walk away from the security of a lucrative job and go out on his own, and he's quick to point out that the vast majority of CultureShoc's clients are where they are because of fear.

“They don't want to have the tough conversations. They don't want to make the hard decisions in a family business,” he says. To this day, he has yet to have a client regret stepping into that fear and using it.



RON KAMINSKI



CultureShoc's mascot is the buffalo. The inspiration has to do with the buffalo's behavior in the face of bad weather. When a storm approaches, cows run away from bad weather, prolonging the pain of the storm as it follows them. Herds of buffalo, on the other hand, run into the storm and reach green pastures and sunny skies faster. CultureShoc's point of view wants businesses to emulate the buffalo. Its job is to help them face the storm head-on.

Kaminski and his team at CultureShoc are so confident in their work that they don't require payment unless the client sees results. It's about being of service, and Kaminski genuinely loves helping companies solve their problems.

CultureShoc works with a variety of clients from *Fortune* 100s to startups. And with a list of happy clients that includes KeyBank, Cleveland Clinic, Hyland Software, Northeast Factory Direct, Bravo Wellness, USA Insulation and many others, it seems to be working quite well.

It's also working well inside CultureShoc, which prides itself on its own culture of authenticity. "We eat our own dog food," as Kaminski says, meaning that they practice what they preach with a clarity of a shared vision, traction against that vision with accountability and a healthy team of people. These are people who love what they do and are really good at it. ■

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— Ron Kaminski, founder, CULTURESHOC

