

CREATING A LIVING CORPORATE CULTURE

BY **Eivind Slaaen** Head of Global People and Culture Development at Hilti

Corporate culture at Hilti is not a theoretical definition, but a practical activation of expected behaviour. We define it as a unique combination of caring and performance. It is about balance and sustainability.



IMAGE:

Outperformer Program trainees meet Hilti Executive Board members at their first annual global summit



"The culture at Hilti combines of two elements: caring and performance. The caring element focuses on a team orientation, putting people at the centre, integrity, honesty, and inclusion. On the other side, we have a strong performance orientation that comes along with competitiveness, courage, going the extra mile, and taking risk"

This culture was built over decades and was strongly influenced by the nature of Hilti as a family owned company. Today, Hilti is privately owned, and the company has managed to blend the entrepreneurial spirit of a small agile start-up with the great processes and structures of a big corporation.

Our founder, Martin Hilti, set the corner stone of our culture, dreaming about a company full of entrepreneurs. He also said, "company growth and personal growth goes hand in hand". We believe in principles like worthwhile work, self-responsibility, facing facts, leading with the head, heart and hands, learning from mistakes, supporting, and praising each other. We believe that corporate culture is a journey that needs to be nurtured and we therefore developed cultural trainings back in 1984 and in 2004 we installed a structured culture development process called "Our Culture Journey".

What is unique about our culture at Hilti is the combination of two elements: caring and performance, which at a glance may seem like opposing elements. The caring element focuses on a team orientation, putting people at the centre, integrity, honesty, and inclusion. On the other side, we have a strong performance orientation that comes along with competitiveness, courage, going the extra mile, and taking risk. What's fascinating is that the "warm" element of caring goes hand in hand with "cold" element of excellent performance, which creates unique essence of our culture.

Culture is integral part of our business model and strategy. Our business model starts with Purpose and values, followed by People and only then comes Business Strategy. Our business strategy – "Champion 2020" has its foundation in caring and performance oriented culture and in our common purpose – "We passionately create enthusiastic customers and build a better future". The way we run our business is based on living our core values:

- We act with integrity in all we do
- We demonstrate courage to go beyond the circle of habits
- We outperform through teamwork
- We have commitment to personal and company grow

We strongly believe that our culture is critical for the creation of a good atmosphere in the company and that significantly influences employee engagement.

It is always a challenge for global players to "manage" one corporate culture across culturally diverse world. We at Hilti focus on a few



"In reading the CEMS mission statement we can find many overlaps in what CEMS and Hilti value - promoting global citizenship, high standards of performance and ethical conduct, cultural diversity with respect and empathy"



PHOTOS CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT:
 Cultural team camps combine hard facts learning, soft skills development and team bonding
 Our customers highly appreciate on-site consultancy from Hilti account managers and field engineers



fundamental principles and those principles are shared globally – regardless of culture and geography. We then discuss how the behaviours behind these principles play out within local cultural context. To give an example: Commitment – our culture is based on self-responsibility as well as taking and honoring commitments. There are no exceptions to this. However, it will always be within a cultural context, e.g. it will look differently in Japan than in Germany. That said, we are not willing to accept the lowest common denominator as this would contradict our aspiration of strong performance and people development. Therefore, we always have local people to facilitate these discussions to ensure that we do respect the local cultural context while still aligning with a global Hilti standard.

As we are into building a long-term relationship with our employees and we have teamwork as our core value, we are always keen that people joining Hilti will feel good here. This feeling would not come if the culture does not fit their preferences and mind set. Therefore we discuss Hilti values with our candidates. We are not testing if they know the Hilti values, we want people that believe in our values generally and are aligned to them.

We have quite a few CEMS graduates working at Hilti. All of them came with a backpack full of international experience from either exchange semesters or international internships and projects. This kind of global mindset fits Hilti, as experience

shows that people who lived and worked in multiple countries have developed certain values like commitment and teamwork. We know that CEMS students are often on the frontline of trying the new ways of doing things, innovation and setting high standards for their own performance.

Reading CEMS mission statement – promoting global citizenship, with particular emphasis placed upon the values as high standards of performance and ethical conduct, cultural diversity with respect and empathy or responsibility and accountability – we can find many overlaps in what CEMS and Hilti value.

From our point of view CEMS students are very well prepared to become contributing members of the Hilti family, bringing a lot of ingredients that fit our understanding of corporate culture. All that needs to be done is to mix the ingredients in the right proportion to create a unique blend.

It is like with getting the perfect tasting wine: you need to consider the quality of soil, weather, type of grape, barrel, condition of storage and that all under the watchful eye of a passionate wine master. CEMS students bring their education, diverse experience and the way they see the world, which fits our purpose, and we at Hilti provide the stage on which they can perform.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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