



Cali Bamboo Increases Engagement While Respecting Employees... and the Planet

“It feels good that employees have ‘voted’ us one of the Top Workplaces in San Diego for the third year. I like to win, but win the right way. Play the game, if you will, but play it fair and well, treating people and the planet with kindness and respect along the way.”

Jeff Goldberg, CEO, Cali Bamboo

Founded in 2004, [Cali Bamboo](#) helps customers implement stylish design without impacting the environment, setting the standard for sustainable businesses. Determined to maintain a positive work environment during rapid growth, the company used the [WorkplaceDynamics](#) employee engagement survey as a tool to guide communication and hiring. Not only has the company earned [Top Workplace](#) status for three consecutive years, but survey scores have improved each year.



Background

Mission-Driven Company

Jeff Goldberg and Tanner Haigwood founded Cali Bamboo with two guiding principles:

1. Make a difference today for a more sustainable future through the promotion of bamboo materials as viable alternatives to traditional products.
2. Take care of people, nurture them, and do good things for them and their families.

“We wanted to create something that was positive and authentic and caring,” explains, Goldberg, who is CEO. “We treat everyone with a great deal of respect and integrity and set up what we feel is a family environment.”

For Goldberg and Haigwood, maintaining that family environment drives business decisions as much as the environmental mission statement.

Rapid Growth

The past four years have brought a period of significant growth to Cali Bamboo. With 100 employees, Goldberg finds it more difficult to connect individually with each member of his staff.

“I’m not physically capable of getting to know everyone anymore,” he explains. “As the organization gets bigger, I’m less into the details and need to focus on other things.”

Strategy

Surveys Measure Employee Engagement

Considering their employees as their number one asset, Cali Bamboo’s founders sought a way to gather valuable input from the team to inform future decisions. The WorkplaceDynamics employee engagement survey provided an ideal forum.

Goldberg reports, “We always have meetings after the survey where we take the

feedback— whether it be good, bad, or ugly—and we make adjustments. We take action on their ideas and thoughts and learn lessons from them.”

Communication Reinforces Mission

Goldberg asserts the importance of providing feedback and transparency. “If you paint a picture of how the organization fits into the world and relate that back to an employee and how they are critically important to those things, you create an opportunity for great engagement.”

Cali Bamboo executives hold formal, quarterly presentations to share numbers and initiatives with employees. Emails and smaller meetings in between provide critical updates.

“We share what’s going on in a meaningful way, whether that involves the bumps and mistakes or sharing the wins with everybody, giving credit to people and teams that deserve it,” Goldberg reports.

Hire the Right Leaders

In addition to communication, Goldberg recognizes the key role that personnel decisions play in the company’s success. With top-level leaders removed from the day-to-day, mid-level managers must make an impact to keep the culture strong.

He explains the strategy. “We hire the types of people that are going to be accessible and care about what’s going on in the lives of the people that work for them, leaders who will build those direct, strong bond relationships.”

Results

Three Consecutive Years as a Top Workplace

Cali Bamboo’s communication and hiring strategies have earned the company a slot on San Diego’s Top Workplace’s list three years in a row. Perhaps even more impressive is the fact





that survey scores have improved each year.

“What is fantastic are the scores,” reports Fraser Marlow, Head of Research at WorkplaceDynamics. “Cali Bamboo scores

higher than other organizations in the Manufacturing sector by double digits.”

Happy Employees

Goldberg measures success in part by the smiles on the faces of his staff. Cali Bamboo employees give both the company and the leadership a big “thumbs up” with these anonymous comments from the surveys:

- “The leaders encourage personal growth and opportunity, promoting within and across.”
- “We are growing incredibly fast. It is even more important and reassuring to see how committed Cali Bamboo is to their existing employees.”
- “I love my job because I can help both the people around me, as well as customers and ultimately the planet.”

Long-Term Impact on Growth

Not only has the survey earned Cali Bamboo visibility in the community, but more importantly, the results have guided executives on where to focus their efforts for greatest effect.

“I have a better perspective on what’s important for the organization’s long-term health and growth,” Goldberg concludes. “Over time, I may have less personal influence over individual relationships, but I still have the ability to impact the culture by focusing on it, learning from the past, and understanding what’s working well now.”