

Christa Reinhardt:

Welcome to the Vanderbloemen Leadership podcast. I'm Christa Reinhardt, your host, and I'm also the Senior Marketing Coordinator here at Vanderbloemen. Today we will be continuing into the last episode of our series, New Year New Rhythm, where we're walking through what you can expect to change in the new year and how you can prepare for those changes. In this week's episode, I get to sit down with our founder and CEO, William Vanderbloemen and Michael Buckingham, our new VP of Marketing and Business Development, to discuss how you can build up a healthy new team and culture after your massive transition and turnover. You don't want to miss this conversation.

Christa Reinhardt:

Well, hey everybody. Thank you so much for joining us today as we wrap up the last episode of our series. Today I get to be joined by our CEO and our founder, William Vanderbloemen. Thanks for being here, William.

William Vanderbloemen:

Oh, always good to be with you, Christa.

Christa Reinhardt:

And then also we have a new guest. This is Michael Buckingham, our VP of Marketing and Business Development.

Michael Buckingham:

Holy cow. I'm excited to be here.

Christa Reinhardt:

Yes, really exciting for us.

Michael Buckingham:

It never gets old. I haven't gotten to do that on camera.

William Vanderbloemen:

For those of you don't know, Michael started a wonderful agency called Holy Cow. We can talk about it a little bit.

Christa Reinhardt:

It's been our ongoing joke. We love it. Well, today I have Michael and William here because we're going to be discussing how you can build up your new team and your new culture after a year of transition and turnover. So feeding into that, we've talked a lot. William, you've been talking for the last year now about the year, how 2021 was full of turnover. You predicted it what? Last December now?

William Vanderbloemen:

Yeah, it's been about a year since we put an article out on Forbes and then it happened and now everybody's talking about it. I don't see it slowing down either. There's just too many continuing circumstances and a lot of offices hadn't even gone back to work yet. When people are forced to go

back into an office, it might make them change. We're looking for a position on our team right now. And I was just looking, not at the people we already know, but the people who are coming to me proactively through LinkedIn and they're amazingly talented people and it's not because I'm all that. Because there's this churn that's happening.

William Vanderbloemen:

And also, not what the podcast is about, but inflation's real. And if you've been giving your team raises throughout the year, this may not apply to you. If you haven't changed your people's pay in a year, it costs some more to live next year than this year. And it varies from place to place in the country, but I think in a year where we're all a little gun shy of spending money, there's going to be a tension between what you need to do to make people whole and what you are willing to do. And it's just going to elongate this resignation.

Christa Reinhardt:

No, that's a great point. And so with 2021 being that year of turnover and we don't even think it's going to stop soon, 22, I can't help but feel like this is the year that now that we have all these new team members and new people, it's time to build up that new team and culture. What do y'all think?

Michael Buckingham:

Absolutely. There's loss, but then there's also a gain. It's the whole pruning concept of in order to grow, you sometimes have to have some pruning. There's some difficulties or uncomfortable pieces of that, but that produces so much growth and so much new health and you can't do that on accident. You need to be very purposeful about it, but it's so valuable when you embrace it.

William Vanderbloemen:

I tell you, we say at our house all the time, "Transitions are hard." And we have one son who, here in Houston where we're recording this in December and it's 82 degrees outside, but he just does not transition from shorts to jeans very well. Ever since he's a little boy, there's that short little time when it's cold here, I think we're having it on a Thursday this year. But during that winter time he has to put on jeans and Adrienne just looks at him and says, "Transitions are hard."

William Vanderbloemen:

And you think about Jesus. When did he in trouble with his own friends, not the religious authorities and the bad guys or whatever, but his own friends were always saying, "Why are we going to another town? Why are we leaving? Where did he go? Did we lose him? Why are we moving?" And it says, "Jesus just kept moving from place to place." And those transitions are hard, but he knew just like you were saying turnover is not inherently a bad thing. It can be a time to prune and grow in a way you might not otherwise.

Michael Buckingham:

Yeah, that's exactly what I'm going through right now. There was pain leaving Atlanta to come to Houston. My oldest son is there. My favorite restaurant's there. But then we're discovering new here in Houston. And that my time, even in these two weeks already here at Vanderbloemen, and honestly this isn't me blowing sunshine, I'm doing a podcast with William Vanderbloemen. This is crazy.

Christa Reinhardt:

We're like, "Hey, welcome to the team. Join our podcast."

Michael Buckingham:

I wouldn't have told you in six months this was going to happen. But I truly, truly believe the best is ahead, and it's about looking back enough to know where you're coming from, but focusing on looking forward to what's next.

William Vanderbloemen:

Christa, as you talk about building a new culture, building a new team, I'm guessing people who are listening here at the front end of 2022 are either anticipating hiring some new people as church reopens. And it's going to take another whole year for us to find out whatever normal looks like. Or as you've lost some people, how are we going to fill those holes? Or maybe you're like me. We've got several new faces around here. And because we've been shut down... You remember that first event we had after work we all got-

Christa Reinhardt:

Everyone's awkward. Doesn't know each other.

William Vanderbloemen:

Gosh, I've said it before, I think on this podcast, it was like a bad scene from a middle school dance where nobody knew- "I don't want to go talk to them. I don't know them." And you stare at your shoes and you wonder how long this thing lasts. And we like each other.

Christa Reinhardt:

It's true.

William Vanderbloemen:

There's a bit of coming out of this pandemic and back to the office where there's just everyone's culture is suffering and you're going to have to rebuild. If you've got new people, you have an amazing opportunity. I've said this to everyone. I hope Michael's heard me say it many, many times. The great value of a longstanding, long term, long tenured employee is that they have institutional memory. They remember back when we did this or when we worked with that church or when you had that member or that board member. They had institutional memory. But the great value of a new team member is fresh eyes.

Christa Reinhardt:

That's so true.

William Vanderbloemen:

And I think sometimes, especially if you're a new employee and you want to honor your new employer, you want to not bring in too much change too fast. It can be really hard to speak up and say, "Hey, why do we do it this way?" Let me just challenge you who are leaders of your teams to make the new people ask that question out loud. Because nobody else is a fresh set of eyes except the new person. And they

might be able to say, "Why do we still use a mimeograph machine for bulletins?" And I can't wait to hear what Michael comes up with. Why are we doing this? Why that? I think if you, as a leader, can't handle that question, you're going to be a lid to your organization. And you need to utilize that brief window of time when a new person really is new and give them permission, even admonishment, to come to you saying, "I need you to tell me when you see something weird." Why do we do what we do?

Michael Buckingham:

And I will even say to those that are new, that are in the shoes that I'm in right now, don't be shy about it because I think most want to hear from you. They brought you in for a reason and they know you're new and they want those new, fresh ideas. They want the thing that they haven't been able to see that you see right away is very obvious to you. So I just encourage you to be bold enough to step into those shoes and point out the things that you see that maybe they haven't seen.

Christa Reinhardt:

Yeah, and a lot of times they're excited about it. I think, Michael, you and I talked this morning about new things that you've seen just from coming here. And it's things that the rest of our marketing team, we're excited about these changes. We're excited to use your new eyes and your fresh ears and eyes to look at what we have and question those so that we can get better. We can go through the process, simplify and be able to just do all of our, the kingdom work we do here, better is the goal.

Michael Buckingham:

Absolutely. And it means there's going to be some work to do.

Christa Reinhardt:

Definitely.

Michael Buckingham:

There's so much just fruit from all that to carrying your mission.

Christa Reinhardt:

Goes back to pruning. Not easy, but it is good and it leads to growth. So hitting on culture, we do a lot of things here at Vanderbloemen and I was hoping y'all could share on for other organizations, churches, and ministries, what are tangible things that they could do for their culture?

William Vanderbloemen:

Well, I think one, a couple quick things, and you might if you're really interested in it, we did write a book on this called Culture Wins. And if you want to know how you're doing as a team with your culture, if you go to [theculturetool.com](http://theculturetool.com), just T-O-O-L, you'll get a free online how are we doing in eight basic areas of team health. Because if your team's not healthy, it's not complete and then all of a sudden you're off mission and you're not producing at the same level you could be. And our entire mission is to make, I said it to Michael this today, if you are trying to make sure Jesus is winning, we want to help you build the winning team. So go to that culture tool, [theculturetool.com](http://theculturetool.com), and you can get a little anonymous look at how you're doing.

William Vanderbloemen:

And I would say until you're ready to be honest about where you are, you can't improve your culture. And it's not a lot of fun. It's like going to the doctor for a really invasive test and getting results back and then not wanting to hear it. But until you're honest, you can't get any better. And whether you use our culture tool, I think we've had maybe 3000 Christian organizations run through the thing. So you get a nice sampling of how you're doing against other people who are trying to help Jesus win. And getting honest with yourself and then what's measured is what matters. And if you aren't measuring how you're doing with your culture, for us, that can mean a scorecard for team members' performance. It can mean writing down clear values. It means keeping a calendar with regularly scheduled culture events. It means having a budget with dollars allocated just toward building culture. What's measured is what matters and if you don't have tangible, quantitative ways that you're measuring how you're working on culture, my guess is that is not mattering to you much yet.

Christa Reinhardt:

No, that's great. And you touched a little bit, we have a culture team and I think that was one of the coolest things that I've gotten to be a part of with my job here is being part of the team that's dedicated to making sure when we onboard those new people, they feel welcome. They feel part of the team. They feel like they have the room to grow here and that we want to partner with them in this, in their career. That's great. Did you have anything to add, Michael, to that?

Michael Buckingham:

I would say, yeah, even as my first week here, that very first day, the amount of welcome, because we're talking about turnover and turnover brings new people, but the amount of welcome and the amount of, "Hey, we are really glad that you're here." And they weren't just words because they really, again, this isn't about just a list of things that you do, but it's really about the heart of, "No, we love our people." We love that they're here and we appreciate you. And even as William talked about, the honesty of, "Hey, here's where you're at." And being person to person. These are not just roles to roles. This is William and Michael talking today in my office about, "Okay, do this and what about this? And all those things. And having those open conversations brings so much health. I've seen that for these last two weeks. I just listened to the book and I'm like, "All right, let's see if this is real or not. Let's see if it's just a good book." But when you see it in action, it brings so much help and just so much excitement to everybody involved.

Christa Reinhardt:

That's funny. It's funny you mention the book because I remember reading the book before I came here. William, I don't think I've ever told you this, but there were little things I would notice from the book that I'm like, "Oh, they really do this. Oh, that is part of staff meeting. Oh, we do have those blocks on our desk."

William Vanderbloemen:

Well, we do have a long way to go, but I think that we are now in an experienced economy. And what I mean is, is people don't pay for data like they used to. They don't pay for information. They don't pay for transactions. They pay for an experience. People remember how they feel long after they forget what they learned. So, we aren't anywhere near, if you really want to read, you can probably Google, "What's it like on your first day on the team at John Deere?" Because they do this amazing job, their balloons, it's unbelievable.

William Vanderbloemen:

But their whole idea is we're going to create an experience that you will never ever forget. Even if we mess stuff up because we will, that first day we want you to feel the experience of being welcome. And if you can get to where you're honest with yourself about your culture and you start to outline what it looks like and what it is and start to calendar it and budget it and build experiences around that, you'll start to create a feel that people might not even be able to tell you what it is that's good. They're just like, "I think we have an opening. My friend would be great at that." When you start hearing that, your culture's doing well. When your team members are recommending their friends to come fill positions, it's like the highest net promoter score an employer can have.

Michael Buckingham:

Yeah, and even as we're talking about transition, I remember being at an Apple store and there was an employee that was clearly their last day and all the associates that stood up and applauded them. Even as they're leaving, that culture still goes forward.

Christa Reinhardt:

That's amazing. That's great. Talking back on those teams, let's talk about a leadership team or culture team or the people that you want leading the rest of your staff. How do you build that and who do you know? Who should be on that? What kind of people need to be there?

William Vanderbloemen:

Well, what I do is I hire people who have a track record of pouring into younger leaders and making them better. And that's why Michael's here. So Michael, your question.

Michael Buckingham:

I'm excited about that. No, I can't wait for that piece of it. That was one of the really exciting parts of it. Yeah and at the same time, it's about bringing people in that are better than you and have abilities or an insight or just the way that their mind works that's just not the same as yours. We don't all need to have the same ideas. And if we are, a lot of us don't need to be there. So I see a lot of leaders shy away from that because if they do that, then it's all about them looking good, them looking good. But again, raising up that next generation is all about coming underneath and lifting them up and letting them shine. We just talked today about our team meeting on Friday. I'm not going to be the guy that's up front. I want my team to be up there. I want them to shine. I want them to grow.

Christa Reinhardt:

Yeah, and as someone on a team, having leaders in that way gives, I think, the space for us to want to grow and want to step into those positions that you create for us.

William Vanderbloemen:

Well, and I used to think it takes a commitment from the top for that to happen and it does. But I've learned over the years, I am delegate and trust and to a fault. I'm just convinced you can figure it out on your own. I believe in you, "Here, hold this brick and jump in the deep end and you're going to do great." So that's me. What I cannot do then is hire people who are exceedingly high control and micromanagerial that are a funnel between me and the rest of the team, because it just ruins it. And

one's not right over the other, if your style really is delegating trust, you've got to have enough policies in place that people can't run rampant.

William Vanderbloemen:

But the people you put in place have to match some of your spirit, where even your bookkeeper doesn't just, you know what bookkeeper's favorite words are? No. That's how they start their sentence. They can say it in Spanish. They can say it in German. They say it, "No, [foreign language 00:16:50]" For me, the perfect financial person is like, "I'm sure we can find a way to make it work. Let's make sure we understand the implications." So if your leadership style is one way you, your direct reports need to mirror that. Not be the same as you, they need to compliment your gifts, but the spirit needs to be the same. Otherwise you would just block that spirit from flowing throughout the team.

Michael Buckingham:

And when you do that, I'm experiencing it. You and I just talked this morning. Because of that, I'm going to tell you, your employees are going to step up. I feel the weight of that. I feel the weight of this is my time. This is my time to make some moves and changes and see some things. And there's a weight that comes from that, but also such a freedom that comes from that from knowing that honestly, that you are in the right place. Because if I was in the right place, then why give me that freedom to move?

Christa Reinhardt:

Exactly. Yeah, it is kind of empowering in that way. That's great. Well kind of wrapping up because we are getting kind of towards our time. Thank you so much for sharing all of that. I think there's a lot of good things on this. And as you mentioned earlier, William, we have a ton of resources on building up culture. You wrote an entire book on it and I know you've told me and you've told others when you write a book about it, you really care because I think the metaphor you use is something about giving birth when you write a book.

William Vanderbloemen:

We have seven children. I've not given birth to any of them, but I've watched it. And man, it's got to be something inside you that needs to get out. And I really think culture's a cool word that people use in a lot of different ways. But the more I look at it, we're really talking about retention. If you've got a great team, you want them to stay. And for lots of reasons, we could go into for another podcast. My prediction for the next 10 years is I don't care what industry you're in, whether you're church, school, nonprofit, for profit, retaining good team members will separate the prevailing organizations from everybody else. And maybe we do another podcast on that, Christa.

Christa Reinhardt:

Yeah, that would be great conversation.

William Vanderbloemen:

They're very tactile data driven reasons why tenure is going to shorten over the next 10 years. And if you can figure out how to keep your people just a year longer than your competitor or the people down the road, you're going to come out on top. And so culture is not just about, "Do we have to get a sliding board at the office and do we need a ping pong table, bocce ball?" It's about how do we keep people

around here and make this an irresistible workplace? I think the beginning of the year is a great time to focus on that.

Michael Buckingham:

Absolutely.

Christa Reinhardt:

Yeah, that's wonderful. Well yeah, be sure to check out those resources. You can find them all over our website. We have Culture Tool, Culture Wins, all kinds of resources there. So I have to ask you guys, we've asked everyone else as we wrapped up the podcast, what are your new year's resolutions? William, you've shared a couple, but if anyone hasn't listened, maybe you can recap those.

William Vanderbloemen:

Well I do several. So I've shared physical, spiritual is almost always do one year Bible in some form with Adrienne except we did it in chronological order one year. She wanted to read from beginning to end. And let me tell you something, if you read the Bible chronologically, by November you're so ready for that baby Jesus because you've been in the profits. And so we're going to find one that's not chronological, that is a one year book.

William Vanderbloemen:

But on a just personal enrichment, we are finally, we were supposed to go in 2020, burn all of our frequent flyer points to the ground and take the kids to do the Griswalds go to Europe sort of thing. And so we're going finally this year, I hope, after all the shutdowns. And each of the kids has to host a city and so we make them do research and they're going to show us around and they're going to pick the restaurants and all. So Macy and I are doing French together and Emma and I are doing Italian on Duolingo. So I want to be able to order food and get to and from just a little bit in each of those. That's the new year's.

Christa Reinhardt:

What a good learning opportunity.

Michael Buckingham:

Yeah, I have one very, it's the typical new year's, but I'm really committed to it. And it was one of the things that I was excited is we were talking early on about coming here is a focus on health and I need to lose 30 pounds just straight up. And we have a gym right upstairs. I'm really excited to truly take advantage of that and really go in and not just weight, but just health overall. And honestly, the other thing is I'm really looking forward to falling in love with Houston next year.

Christa Reinhardt:

There's a lot to love about it. Well, thank you so much the two of you for joining me today and thank you everyone who's been listening to this series. We really do hope that it will be helpful and show you a glimpse of the work that we get to be a part of and we're so honored to be a part of.

Christa Reinhardt:



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Thanks for tuning in. We hope this conversation and series will show you a glimpse of the kingdom work that we have the privilege of being part of. Keep tuning in to hear we've seen God move and learn tips for walking through each part of the hiring process. If you don't want to miss any upcoming episodes of New Year New Rhythms, make sure to subscribe to the Vanderbloemen Leadership podcast wherever you listen to podcasts.