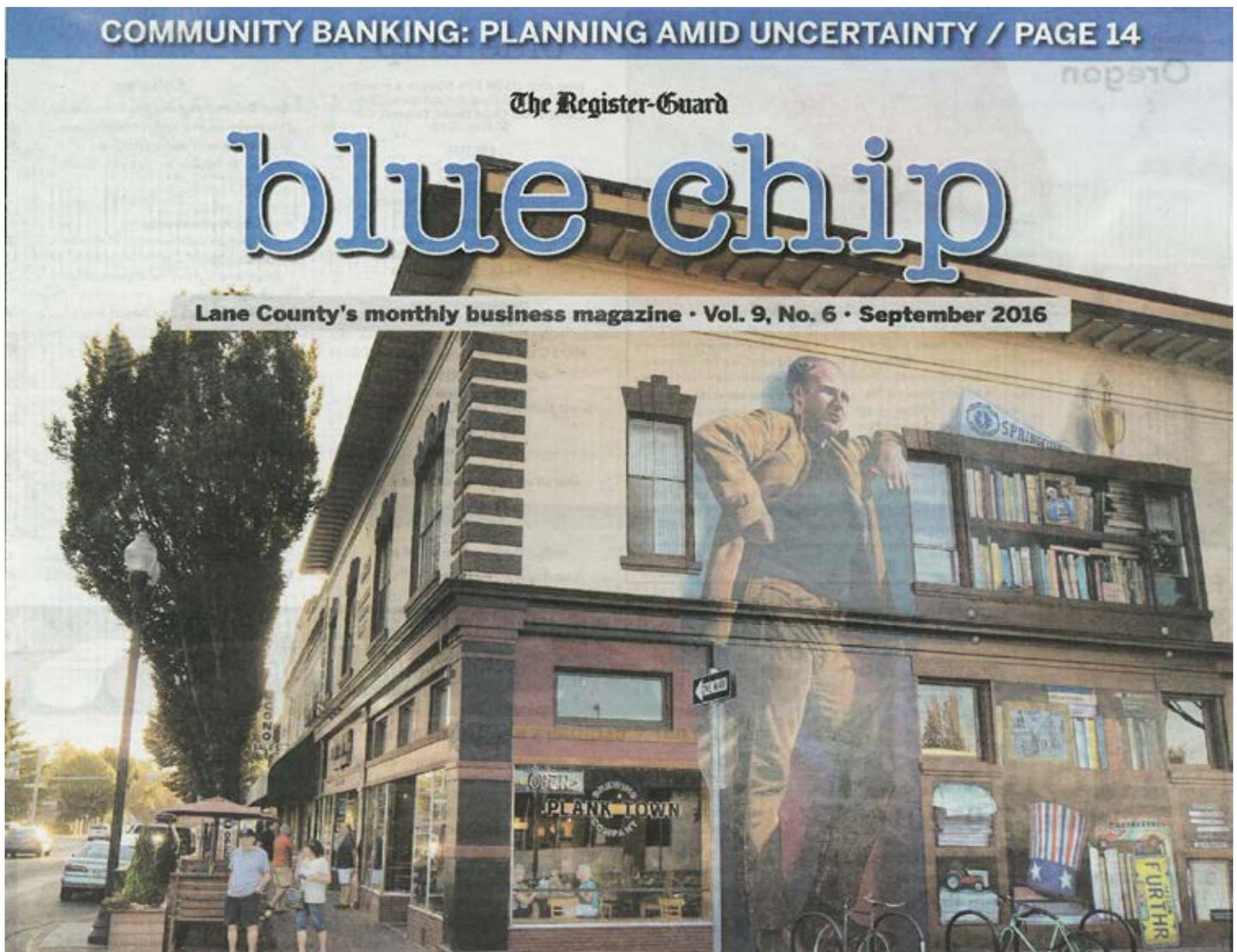


The Register-Guard

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Cafe Yumm!'s clear purpose attracts right people
— by Andrew Robinson, September 5, 2016, reprinted in full

Blue Chip is published by The Register-Guard, Eugene, Oregon.

"Take care of your employees, and they'll take care of your business. It's as simple as that." —
Richard Branson, founder of Virgin Group

It was lunch time, and we were traveling through the remote town of Ely, Nev.

"I'm hungry," our 8-year-old said from the backseat. "Can we get Yumm! for lunch?" My wife and I laughed, and admitted that Café Yumm! sounded really good, especially

compared to Ely's limited lunch options.

Café Yumm!'s success mystified me before doing this case study. The business had to convince one customer at a time that Yumm! sauce not only tasted good, but it was made from quality ingredients and was good for them. By studying the company, I discovered there's a reason for its success that runs deeper than the signature sauce.

Let's do some anthropology.

I'm sitting with Mark Beauchamp, who founded Café Yumm! with his wife, Mary Ann. He points his finger to the wall over my right shoulder. I turn around to see a sign that reads: "To nourish humanity and the world."

"That's what it's all about for us," Beauchamp said. "That's our purpose for being in business. I think it's also the main reason for our success."

I'm dubious. A purpose statement isn't anything new. How is this simple statement responsible for Yumm!'s growth from a single location in Eugene's Fifth Street Public Market to 19 restaurants in Oregon and Washington and products sold in more than 150 grocery stores?

After spending time with Beauchamp and other Yumm! staff, I learn that the purpose statement is only part of the equation. The power of the statement lies in how employees translate their purpose into practice. In short, "To nourish humanity and the world" is what they do because it's who they are. The decisions Yumm! staff make each day point to this statement, just like Beauchamp's gesture during our conversation.

For Yumm!, fidelity to purpose precedes profits. As Beauchamp says, "There is no greatness without goodness," a phrase he discovered and immediately embraced while reading the book "Life of Pi" in 2003.

Nourishing humanity begins with Yumm!'s attention to employees. In addition to competitive salaries and benefits, the company finds opportunities to nourish its staff through initiatives such as "Yumm!versaries," birthday cards and an annual holiday party.

Kind as these specific actions may be, they're the fruit of a healthy culture, not the cause of it. These acts only are meaningful because they spring from a still deeper reality within Yumm!'s culture. Leaders who try to implement similar initiatives apart from a healthy culture will likely experience frustration and disappointment.

Three themes from my study of Café Yumm! offer clues for companies that wish to strengthen their culture:

Translate purpose into practice: Purpose begins at the top of an organization. Company leaders need to take personal ownership of the purpose statement. That statement needs to evolve from a platitude on the wall to practices throughout the company. Company leaders

who exemplify a life lived in service to the company's purpose inspire employees to do the same.

Treat employees like they're your customers: Care for your employees and, as Richard Branson says, "they'll take care of your business." The primary means of driving growth and profit used to be through hefty investments in outward facing advertising. Companies like Southwest Airlines and Zappos illustrate that a company's culture is its brand — the foundation upon which it builds its future.

Provide opportunities for employees' personal growth: "Working at Yumm! has made me a better person," said Angela Smith, a 14 year employee who manages the Delta Oaks location. "I've developed talents here that I didn't even know I had." She cited a recent Dale Carnegie Leadership training she and other managers attended. "I learned so much that I can immediately put into practice," she said.

Café Yumm! illustrates how culture affects business performance. A strong culture infused with a clear purpose makes for a workforce that's engaged and vested in seeing the business succeed. But there's more. The resulting culture is more responsive, better able to make decisions and solve problems.

"Making decisions is so much easier and faster when you know who you are as a company," said Kim Ely, director of operations and finance. "Our clear purpose makes the best decision pretty obvious."

Smith echoes this with her experience with employees. "My team members know what to do, and how to handle a situation with a customer. I don't have to explain it every time."

Yumm!'s clear purpose and strong culture attracts employees and customers, whom Yumm! team members call "guests." Smith, who's been known to have lunch at Yumm! on her days off, sums up her experience well.

"How blessed am I to get up every morning and want to go to work."

Perhaps Yumm!'s nourishment of people will one day extend to Ely, Nev. My 8-year-old would be thrilled.