



# RevZilla Revs Up Culture with Energage Survey

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## Background

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Talia Edmundson,  
Director of Human Resources,  
RevZilla

## Intentional Success

Well known in Philadelphia, RevZilla is a great regional and national success story. The company was started in November of 2007 by three friends who realized there was something missing in the motorcycle marketplace – an experience catered especially for high-end customers.

They set out to fill that gap by launching a website called RevZilla.com. The goal was to give a high-touch customer experience to shoppers who are very specific – because motorcycling is intentional.

## Palpable Culture

A big difference between a top workplace and an average workplace is that top workplaces strategically use their culture to move the organization forward. Certainly, the success story at [RevZilla](#) is reflective of that.

Just walking in the building, the culture is palpable, sometimes surfacing in clever, operational details. “We play with titles a little bit here,” related Talia Edmundson, Director of Human Resources. “One of our core values is ZLAvolve versus evolve.”

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“Zillans” understand customer service is a direct reflection of the company’s culture. Early in RevZilla history, a customer called about replacing a motorcycle tire. After a 30-minute consult, he ended up purchasing just a \$12 tube. Edmundson commented, “We could’ve easily convinced the customer to buy a \$200 tire, especially after spending so much time on the phone. That’s when we adopted our service standard. We only sell customers what they need, but we treat them as if they’re going to buy our highest-priced item. Why sell them a tire when all they need is a tube? We’ve lived by that standard ever since.”

Edmundson said the culture took shape around this experience. “Everything the RevZilla HR team has done has been focused on how to make the employee experience align with the customer experience.”

## Candidate and Employee Experience

Sourcing great talent is important to RevZilla. They have two recruiters who aim to create a specific experience for applicants by going after talent with the same touchpoints they use with customers. “The candidate experience has been very intentionally designed in addition to the employee experience with a response that goes to every single applicant,” explained Edmundson.

“Our interview process is long. The only way to make sure that a candidate is staying engaged is to pay extremely close attention to them at every step. That sets the tone very early for what they can expect as an employee.”

Communication is key during the interview process and after a potential applicant is hired. “We have the advantage as managers of being able to stay in touch with employees in our own way,” says Edmundson. “What drives the relationships in the departments here is consistent one on ones.”



## Honest Feedback

Employee feedback plays a significant role at RevZilla. It not only allows the organization to look at how their employee satisfaction compares with other workplaces, but also helps get down to the specifics of why an employee may or may not be content in the work they do.

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“The generalist on our team who’s been building this up for several years now does touchpoints on a frequent basis,” explains Edmundson. “In addition to independent surveys, we’re conducting problem engagement forums where we ask every group the same set of questions:

- Did you feel like coming to work today?
- What made you want to turn your car around?
- What aren’t you having fun with right now?
- Are we using you in a way that makes you feel like all your talents are being utilized?

“We don’t sugarcoat anything or make it sound like fluff, but in return we get feedback that’s very raw.”

“We also like to use a [third-party survey](#) because it can be a bit daunting to sit in a room with someone on the HR team and be honest,” Edmundson said. “People don’t always want to tell us exactly how they’re feeling, especially if it’s face to face.”

## Energage Survey

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### Asking the Right Questions

“One of the reasons why we’ve chosen the Energage Survey year after year is because of the reporting that’s available,” Edmundson related.

“Energage is the one system that consistently gives me reports that are digestible, that are asking the right questions. Because some of these surveys, quite honestly, don’t ask the right questions.”

Knowing where the culture is succeeding and failing is a valuable resource for improving employee satisfaction. “It’s important to us to get feedback that is actionable,” shares Edmundson, who recognizes that change is a vital part of maintaining an excellent company culture. And asking the right questions can help them continue to do just that.

### Programs Based on Survey Feedback

To move the culture needle, RevZilla purposely builds and designs programs around the Energage survey feedback. Edmundson offered a few examples:

“Two years ago, we installed ‘ZLAnthropy,’ a paid voluntary time off program. We wanted to tap into what folks were really interested in outside of work because we know that it’s feeding that passion. If you have time to give back to that cause, you’re going to feel excited about coming to work. We give folks 16 hours of paid time to volunteer.”

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The program has produced some successful opportunities so far, including a chance to give back to the community and a wide range of experience rewards that take employee appreciation to a new level.

“Folks wanted to see us involved with animals and education. So, we are partnered with a program that has a dog component, as well as a strong tie to a local South Philadelphia elementary school. Additionally, we launched an employee mentorship program that’s in its first class right now.”

“We also launched a service award called Laps Around the Track – again making it very culture specific. Rather than give someone a pen or a tie tack we give them experiences. You can go to a concert, get a massage, or go bungee jumping. You choose your experience and it gets bigger with the time you’ve been here.”



## Gauging When it Doesn't Feel Right

According to Edmundson, each department has its own feel. “In doing these checkpoints and keeping our finger on the pulse of what’s happening, I think we’re able to gauge when something doesn’t feel right,” she related.

“You have to go by feedback,” Edmundson adds. “If we’re running the Energage Survey, and one department has taken a huge dip, that’s concerning. What is it that we think is causing that feeling in that department? What is it that has shifted the average?”

## Use in Departments

Once Edmundson has gone through the survey feedback, she sets up individual department meetings to show the departments their scores.

“I show them how they ranked against other departments in the company,” she explains. “It can be tough to see where you fall. But also, it’s a great opportunity for the director who scored at the bottom to figure out what the director at the top is doing.”



Edmundson says this causes departments to consider a number of important influencing factors including:

- What types of meetings take place at the department level?
- How are they structured?
- Which department is doing exceptionally well in one area where you might not be?

“We provide all the department specific comments as well. They’re getting the raw feedback as I read it, which is valuable to my team. Then we work with them continuously to figure out what they can do to hit the trouble areas.”

“The survey feedback also provides a great opportunity in the engagement forums because it gives us an opportunity to benchmark,” adds Edmundson.

### Three Steps to Culture Management

RevZilla takes a three-step approach to managing their culture:

1. **Know where your culture stands.** Before RevZilla seeks to change, they seek to understand. Energage Survey gives them a powerful, yet easy way of soliciting feedback and providing an objective basis for their change efforts.
2. **Find out what good looks like.** Employee surveys can yield valuable data. But through the Top Workplaces program, RevZilla also knows where they ranks relative to other best-in-class organizations.
3. **Up your culture game.** The combination of technology and employee feedback helps RevZilla to “hack” their culture, making changes in small and subtle ways that add up over time.

RevZilla does culture management about as well as anyone we’ve seen. In fact, they’ve been named a [Philadelphia Top Workplaces](#) winner six years in a row.