

you we don't want you—there are no BS [Big Shot] leaders at Southwest” (Warrior Spirit, 2006). Barrett encouraged the culture by creating a Culture Committee, a group made up of a team of 100 employees who preach and teach the company's unique culture (Medley, 2006). In addition, local culture committee's members are further entrusted with the task for maintaining and strengthening the Southwest SPIRIT (always in capital letters). The culture even has its own language, which includes “Southwest Family,” “Servant Leadership,” and “New Hires,” all used as proper nouns to indicate their importance to the company (Medley, 2006).

Although leaders play a key role in developing others, everyone at Southwest is in charge of that culture. Through strong training programs, promotions from within, the telling and retelling of many stories, for which the company cofounder and past CEO Herb Kelleher is famous, the culture is ever present. The company offices are decorated with memorabilia that further reinforce Southwest ideals. Kelleher ensured that current and upcoming leaderships are in place and guarantee “life after Herb” (Medley, 2006). Barrett played a further role in developing leaders, mentoring anyone who had “a passion for what he or she does or who has a desire to learn” (Shin, 2003), and she empowered her followers to do the same. She stated, “When New Hires ask me all the time, ‘How are you going to keep the culture?’ I say, ‘I’m not. You are.’” (Medley, 2006). The new CEO, Gary Kelly, seems to be carrying on much of the tradition. He showed up dressed as Edna Turnball, the mom in the musical *Hairspray*, at a recent company Halloween party (Bailey, 2008).

Questions

1. How does Southwest develop its leaders?
2. What is the role of culture and fit in success of the company?

Sources: Bailey, J. 2008. “South by Southwest,” *The New York Times*, February 13. <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/13/business/13southwest.html> (accessed April 27, 2010); Fisher, S. 2007. “Flying off into the sunset: An airline icon plans to slow down,” *The Costco Connection*, September: 17–19; Medley, M. 2006. “The culture queen,” *Motto*. <http://www.whatsyourmotto.com/articles/culturequeen.aspx> (accessed September 1, 2007); “The power of persistence,” 2002. *Fast Company*. http://www.fastcompany.com/fast50_02/people/persistence/barrett.html (accessed April 27, 2010); Shin, S., 2003. “LUV Colleen,” *BizEd*, March/April: 18–23; Sekula, R. D. 2007. “Air superiority,” *Smart Business*. http://www.sbnonline.com/Local/Article/10596/71/0/Air_superiority.aspx (accessed April 27, 2010); Solomon, M. 2012. “What you can learn from Southwest Airlines’ culture,” *The Washington Post*, April 3. http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2012-04-03/business/35453344_1_culture-core-values-customers (accessed August 5, 2013); Warrior Spirit with a servant's hear: SWA's thriving culture of service. 2006. Knowledge: W. P. Carey, May 24. <http://knowledge.wpcarey.asu.edu/article.cfm?articleid=125> (accessed April 27, 2010).