The Influence of Organizational Culture on Employee Retention: A Case of Google

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ABSTRACT

Google's organizational culture is one of the main reasons it has cemented its place as the biggest player in the current age of information technology, rapid digital growth, and in the fourth Industrial Revolution which includes the Internet of Things (IoT), virtual reality (VR) and artificial intelligence (AI). This paper investigates how a healthy workplace culture cultivates the best and retains the best and talented employees in the field. How the mission, core values, and flexibility resonate with the employees in building the culture. The paper presents the influence of organizational culture on employee retention in Google. The paper analyzes the pros and cons of such a culture and its impact on the company. The paper concludes with implication and recommendation to the companies and business leaders around the world.

Keywords: Google, Organizational culture, Employee retention, 4th Industrial revolution, Flexibility, Information technology

INTRODUCTION

Google is an American multinational limited liability technology company that specializes in Internet-related services which include online advertising technologies, search engine, cloud computing, software, and hardware. It is considered one of the Big Four technology companies, alongside Amazon, Apple, and Facebook.

It was founded on September 4, 1998, in Menlo Park, California by Larry Page and Sergey Brin while they were studying PhD. at Stanford University, Google became a public traded company on August 19, 2004, and moved to its current headquarters in Mountain View, California is also known as the Googleplex in 2015.Google became the subsidiary of Alphabet Inc. and Sundar Pichai became Google's CEO replacing Page who became Alphabet's CEO.
According to records from the first quarter of 2019 Google has 103,459 employees around the world, Google caters to a global audience and its diverse workforce reflects the diversity of its global customer audience. In more than 40 countries around the world, it has opened more than 70 offices. It has been on the top lists of "The best companies to work for" indexes for years and they have a unique organizational culture that helped them tremendously.

Google doesn't follow the typical ways of managing people, but they invented and following many ideas that proved successful out-of-the-box processes that along with many benefits try to minimize bureaucracy and other time-consuming behaviors. This document will go in details through Google's practices that made them one of the most successful companies in the world.

1. Background of Idea

The organizational culture of Google is a driving force that pushes the company to continue its dominance in the field of information technology and online advertising. Organizational culture, which in this business case is the corporate culture, refers to the traditions, customs, and behavioral ideas that affect the behaviors of employees. Google's organizational culture encourages their employees to share information to support innovation. Innovation is a crucial factor that helps the company competitive with other technology businesses. Google has a culture that encourages teamwork and emphasizes innovative environment which enables employees to tap into the culture. Google puts a lot of effort to employ the right people, helping them to have a community with similar objective and thinking individuals.

Google is actively developing its strengths through its organizational behavior, such as training, and through informal strategies. Google also provides a Global Education Leave program that allows employees to take a leave of absence and seek for further education. All this education is managed by Google and all the payment will be covered by Google. In order to maintain the creativity and innovation, a lot of efforts are made to improve the characteristics of Google's organizational culture. Google was one of the first companies to really understand the need of employees to have a flexible schedule and work on their terms to unleash their creativity and a higher productivity level. They also encourage their employees to determine how they would like to work and give them freedom within the environment to approach work in a way that fits them.

Google is a company that has an organizational culture of innovation and emphasize on it. The company also highlights the importance of openness among employees to foster innovative thinking. The resulting innovation applies to Google of approaches to compete in different industries. For example, the company is innovating their technological resources and services provided to customers in the online advertising industry. This cultural key feature refers to the information sharing among employees of Google. The company's objective in fostering openness is to enable the spreading of valuable knowledge that can held to further innovation. For instance, the corporate culture drives employees to communicate with each other at different times of their typical working day, to improve the knowledge they use in their jobs.

Openwork culture increases the interaction and fosters a cooperative atmosphere in the office. The idea was that with more interaction between the office worker, the easier access to their colleagues, and work would be done more efficiently. Google agree that enhancing collaboration is one of the best ways for facilitating great work and innovation. Managers encourage their team members to communicate and spend their time together as much as possible, for inspiring new ideas off one another. Within the office space, departments are clustered together, which enables regular exchange of ideas while also maintaining an open and illuminated environment. Google also provides a warm working environment where employees can comfortably talk to others and share ideas with others. In this situation, the objective is to use the organizational culture to improve internal communications and idea generation. This characteristic of the organizational culture also helps Google to optimize the morale of its employees. Warm social relations in the workplace contribute to employee's satisfaction in their jobs.

Google is a globally known company as a workplace where work doesn't quite feel like work. In a world where boring work environments are very common, this is a difficult

reputation to gain. Despite working longer hours and even weekends, employees at Google still claim to really enjoy going to work. Instead of employees having to go elsewhere for breakfast, lunch, fun, and relaxation, elsewhere, they can find everything they need right in the workplace. However, Google has managed to create a very creative and enjoyable workplace with the benefits, environment, and flexibility on where employees can work. To help with morality, employees are free to bring their pets to work. Some Googlers describe that being able to bring their pets to work will sustain their energy levels, as well as bringing joy to other employees in the workplace. Pets are viewed to improve the quality of the work life. Google has written an entire section on dog in the employee code of conduct. Any company which focused on the finer details that obscure the difference between the home and work environments is expected to get high marks on its culture.

Google embraces that trust is the most important element for an employer-employee relationship. Google show their willingness to trust their employees are what lead to creativity, above-and-beyond performance, productivity and job satisfaction. Google shows that by making sure that its workplaces align with what employees need, it cares about the employee experience. If you look at the amenities, pay, work-life balance and more of Google, the company understands that employees need to be looked after in all aspects of their lives to perform at the highest levels. Google also provides on-site physicians, nurses, medical services and health care coverage to keep employees happy and healthy. Google even offers death benefits to the families of deceased employees. If a Google's employee passes away, his or her spouse will receive a check for 50% of the employee's salary every year for 10 years.

Most Googlers believe that their work makes the world a better place. Google's employees are positively impact the society with the applications and technology on which they are working. Humans would certainly benefit from these developed technologies. For instance, self-driving cars could enable its passengers to catch up on sleep while travelling around the world. Google is developing new wearable technology that could be highly beneficial to people. A high percentage of Google's employees say they're satisfied and happy in their job. The key to Google's success as a workplace is to constantly innovate, experimenting, and keeping things fun. A lot of Google employees find their jobs to be meaningful. This creates the motivation among the employees to constantly innovate and push into new dimensions. Meaningful and challenging projects are what attracted the employees and keeps them stay at the company.

Organizational culture of Google is a driving force that push the company to continue its leadership in information technology and online advertising industries. Google's organizational culture is specific to addressing the needs of the information technology and online services business through the cultural trait of creativity, ensuring that its products satisfy industry standards and are at the forefront of technological development. As one of the largest technology companies in the global market, Google is an example of effective organizational design and human resource development in the corporate culture. However, there is a possible improvement in the organizational culture of Google. As a workplace that is almost perfect, but it can be much better by reducing time waste that comes with the open space offices to boost work performance and enhance the employee's mental health by implementing regular meditation programs to improve employees' mental health.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

It's well documented that Google has a unique culture. It's not the typical corporate culture. In fact, just by looking at pictures inside the Googleplex, you can see that it looks more like an adult playground, not a place for work.Google's success can be attributed to this culture. Google has people whose sole job is to keep employees happy and maintain productivity. It may sound too controlling to some, but it's how this world-changing organization operates. Their responsibility is critical as they deal with Google's biggest competitive advantage in an extremely competitive market.

3.1 Discourage "Got a minute?" meetings

Despite being what Google is famous for, Google workplace is one of the most controversial topics professionals in the industry talk about. Google's company culture is synonymous with employee engagement. The Mountain View giant is constantly innovating and experimenting with its culture, and to great effect.

The company has topped Fortune's Best Companies to Work For list for six years running, 86% of employees say that they're satisfied with their jobs and it has a 4.4/5 rating and currently ranks 8 for best companies to work for in the US on Glassdoor (Glassdoor 2019).

While fun perks have popularized Google's company culture to the extent that there's a Hollywood film about it (2013's The Internship), there's more to Google's approach to employee engagement than free food and bringing your pet into the office. According to Laszlo Bock, the company's former Senior Vice President of People Relations, "If you took all of that stuff away… you would still have the same company, the same drive for creativity and innovation."

Unfortunately, nothing is perfect and the same applies to Google's workplace in our opinion, the open space culture (a concept that consists of spread offices across floors with no barriers between offices) although increases productivity by 15% as studies shows (Brennan, A., Chugh, J. S., & Kline, T. 2002) it also encourages what known as the "Do you have a minute?" meeting.

Despite the open space offices policy, employees always work on their own specific projects and require a high level of concentration and productivity but the seating areas are open to the rest of the company and colleagues so it is easier to have these kinds of meetings multiple times a day.

These "meetings" tend to affect time management, fluency of workflow and energy, "One of the most common and inefficient uses of time and energy are frequent 'got a minute?' meetings," says Kristopher Jones of LSEO. "These meetings are the ones that are unscheduled and typically distract from productivity." (Morgaine, Briana, Bplans).

We think these meetings are bad because they usually don't have the other person's full attention and have no data and fewer facts, according to Kristopher "The reality is that almost nothing important can be accomplished in one minute, which means one minute turns into 15 minutes or longer and ends up being a terribly inefficient management of time," (Morgaine, Briana, Bplans).

Additionally, and since Google's workplace is almost perfect, we think that the two or more parties of a meeting should be able to have the chance to prepare for the effective meetings and can delay the meeting without sounding unreasonable.

A basic email or a message would be much better to send a heads-up or schedule a meeting even if it was a short 10 minute one.

3.2 Practice Meditation regularly

Google relies heavily on creativity and innovation as an up-to-date resource to cope with the growing competition in the company, which above everything else puts a lot of pressure and stress on employees in various projects.

Meditation is a process of mental alertness, focus, and unconscious self-sublimation. Techniques include the elimination of pressure and education in sensitivity. One of meditation's objectives is to interact with the person's inner self.

Meditation can help relieve stress, depression and pain. And it is done when a person constructs an image in an object's mind and then focuses on it in a holistic way that allows him to see nothing around him except the picture he drew in mind, plus many other strategies that declutter the mind.

One of the potential positive effects of meditation is the elimination of cumulative stress and a positive increase in the energy and health effects. It also results in a slight to moderate decrease in the different negative stress dimensions. Yet from too much meditation one must take precautions. This is because man's aspects are contradictory. Meditation is not a substitute for professional medical treatment, which includes medicine and sports. It is advisable for a person to consult his doctor before practicing meditation, especially those with diseases.

Stress and mental health are still one of the last work taboos. Meditation encourages you to observe your emotions, and hang out with them, instead of avoiding or suppressing them. Teaching this skill to your employees can lead to happier and more harmonious teams. If a weekly class is too much, then you could offer employees free memberships to Headspace, a neat little app that leads you through 10-minute daily meditation practices voiced by an ex-Buddhist monk named Andy.

In conclusion, we advise Google to invest their time and money into a meditation program held by a professional to cater to the psychological well-being of Google's employees. Because we believe that this idea will greatly improve the state of the mind of employees and in turn will bring greater productivity to Google.

4. Idea Application

In this chapter, we are going to go in-depth on how to apply the ideas from the previous chapter onto Google's workplace environment and the risks of the backlash it may face from doing so. Starting off from the first idea, which is scheduling quick meetings with a designated time span and to stay on topic throughout the discussion. Meetings are a vital part of any company since the start of corporate culture and for a good reason. They are commenced to brainstorm groundbreaking ideas, make life changing decisions, meeting clients and discussing on how to better their strategy all for the sake of a company to grow. However, bad meetings that serve no purpose or so whatever and slows down productivity and wastes time will make the company fail.

This idea is meant to solve the problems of co-workers inviting an employee with a 'got a minute?' with the sole purpose of having a meeting or discussion. And to argue the fact that nothing of importance and productive can be done under one minute which in turns lengthen one minute to half an hour wasting people's greatest asset, which is time. To apply this said idea, there must be a memo sent to everyone's emails or ironically a meeting from the Human Resources or People Operations department of Google to clearly address this issue and offer this idea to boost productivity and wellbeing for everyone.

The idea to solve this problem Dean Brenner (*The Secret To Better Meetings* 2018) suggests that is to have quick meetings within a period of time and requesting that you do so ahead of time with a clear agenda on what it's about so both parties know what to discuss and there will be no need to lay out the agenda and more time delving into the relevant details, which also makes the meeting more effective and efficient at the same time. Human Resources of Google may also inform its employees on the said memo or meeting to also respect both parties time by arriving early or on time so the meeting can take place and those who are late may be given a warning or a reminder as a way to pressure them into obeying the rules. Human Resources may offer a seminar or a lecture on how to make meetings more engaging and effective by telling them how and why they should apply this idea to employees who hold mid-level management to a high-level management position. Since they are the ones who frequently will hold the meeting, they also needed to be lectured on who actually needs to attend meetings for if they are not essential and don't contribute to the discussion, Human Resources can remind managers to let them off the hook. Furthermore, Human Resources may inform or lecture employees that when conducting a meeting, they can do so in a distraction-free environment and to silent any electronic devices to pay attention to. As again, violating these rules can be met with a warning from the Human Resources department. As with anything, there may be risks or side effects on applying a new change within the workplace, with this idea Human Resources is asking to break a bad habit but nonetheless a habit of barging into co-worker's and asking if they have a minute? Employees need to know that it's not a minute usually and turns to 30 minutes or so and you can't refuse the invitation especially if it's the manager of your department. But again, if we employ this idea within the workplace where everybody needs to inform the other party what, where and when the meeting is through any virtual platform, the person may or may not read it due to having their gadgets off or they read it and chose to completely ignore it due to laziness or other behavioral factors.

To solve this, the initiator of the meeting can choose to physically walk to the person and inform him if the respondent hasn't responded with an enough time about the meeting and the agenda. Another option is to of course take matters into the Human Resources department to give them a reminder for it is needed to make this new policy work.

Other than applying the first idea, another suggestion made by our teammates from the Nusantara Project was to practice meditation regularly for the sake of mental health of employees for it is vital for creativity and innovation which is always on demand on Google's workplace to innovate new technologies constantly for billions of people. Stress is a reaction to a situation – it isn't about the actual situation. Workplace stress then is the harmful physical and emotional responses that can happen when there is a conflict between job demands on the employee and the amount of control an employee has over meeting these demands. With Google having the best and brightest of the world employees all in one workplace, everyone is working hard and can't afford to

make a mistake in order to avoid embarrassment which in turn creates burnouts and stress from the pressure. With the most popular job in Google being a software engineer which rates a 12.13 on the Mc Graw's list of most stressful jobs, methods like meditation are still needed in the workplace to keep a healthy and sane mind. And again, referring to the meditation idea, the best way to apply this said method to Google is, of course, starting from the Human Resources department of Google on how to tackle this idea. With Human Resources on standby, the next step is to obviously hire professionals who are qualified to give out meditations and must be done through extensive screening to see if the person is able and committed to do the work. Once they have qualified individuals to do the job, it's best for Human Resources to tap into Google's employees' work schedule to settle out when it's the best time to have these meditation sessions. Note that these meditation sessions are optional meaning that employees can choose whether to go or not go but is recommended if they are stressed and don't have a clear mind to carry on with work.

Other than meditation instructors, Google may also employ a psychologist to offer one on one attention to troubled employees and offer them good listening and advice to vent out and solve their stressors whether it is non-work or work-related. This in turns creates good morality to employees at work and home which in turns boost productivity. If employees aren't too keen on joining any of these activities, Human Resources may inform everyone that it is compulsory to download an app called Headspace, an app designed to make meditation available to everyone at any time. Headspace provides generic session timer recognition mobile app functionality, email alerts, progress monitoring, system learning, and an app community. There are video info graphics of high quality, fast, complementing the guided meditation tracks. The design on a desktop or handheld device is plain, versatile and easy to use. The next guided meditation in the series begins by pressing the play button on the timeline. The software for meditation provides a quick clock that allows users to see how much time remains. The facilitator advises sitting in a chair with hands in one's lap to protect those sitting on the ground from the stance instructions. Madhavan Mani, BTech, MSc (2015) reported that Headspace scored 4.0 in their study, which is the highest of all phone-based meditation apps, giving another explanation for downloading it. A risk of applying this is its fees for Headspace's subscription costs $12.95/month or $95.88/year with discounts for longer-term subscriptions which can be subsidized by Google using receipts. Another side effect is the cost of running such an operation to focus on the mental well-being of the employee, people may argue you cannot put a price on that but employing psychologists and instructors to cater to employees' demand can be expensive.

CONCLUSION

Although Google has made breakthroughs with its open approach to handling its staff and workforce, there are still improvements to be made to its organizational culture specially to tackle the constant growth of technology and the push for innovation in the 21st century. One of the recommendations for google is the further intensification of cross-cultural integration among work staff by hiring staff from various backgrounds and ethnicities. This will not only further justify Google as a multinational and global company but also cement themselves as one of the leaders towards a more open and connected world.

Another recommendation is for Google to change its hiring process towards a focus on managers and leaders with higher managerial and people management skills rather than intelligent individuals who are horrible managers and team leaders. People are promoted into management positions not because they know how to lead or manage, but because they are intelligent or smart and there is no other path to move forward upon.

There are so many other recommendations to be more people and employee focused as Google is such a big company, it can hire whoever and whomever they want. Google staffs are so outstanding you can work there for many years and not get a promotion; you will feel everyone is overqualified for their positions and each employee is so small in their huge work teams that you are only measured by the measurable improvements that you can bring.

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