



How Tech-Based Startups Create Their Company Culture

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Introduction

“Without culture, and the relative freedom it implies, society, even when perfect, is but a jungle. This is why an authentic creation is a gift for the future.” - Albert Camus.

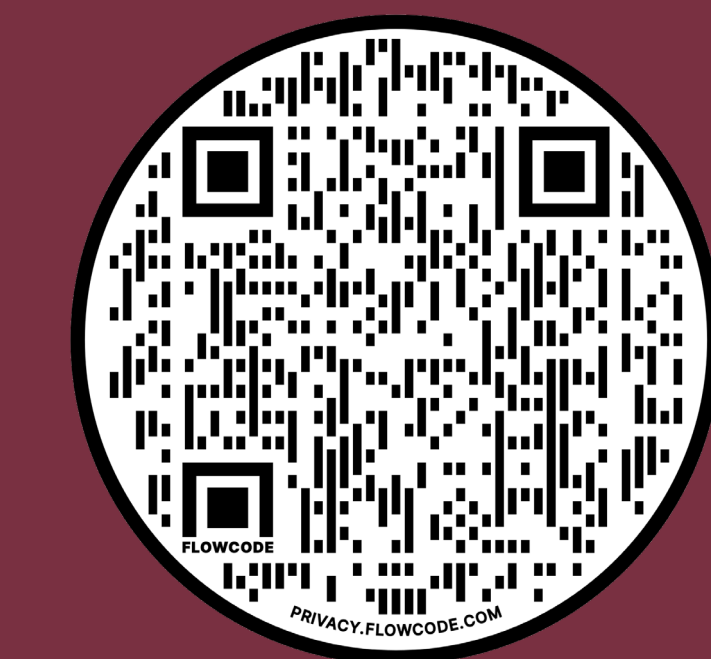
As defined by corporate anthropologist Michael Henderson, “Culture is an active, self-questioning and -organizing process of shared personal values, beliefs, and rituals that creates meaning that is transmitted from one generation to another through learned formal and informal interactions that occur daily.” Workplaces, as institutions of socialization, also have a propensity to develop their own cultures, which is called company culture. There is no distinct tech culture. Being intentional about creating a company culture is crucial to the development and growth of a business because it reinforces its objectives and prevents subcultures from jeopardizing the unity of the company. Tech start-ups create their company culture by upholding their own personal values, determining their societal impacts, and adapting to change.

Methods

I selected four tech start-up founders and interviewed them via Zoom to learn more about the importance of company culture and what creating one entails. I was connected to them through my internship with StarterStudio, a non-profit accelerator program located in Orange County, Florida. I prepared a questionnaire to ask the founders. Through these questions, I was able to gain insight into the different reasons why company culture matters to entrepreneurs and how each of their personal experiences and values of company founders are the guiding force behind the kind of company culture they choose to implement. I obtained permission to use company names.



References



Personal Values

- Honesty
- Humility
- Trustworthiness

By far, the most emphasized response to what goes into creating a culture was personal values. Because culture is a collective process, accepting a company culture means that employees, customers, or investors will likely need to hold similar personal values to that of the business. When personal values do not align with company values, personal values tend to dominate, leading to disengagement or high turnover rates. Values are important because they can determine which strategies are elected by the founders, how employees feel about their workplace, and whether customers and investors buy into the business.

Societal Impact

Considering the implications that your business has on society is an essential part of creating a company culture. This is because company culture is tied to the material effects that a company has on its surroundings and vice versa. One of my interviewees was with the founder of Ceribritech, a tech-startup in the process of developing a helmet-like device that can detect concussions and other head injuries in real time, which could be life-saving for athletes and soldiers one day. Furthermore, the societal impact of businesses extends beyond the products and services they provide; successful companies often assume the role of industry leadership. In my interview with ORGO Earth, I gathered that they have the intention of establishing a culture revolving around the rejection of corporate culture. They plan to create a workplace that is more egalitarian and decentralized, with the expectation that other tech start-ups may follow and do the same.

Adaptability to Change

Company cultures should not remain static; the world is ever-changing, so company cultures must remain dynamic and adapt to the environment around them. It is like a moving target. You cannot create a viable business if you do not keep up with both internal and external adjustments. The process of ensuring that company culture is up to date with contemporary culture is subjective to each individual startup. Nonetheless, it is important to plan and come up with new company strategies, change the thought processes and behaviors within the organization, and remain open-minded during these ongoing adjustments.