



Delight case study: Google

A brief history of Google

In 1995, Larry Page and Sergey Brin met at Stanford University. Larry was considering enrolling, and Serge was given the task of showing him around. Serge must have done a great job because Larry was still around a year later. The two computer science grad students began working together and started a search engine called BackRub as part of a research project.

In 1997, the creators decided that their project needed a new name, so they went with Google, an unwitting misspelling of the word, "googol", which is the number 1 followed by 100 zeros. The concept reflected their mission to take the seemingly infinite amount of information available on the web and organize it in a way that made it quick and simple for users to find. In 1998, Google moved their operations to a friend's garage. The domain google.com was registered on the 14th of September 1998, and the Google Corporation was formed later that year. In 2003, the company moved from Palo Alto, California, to the Googleplex in Mountainview, California. From the get-go the company's mission statement has been "to organize the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful", and the company's unofficial slogan is, "Don't be evil". By 2006 the verb, "google" became part of everyday language, and was added to the Merriam Webster and Oxford dictionaries as a result.

Larry Page's initial idea of the perfect search engine was something that would "...understand exactly what you mean and give back exactly what you want". Most would agree that Google has succeeded in doing just that.

Work/life balance

Doing just enough to produce happy employees is not enough for Google. This company understands that the key to producing delighted employees is to help them get the balance between their home lives and careers just right. Just got a puppy and can't bear to leave it alone at home for hours on end? No problem! Googlers are allowed to bring their dogs to work. New baby on the way? Soon-to-be parents receive a \$500 take-out meal fund and over four months of paid maternity (and paternity) leave. There's also a pre-school on site, so Googlers save the time and money it takes to shuttle their kids to and from school. Employees enjoy three free organic meals a day and there are medical and dental facilities on site. Fully-kitted laundry services are available and a shuttle service equipped with wi-fi transports employees who live around the Bay area to and from the office. And do all these lifestyle perks pay off? The answer from both employees and managers is a resounding yes!

The payoff shows up in increased innovation and productivity, low turnover, low sickness rates, and high employee satisfaction. In a world warring for increasingly sparse talent, strong employer image is also not to be underestimated. "It means you can attract and attain some amazing people", says Lazlo Bock, senior vice president of people operations at Google. "People who are exceptional and motivated, and who are driven beyond a good job and a paycheck."

(How employee freedom delivers better business, Suzanne Gargiulo, September 21, 2011. CNN.com)

We live in an earthquake belt. And it is not that hard to create an earthquake kit for yourself. Gallon of water, first aid kit, manually chargeable flashlight/radio, etc. Not that hard, yet few of us have it. A couple of months ago I saw the Google employees walking around with nifty backpacks. They were earthquake kits that Google created for its employees... That was so nice. It even had water! The company did not have to do it, it was all about going the extra step for their employees. This is why Google employees are so loyal to their company, the company tries to care for them and the employees care back.

(10 insights from 11 months of working at Google, February 11, 2008 by Avinash Kaushik)

Google's perks help employees strike a healthy work/life balance.

Help your employees to strike a healthy work/life balance.

How can you help your employees strike a healthy work/life balance?

Camaraderie

Departments are encouraged to socialise in quarterly "off sites" (interdepartmental visits) to learn more about their co-workers. Google's office decor also encourages socialising: a bowling alley; hair salons; cafeterias; and outdoor sport facilities create plenty of opportunities for Googlers to enjoy one another's company.

Google encourages employee camaraderie through fun activities and social facilities.

Encourage employee camaraderie within the workplace.

What can you do to encourage employee camaraderie within your workplace?

Communication equals innovation

TGIF is a weekly company get together which features a question and answer session. This tradition reflects the leaders' belief that employees should feel comfortable asking even the most senior leaders any question. Leaders genuinely seek out, absorb and respond to employee suggestions, involving employees in the decision making processes of the company.

The 20% Project encourages Googlers to dedicate 20 percent of their time to a project outside of their existing work responsibilities. The project must benefit the company in some way. This provides opportunity for employees to explore new areas of work while broadening their existing knowledge base. Google's shuttle system exists because one employee, Carrie Spivak, got fed up with driving to work everyday. She researched bus companies, plotted out the shuttle route, and eventually took her idea to senior management. Today, thousands of Google employees benefit from one woman's simple yet effective idea, all because Google listens to their people and creates opportunities for them to be innovative.

And if you think about it, if you're an organization that says "our people are our greatest asset," you must default to open. It's the only way to demonstrate to your employees that you believe they are trustworthy adults and have good judgement. And giving them more context about what is happening (and how, and why) will enable them to do their jobs more effectively and contribute in ways a top-down manager couldn't anticipate. - Lazlo Bock, Passion, Not Perks, Think Quarterly

Google encourages open communication between employees, managers and leaders.

Encourage open communication between your employees, managers and leaders.

What can you do to encourage open communication between your employees, managers and leaders?

Google creates opportunities for employees to be innovative.

Create opportunities for your employees to be innovative.

What opportunities can you create for your employees to be innovative?

Education and training

Google ensures that its employees are never short of intellectual stimulation by hosting training programmes and providing reimbursement for employee studies. The Global Education Leave Program enables employees to take a leave of absence to pursue further education for up to five years and \$150,000 in reimbursement. Also, classes and lectures on a variety of subjects ranging from planning and home purchasing to learning a foreign language are held at the Google offices on any given day.

After a while at any company your mind gets stale, you can't get out except for a conference or such. At Google you have alternatives. This last year I have learned about microexpressions from Paul Ekman... saw the light when Barack Obama spoke, realized why John Chambers is so well admired... At Google I am grateful... to learn something I otherwise would not have.

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Google encourages its employees to further their education by providing training opportunities and reimbursement.

Encourage your employees to further their education.

What can you do to help your employees further their education?

Recruitment

Part of the Google recruitment process is looking for people who are well-rounded and work well within small teams. The term, "Googley" is used to describe a person who harbours unique talents and uses those talents to be constantly innovative in what he/she does. They must demonstrate the will to make the world a better place. CEO Larry Page approves every hire personally.

We want the best of the best to come to Google. We budget what it takes to find the best of the best. - Todd Carlisle, director of staffing.

Inside Google's recruiting machine - Fortune Tech Feb 24, 2012 by Anne VanDerMey

Google looks for people who are well-rounded and work well within small teams, and tailors their recruitment process to attract those people.

Tailor your recruitment process to attract employees with specific skills and traits that encourage delight in the workplace.

How can you tailor your recruitment process to attract people with specific skills and traits that encourage delight in the workplace?