Business culture of corporate giant – a case study of Google company

Hugo Cárcel Beltrán

University of Valencia, Faculty of Economics, Spain

e-mail: hucarbel@alumni.uv.es

Aleksandra Gulc

Bialystok University of Technology, Faculty of Engineering Management, Poland

e-mail: a.gulc@pb.edu.pl

Abstract

The objective of the article is to analyse the corporate and business culture of the multinational enterprise on the basis of case study of Google company. The article is mainly focused on the key aspects such as the motivation of the employees or the incentive system developed. Other important issues for the company will also be addressed, such as the role of creativity and innovation. The article reveals the key success factors of the international giant – Google company.

Key words

motivation, human resources, innovation, technology

Introduction

The corporate culture of a company is defined as "a cognitive framework consisting of attitudes, values, behavioural norms, and expectations" [Greenberg and Baron, 1997] or "the collective thought, habits, attitudes, feeling and patterns of behaviour [Clemente and Greenspan, 1999; Szydło and Widelska, 2018]. The corporate culture should be related with employees values and the environment in which

the organisation operates. Global and competitive business environment has made the positive culture a key factor of success allowing companies to attract top employees [Sadri and Lees, 2001]. One of the companies with a higher level of development of its corporate culture is Google, where its organizational environment is considered as one of the best within the world's leading multinationals. Google, which was born in 1990s in Silicon Valley in California, operates in the specialized context of the Internet economy of distributed intelligence [Girard, 2009]. In 2019, Google's total revenues worldwide was an incredible USD 160,740,000,000 with a total workforce of 118,899 full-time employees [Fernández, 2020].

The aim of the following study is to analyse the corporate culture of Google company. The article focuses on the relationships established between the employees, the role of human resources within the company, the incentive system, the role of motivation in the organization, the importance of the creativity in the company, positive work atmosphere, professional and personal growth, etc.

Google culture is primarily based on the effort of its employees. They are increasing their merits in the company according to their work and ideas contributed, as well as the quality of these. These employees are usually specialists in their work and have high level training, having a great knowledge of new technologies [https://www.eipe.es/, 14.04.2020].

Technological innovation is one of the fundamental pillars of Google. The company constantly tries to launch new products or improve existing ones. Faced with this situation, human resources become the main axis for the company, since these new ideas and innovations have to be born from them that will make the organization stay on top of innovation and differentiate itself from its competitors. To achieve this, the company own managers know that it is necessary to establish an incentive system that allows their workers to be motivated and function at full capacity [https://corporativocln.com/, 07.03.2018].

1. About Google: mission, vision and values

Mission, vision and values of an organization have been strongly considered as a necessary aspect of the process of strategic management for various types of organizations. The set of these three components forms the reason for the existence of company and the reason for its creation. Having a clear and precise mission and vision is very important, as it alllows the company to achieve the set of objectives in the future [Taiwo et al., 2016]. Mission statements are the basis of all processes of strategic planning and explain what organizations want to be and whom they serve [Ozdem, 2011; Czerniawska and Szydło, 2020a]. The mission should be defined in

line with the values and shareholder's expectations and answer the questions: 'what is our business?' [Johnson et al., 2008; Czerniawska and Szydło, 2020b] and 'what is our business for?' [Drucker, 1973]. The mission is based on the current function of the company and its reason for existing today. In the case of Google, its mission is literally "to organize the world's information so that everyone can access and use it" [https://about.google/, 22.01.2021].

The vision on the other hand faces on the future and refers to the future goals that the company wants to reach, from an ambitious but realistic point of view it is a source of inspiration and motivation. Commonly, it explains not only the future of the company but that of the industry or environment in which the firm hopes to create a change. The vision becomes the inspiration so that the employees of the company are motivated and seek to achieve the objectives [Johnson, et al., 2008]. For Google, its vision would probably be the most important and prestigious search engine in the world [https://www.barcoproject.com/blog/, 08.10.2018].

Finally, the values of the company are those ethical standards, beliefs, principles, behaviours, which create its organizational culture. To ensure the comfort of work and integration with the company, the employees should share its values [Szydło, 2014, 2018a, 2018b]. These values give a positive external vision of the organization and help to create its own corporate identity [Green and Russel, 2013; Szydło and Grześ-Bukłaho, 2020]. Some of Google values are: user-centricity, equal employment opportunities, positive environment, democratizing the workplace, and promoting work flexibility [Quiroa, https://economipedia.com/, 26.10.2020].

2. The 10 principles of Google

In addition to the aforementioned values that Google integrates into its philosophy, the company has a series of principles that it updates over time and that form the basis of its existence. These principles, which Google has called "Ten things that we know to be true "can be summarized as follows [https://www.eleconomista.es/, 04.04.2013]:

- The user is the most important: for Google, all the work has to be focused on its users in order to make it useful for them. For example, when the browser or the web page design is modified, it is always done with the user's utility in mind.
- The desire to improve is essential: motivation and the desire to improve are key factors for the company.

- Faster is better than slower: user time is money; therefore, processes have to be faster and faster. After all, Google's goal is to get its users to leave its home page as quickly as possible.
- Democracy is a good form of government for the web: all employees are part of the company and their opinions also count when making decisions.
- Information can reach anywhere in the world: in an increasingly globalized world, Google can boast of being a pioneer in the development of new technologies. Its system makes it possible for the user to have updated information at any place and time of the day.
- Making money while being ethical: Google follows a series of principles that govern its practices and its advertising programs, always trying to maintain honesty.
- The information never ends: the company has the necessary powers to make searches in news or academic journals possible. The search for inaccessible information is one of the goals of Google engineers.
- Information is a need without borders: Google tries to facilitate access to information throughout the world and in all languages. It has offices in more than 60 countries.
- One may act formal without dressing elegant: talent and creativity are essential. It does not matter where and who has the idea, it must be discussed and worked on as a team.
- Being excellent is highly desirable: being good at work is not enough, it is necessary to set goals not yet achieved by the company, and work to achieve them with perseverance and innovation. The company tries to anticipate future user needs and satisfy them with products and services that set new standards.

According to Google's principles, all products and services are created in order to meet users' needs and expectations concerning fast and wide access to information all over the world. As far as employees are concerned, the essential value is their creativity, innovativeness and teamwork, which are boosted by flexible work conditions offered by Google.

3. The role of employees in Google

As mentioned above, employees are one of Google most important factors, as the success of the company has depended on them since its establishment. The relationship between people and technology guarantees the success in a company that, despite starting as a start-up, is today one of the most important multinationals in the

world. To achieve this, both technology and people who have worked in the Google's project have been decisive [Li, 2020].

Creativity is one of the characteristics of Google innovations, as well as the quality of the products, for this it needs a very creative staff of employees willing to work as a team. Secondly, other of Google characteristics is its team, which is made up of a heterogeneous, sociable and democratic human group, where there are no differences by sex, race or religion and where the important thing is to have a good time while working. To do this, some of the values declared by the company are the following: listen to everyone's opinions, interact, innovate, play and socialize [Li, 2020].

One of the ways that the company uses to encourage creativity in the organization is called "20% of the time." This unwritten rule allows employees to spend 20% of their time working on their own projects. If the company considers that these projects have potential, it buys them. Some Google products created by workers in their free time are: Gmail, Google News, Orkut or Google Now [https://www.losrecursoshumanos.com/articulos/, 06.04.2016].

Innovation is another of the sections that the company tries to promote as much as possible. Therefore, Google promotes innovation in the workplace in a number of ways. For example, the exhaustive and comprehensive hiring process allows to find the most innovative minds in the market. In addition, Google constantly conducts sessions and talks in which they encourage employees in an innovative way, in addition to encouraging the use of as many resources as necessary to generate new ideas and solutions [https://www.siteware.co/en/blog/, 03.07.2020].

In addition, Google has a Department for Creativity and Innovation, where workers are taught how to solve problems in an innovative way, making the most of the exchange of ideas. In this way, Google achieves an increase in the creativity of the staff [https://www.siteware.co/en/blog/, 03.07.2020].

Failure is viewed as a learning tool and is essential for employees to move toward bigger and better things. Eliminating the fear of punishment or ridicule allows company employees to feel more secure [Sereno, E. https://www.eleconomista.es/aragon/, 22.09.2017].

Regarding teamwork in the company is essential for the success of the company, since a corporate culture must unite all its employees and make them feel that they are a part of the whole company. Google knows that teamwork can develop even in the company own cafeterias, where meetings for lunch or breakfast can result in productive brainstorming sessions. Also, people respond better when they feel like they are supporting each other rather than attending in training session imposed by the Human Resources department. This is one of the great work theories of Google:

putting people in groups at meals so that they are able to share ideas and projects, an informal and unconventional way but that gives great results to the company [https://www.losrecursoshumanos.com/articulos/, 06.04.2016].

In addition, Google has a flat organizational structure, which allows all employees to share their voice. This type of structure allows lower-ranking employees to share their opinion or concern directly with the CEO of the company, without any rejection from their direct superior. In line with the above, every week a meeting of approximately one hour and a half is organized between the entire organization and the employees in which they discuss the advances carried out, innovations, etc. [Brooks, 2018].

Working conditions at Google are unbeatable, as evidenced by the many awards it has received, as well as appearing in Fortune magazine's ranking of the best companies to work for. That is why the company receives around 2 million job applications per year, however, the company hires around 7000 of these applicants. A committee of three or four members participates in these selection processes, who jointly decide which people become a part of the organization. While it is necessary to hire the right skill sets that align with the existing company culture, Google also places a great emphasis on the character of a candidate, looking for people who are fun, humble, innovative and team-oriented, but who have their own initiative. [Brooks, 2018].

4. Motivation and incentive systems

In order to make work as enjoyable as possible, Google has been implementing a series of features in its workplaces, in order for its employees to develop their workday in a calm, comfortable and stress-free way, something essential for new innovative ideas emerge. Google is known for making the workplace feel like more than just work, breaking out of the boring workplace rule of thumb.

Without a doubt, Google has managed to change this perception, finding the perfect solution, leading with data and innovation. Some of the characteristics of its facilities are presented below.

The workspaces are decorated in an original way, thus creating a pleasant and colourful atmosphere. There are also cafeterias, living rooms and games for workers such as pool tables, table football or ping-pong, as well as free food and drinks for those who want it.

Another example occurs at the headquarters in Pyrmont, Australia, where the company has designed a kind of greenhouse where it is possible to work with the laptop in total privacy.

In Google there is no predetermined workplace. Anyone who wants to can do their job on one of the sofas, outdoors or with cushions on the floor; the laptop and headphones are the only items necessary to develop the working day.

Within the free food there is a variety of dishes, in addition to vegetarian food. Offering a restaurant service makes day-to-day life easier for employees since they do not have to go to bars or restaurants during their working hours, with the consequent loss of time that this entails.

Finally, within a Google office one might find free laundries or even capsule sofas where one may take a nap, all so that workers can perform daily tasks within their own workplace or can rest if they want it at some point of the day [https://www.losrecursoshumanos.com/articulos/, 06.04.2016].

Other forms of motivation and incentives that can be mentioned are as follows [Li, .2020] [Martínez, 2012]:

- The health of its employees is one of Google priorities, therefore it offers free medical and dental insurance and has gyms and even swimming pools at its headquarters.
- Google engineers are the best paid in the world, achieving a base salary of more than 128,000$ per year, above Facebook, with 123,000$ or Apple, with 114,000$.
- In addition to paying employees well, the company itself provides financial assistance, offering in-office financial assistants and planners to help them with debt, investment, and tax issues, among other things.
- Google also encourages the professional development of its employees and mobility within the company, with the aim that its workers can fill the exact job they want.

To provide the optimal conditions for efficient work, Google invests a large number of resources in its employees, in order to offer a wide array of services that keep them much more motivated and happier while increasing the results of the company.

The sum of all these motivational factors has, according to research by the leadership consulting firm *Bain & Company*, made Google 40% more productive than the average company [https://blog.edenred.es/, 26.03.2018].

Conclusions

All in all, Google business culture is one of the most recognized worldwide, as demonstrated by the fact that the company is one of the most coveted places to work in the world. Its personnel policy, its facilities or its potential make it number one

among the most preferred companies by applicants and it is an example to be followed by those companies that want to stay at the top of human resources management.

Behind Google success in human resource policy there is no secret or complicated strategy. The employees are the most crucial asset of Google, so it takes care of them, supports their creativity and finally makes them identify with the company.

In addition to the possibility of professional development, remuneration corresponding to professional skills and quality of the workforce are fundamental incentives for employees. The company appreciates the innovation and creativity of employees. Without these two aspects, it would be impossible for Google to remain among the most avant-garde companies in terms of technology for so long, becoming possibly the most important company in this sector.

ORCID iD

Aleksandra Gulc: https://orcid.org/ 0000-0002-6401-4765

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Kultura organizacyjna korporacyjnego giganta - studium przypadku firmy Google

Streszczenie

Celem artykułu jest analiza kultury organizacyjnej międzynarodowego przedsiębiorstwa na podstawie studium przypadku przedsiębiorstwa Google. W artykule podkreślono głównie aspekty kultury organizacyjnej przedsiębiorstwa Google opartej na kreatywności i innowacyjności pracowników oraz pracy zespołowej. Wskazano również główne elementy opracowanego systemu motywacyjnego oraz warunki pracy wpierające rozwój pracowników. Artykuł przedstawia kluczowe czynniki sukcesu międzynarodowego giganta – firmy Google.

Słowa kluczowe

motywacja, zasoby ludzkie, innowacyjność, technologia