



HOW TO GET SPECIFIC WHEN DEFINING YOUR COMPANY CULTURE

We've written at length about the value of presenting a clear company culture to prospective employees. Your company culture can be a great resource for winning over excellent candidates or clarifying the best fit for your organization. However, in order to achieve these goals it's important that your company culture be well-defined and unique. Contrary to what many modern hiring pages might have you think, company culture is not one-size-fits-all. It may be tempting to describe your work environment in complimentary terms, but descriptions such as "positive and energetic!" are not definitive enough and will come off as generic and inauthentic or possibly even "too good to be true." If you find it difficult to pinpoint exactly what drives your company culture, ask yourself these two questions: What common trait do all of our successful team members possess? We're not talking about a collective obsession with *aDownton Abbey*. Instead, reflect on personal characteristics that bring your team together and contribute to the overall vibe of your workplace. Do serious and dedicated employees tend to flourish at your company? Or do you find that your team has embraced a light-hearted and quirky approach to absolutely everything? Or perhaps you're proud of the mix of employees you've recruited, and it's their embrace of diversity and differentness that sets your company apart. There's no universal right answer; there's only the accurate description of the most suitable employee for your company. Does our current company culture have a realistic opposite culture? A true company culture is descriptive about what your company values, not simply complimentary about your environment. Make a list of 10-15 attributes that describe your company culture, then read the list and cross out the terms that don't have a realistic opposite state. For example, no company is realistically pursuing the opposite culture of "positive and energetic" (AKA "negative and slow"). That's not a culture; that's a description of your environment. A more realistic company culture would indicate what your company is trying to achieve, such as "Social justice-minded team members with a passion for volunteer service," or "Health care providers dedicated to dignity in old age." Both of these examples leave room for a realistic opposite company culture where different individuals would thrive, such as a team that isn't motivated by social justice or a team that is passionate about adequate health care for children rather than dignity in old age. The purpose of defining your company culture is to make it more obvious to prospective candidates whether or not they'd be a good fit for an open position. Your goal is not to sell your company as the perfect place for everyone to work but to make it clear to a select, elite few that it's the best place to work for them.

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