Cargo"Cult"ure: Imitation is Suicide

Glen Ford, CTO

Beamly

experience

observation

wild speculation

What is culture…

"The sum of attitudes, customs, and beliefs that distinguishes one group of people from another." (part 1/2)

attitudes

customs

beliefs

distinguishes

"Culture is transmitted, through language, material objects, ritual, institutions, and art, from one generation to the next."   (part 2/2)
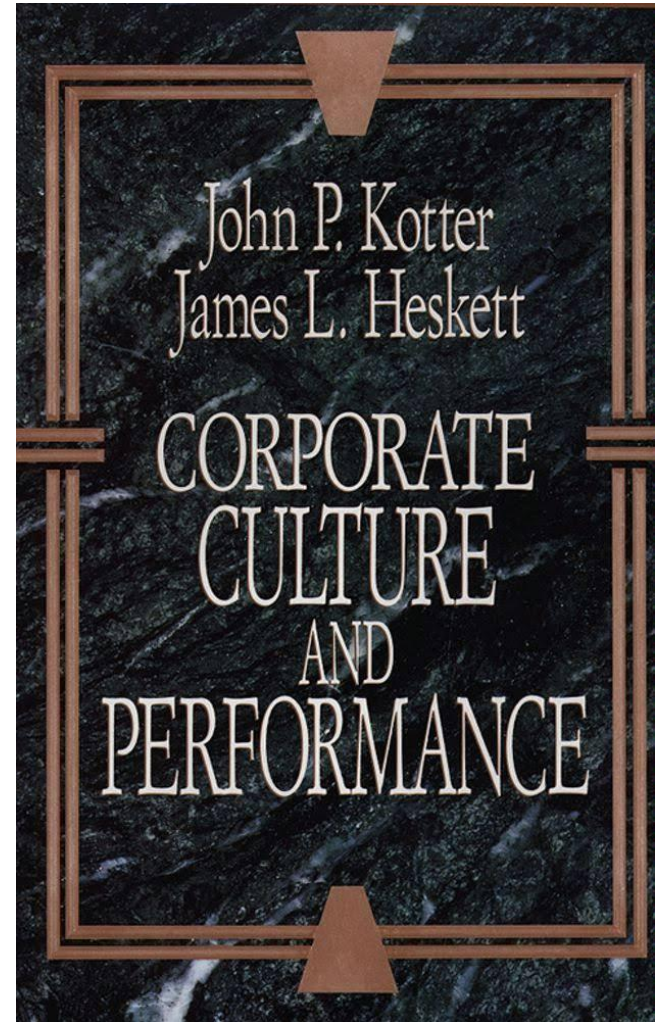
language

material objects

ritual

art

institutions

one generation to the next

Why is culture important?

"Corporate Culture can have a **significant** impact on a firm's long-term economic performance."

1992

Significant

Positive   Negative

A differentiator

Recruitment

Retention

We want to build a "good" culture.

We are human
We want things to be easy
We oversimplify things

Culture is not easy.

So the tendency is to copy.

Culture == What Netflix does

Netflix Culture:
Freedom & Responsibility

Culture == What Google does

Culture == In Sweden…

Observations.

Good culture == fun

Pool table

Fusball

Ping Pong

Is fun your groups purpose?

"Fun" can become boring.
(Well the wrong kind of fun).

Autonomy, Mastery, Purpose

Great culture means great perks!

free food

unlimited holidays

funky office

move to Morocco!

Great culture is low stress!
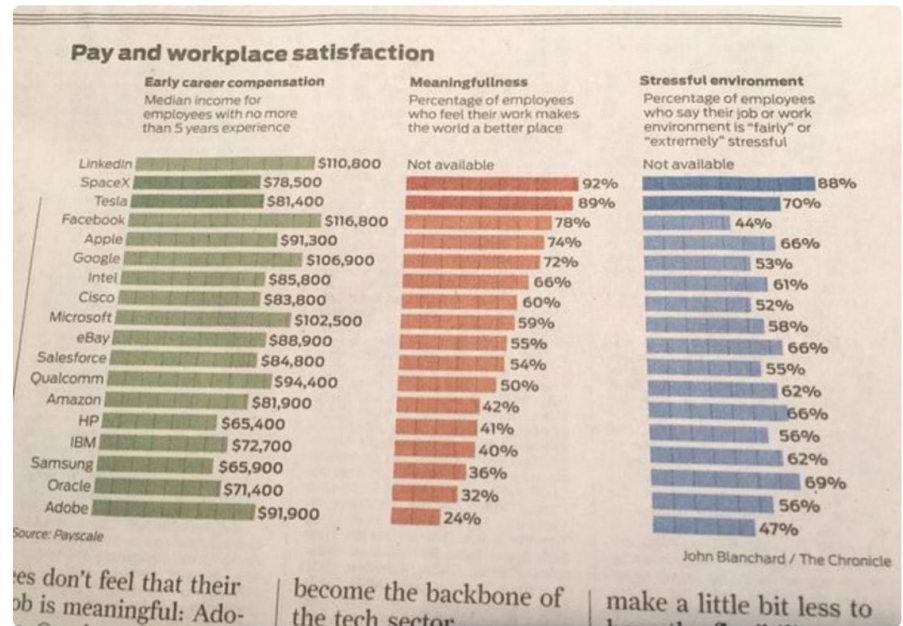
Stress is important and valuable

When work becomes meaningful, stress levels are higher.

Steve Jurvetson
@dfjsteve

Follow

Meaningful work at tech companies. Congrats to #1 @SpaceX and #2 @TeslaMotors. I think this is the root of success.

Pay and workplace satisfaction

	Early career compensation — Median income for employees with no more than 5 years experience	Meaningfulness — Percentage of employees who feel their work makes the world a better place	Stressful environment — Percentage of employees who say their job or work environment is "fairly" or "extremely" stressful
LinkedIn	$110,800	Not available	Not available
SpaceX	$78,500	92%	88%
Tesla	$81,400	89%	70%
Facebook	$116,800	78%	44%
Apple	$91,300	74%	66%
Google	$106,900	72%	53%
Intel	$85,800	66%	61%
Cisco	$83,800	60%	52%
Microsoft	$102,500	59%	58%
eBay	$88,900	55%	66%
Salesforce	$84,800	54%	55%
Qualcomm	$94,400	50%	62%
Amazon	$81,900	42%	66%
HP	$65,400	41%	56%
IBM	$72,700	40%	62%
Samsung	$65,900	36%	69%
Oracle	$71,400	32%	56%
Adobe	$91,900	24%	47%

Source: Payscale

John Blanchard / The Chronicle

...es don't feel that their ...ob is meaningful: Ado- ...

become the backbone of the tech sector

make a little bit less to ...

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5:18 PM - 4 Mar 2016

https://twitter.com/dfjsteve/status/705925529388453888

Cult

Cargo Cult Culture

The danger with CargoCult Culture

You will be slowly committing organisational suicide.

Culture is complex.

Culture is exponentially complex

You are not…

Netflix
Google
or in Sweden.

Culture
Counter-Culture
Subversive-Culture

Blindly imitating the **surface** aspects of someone else's Culture.

That imitation will not bring the change you expect it to.

You may inadvertently introduce destructive behaviours.

You are not copying someone else's culture, you are copying the side effects of their culture.

Would you code by copying someone elses log statements.

Culture is a reflection of values.

Culture is a reflection of those values actually enacted by the organisation.

Culture is a reflection of the most rewarded behaviours **AND** the worst permitted ones.

At a core level you need to reward the behaviours you want, discourage those you don't.

You need to really think about the core values and behaviours you want.

You need to discuss, argue, refine and explore.

Remember, it will significantly impact your firms performance.

Other cultural "patterns".

Learned Helplessness.

Over-indexing Engagement.

I am in it for me.

Resetting your culture?

Possible, in the right organisation, at the right time.

What happened at Beamly…

What are we doing?

We're building the best, most addictive consumer experience for our target audience

We focus obsessively on our target users, understand their world and think in their shoes
We only make content and enable experiences that our target users will love

We innovate without boundaries and never fear failure

How are we doing it?

We work in empowered, accountable teams with visibility of successes & failures

We make KPI-driven decisions and settle debates with relevant data

We're empowered to work in teams and we work as a team towards agreed outcomes

We act individually and collectively in the best interests of the company

Why are we doing it?

We want to work at the cutting edge, developing a great brand in a great environment

We're motivated and recognised as individuals, as teams and as a company

We build a great working environment for ourselves, and constantly strive to improve it

We uphold a culture of honesty, openness, selflessness and respect

Culture is hard
CargoCulture is dangerous

Take the time, spend the cycles.

It is worth it.

Thank you.

@glen_ford