Company Values and Culture Comparison: Amazon, Google, and Twitter

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Abstract. This report analyzes and compares the corporate cultures of three major technology companies—Amazon, Google, and Twitter (pre- and post-Musk acquisition)—to identify the most effective organizational practices. Using a weighted decision matrix evaluating revenue, employee satisfaction, compensation, and innovation, we conclude that Google and pre-Musk Twitter exemplify successful cultures prioritizing transparency, innovation, and collaboration. Key recommendations include fostering open communication, encouraging creative autonomy, and maintaining employee-centric policies to enhance productivity and sustainability.

Keywords: Corporate culture, organizational culture, Employee satisfaction, Innovation, Transparency, Technology industry.

1. Introduction

Corporate culture and values can create a huge impact on one's work experience. Regardless of the positions or industries, positive corporate culture can make the work experience a great one, whereas negative corporate culture can prevent employees from enjoying the work, and can ultimately contribute to declines in efficiency. This report will compare the company cultures of three major North American technology companies, Amazon, Google, and Twitter (before and after the acquisition by Elon Musk), to investigate which company possesses the most effective corporate culture and how a company can foster such effective cultures.

2. Organizational Analysis

2.1. Amazon

To say that Amazon's workers are highly competitive would not be giving the full picture. In one of the recruiting videos, Nimisha Saboo, a Sr. Technical Program Manager describes the company culture as, "You either fit here, or you don't. You love it, or you don't." (Inside Amazon Videos, 2015). In fact, workers are encouraged to "tear apart" each other's ideas during meetings, to work for long hours, and held to standards that Amazon boasts as "unreasonably high" (Kantor & Streitfeld, 2015) [1]. The philosophy of the founder, Jeff Bezos, strongly permeates the organization, demonstrating resistance to bureaucracy, excessive spending, and lack of rigor. One main unique aspect is his view that harmony is frequently "overvalued in the workplace," considering it as something that can hinder critique and treats flawed ideas with unnecessary politeness (Kantor & Streitfeld, 2015) [1]. There are clear principles set in place, such as hiring and developing the best (principle No. 6), exhibiting ownership (No. 2), and having the highest standards (No. 7) ("Leadership Principles," n.d.). Dudovskiy (2022) also described Amazon's culture as a work culture based on fear [2]. During meetings, ideas are openly and harshly critiqued, causing some workers to fear speaking up. Employees indicate that the Bezos ideal is a meritocracy where people and ideas compete for the best by challenging one another, even when feeling "uncomfortable or exhausting" (Kantor & Streitfeld, 2015) [1]. This can be damaging to employees' mental health by decreasing their psychological safety at the workplace. Indeed, many people leave Amazon because the culture is too much to handle.

There are two main characteristics that make Amazon's corporate culture unique. First, although the company is the world's largest online retailer that sells a wide range of goods, Amazon actually does not offer as much compensation to its workers as other companies of equal size may, such as Google (Statista, 2023) Workers are expected to be frugal (No. 9), with an absence of free food buffets, snacks, or fancy utilities (Kantor & Streitfeld, 2015) [1]. Amazon highlights that its main focus is on pleasing the customers, or - in its terms - "customer obsession." Second, Amazon places immense performance pressure on its employees, which makes its work environment extremely intense. Amazon puts very high, sometimes unrealistic, performance standards on its employees, which can be motivating but simultaneously toxic for employees, depending on how they handle stress (Dudovskiy, 2022) [2]. Former executive, John Rossman, writes that a lot of workers describe the tension as, "It's the greatest place I hate to work," showing how there exist strong opposing forces of feeling fulfilled from the demanding work while simultaneously being overwhelmed by the pressure (Kantor & Streitfeld, 2015) [1]. Using the Anytime Feedback Tool, workers can communicate about colleagues to management, which contributes to the yearly rankings of team members and the elimination of those at the bottom. Because of the heavy competition, some workers take advantage of this feature to scheme with others and target a particular individual to bring them down or pull them up. Holding high performance standards symbolizes Amazon's strong focus on cost-efficiency by driving employees' maximum productivity, but it can also overwhelm the employees and decrease their morale.

Because of the demanding workplace culture, disadvantages also arise for certain individuals more so than others, such as those with children, those with disabilities or illnesses, and those who place more value on things other than work, like time spent with family. For instance, an employee who had thyroid cancer received low-performance ratings after her return from getting treatment; her manager justified it by explaining that while she was gone, her colleagues had made many accomplishments (Kantor & Streitfeld, 2015) [1]. Another employee who had miscarried twins went on a business trip the day after her surgery. Women especially find themselves disadvantaged. In 2015, Amazon had a large gender gap, with no women on its top leadership team - in contrast to Google and Facebook. Because of stereotypes that perceive women as caring and empathetic, engaging in disagreements and being too forceful could end up being counterproductive instead, whereas men may actually benefit from such assertiveness (Kantor & Streitfeld, 2015) [1]. With the harsh evaluations and standards, Amazon's strategy is a cycle of constantly cutting and hiring employees (Kantor & Streitfeld, 2015) [1].

Finally, Amazon places a strong emphasis on efficiency and agileness. To improve the efficiency of meetings, the company is known to have a unique meeting style using a six-page document, rather than traditional PowerPoint. This document outlines opinions and ideas to be discussed, and employees explore them during meetings for at least thirty minutes (Le). By adopting the six-pager, employees can ask questions on the spot while the topic is being discussed, rather than waiting until the whole presentation is done. Additionally, Amazon uses the "two pizza rule" to ensure agileness in the decision-making process. According to Le, the two pizza rule requires each team to be small enough to be fed with two pizzas for easier communication and enhanced productivity. Amazon also employs tenets to support individual decision-making to avoid the long command chains from upper management (Le). The six-pager and tenets allow employees to be efficient in their work and avoid bureaucracy. Another way Amazon increases agileness is to constantly optimize its company culture. According to Dudovskiy (2022), Amazon constantly measures employee performance in data format and adjusts certain aspects of the company culture based on the data analysis [2]. By doing so, Amazon can maintain the company culture that values efficiency, and make data-driven decisions to achieve that.

2.2. Google

Google is renowned for its innovative and highly productive workplace culture, which is built on a set of core values that prioritize creativity, strong transparency, and work-life balance. The company has been recognized as one of the best places to work, and its workplace culture is a significant factor in its success (Hakobyan, 2022) [4].

At Google, innovation is encouraged at all levels of the organization, and it is one of the driving factors behind the company's success. The company has a very famous internal policy, known as the "20% time" policy, which encourages employees to spend 20% of their official work time pursuing their own projects and ideas. This policy has led Google to some of the most successful products, such as Gmail and Google News. Innovation is also promoted through Google's culture of experimentation. The company strongly encourages employees to try new things and take risks when they have unique ideas. Unlike Amazon, where incompetence is met with severe critique, failure is seen as a necessary part of the innovation process at Google, and employees are encouraged to learn from their mistakes and keep trying until they find a successful solution (Council, 2018) [5]. From the higher level of the organization, Google invests a lot in the field of research and development; they tend to build the most innovative research and engineering team. This allows Google to always stand at the top of the global technology companies.

Google's value of transparency is built around open communication and honesty. The company encourages employees to speak up and share their ideas and feedback with their managers and colleagues. The company also hosts regular town hall meetings, where employees can ask questions and hear directly from senior leaders (Council, 2018) [5]. By keeping the information flowing smoothly, the information asymmetry between the individuals will be minimized. And the efficiency of communication will be maximized. In addition to transparency in communication, Google is also transparent in its decision-making. The management uses data to inform its decisions, and employees are encouraged to use data to support their ideas and proposals. This approach helps Google ensure that decisions are made based on firm and objective information, rather than personal biases or opinions.

Google is known for how it manages to make its staff achieve a high work-life balance. First, Google offers its employees flexible work arrangements and workload management to help its employees plan and execute their work with a wider range of options and a lower extent of pressure. Google employees have multiple working style options available, for example, job sharing, remote work and flexible hours. By having these options, employees will be able to fit their work with their lives better. To lower the stress for employees, Google has implemented several programmes and training to help its staff to avoid burnout from work (Faangpath, 2021) [6]. Additionally, Google also offers a special leave policy for workers who have children: parents have up to 18 weeks of fully paid leave, and new parents also can have up to six weeks of partially paid leave to take care of family (Council, 2018) [5]. Besides these policies, Google also offers some on-site amenities to make employees' lives easier. In its headquarters, cafes, restaurants, gyms, laundry rooms, barbershops, and more, are open for employee use to reduce their living stress caused by personal tasks.

2.3. Twitter

2.3.1. Before transfer of ownership

One of the highlights of Twitter's culture revolves around transparency. The business shares its plans and progresses with the public, and one can even look up the "head of engineering's calendar and see where he was having lunch that day," as stated by Twitter's employees (Deering, 2016) [7]. Documents and projects were often open and viewable, which provided workers more opportunities to take part in the program or learn the details to get a better understanding of the business overall, thus increasing not only the potential but also the preparation for a job rotation from the employees (Kruse, 2013) [8].

Aside from the transparency of the business, Twitter also exercises the idea of teamwork quite heavily in the business. The business enhances the communication and socialization between workers by providing many entertainment infrastructures; ones including a gym, swimming pool, cafeteria, and more. An outstanding and unique design from Twitter is the roof meetings, which have received vast amounts of positive feedback from its employees (Kruse, 2013) [8].

Finally, responses and voices from employees are also highly valued in Twitter, where the business not only motivates its workers to be fearless to challenge or speak up about any problems in Twitter, but surveys are also conducted on a regular basis to ensure employee satisfaction is consistent within the business. According to the ranking for employee satisfaction, Twitter has been at the top over the years before Elon Musk acquired the business.

2.3.2. After transfer of ownership

After the acquisition by Elon Musk, the most apparent change is the cut in employee numbers in the business. The reason for this, as explained by Musk, is an attempt to shift the business' culture and values from what was originally more teamwork-focused, to now more automated for the employees. Employees feel that the platform's basic product design is now tailored to the whims of Musk, a leader who seems to prioritize his own image and "free speech absolutist" ideology above business interests (Ding, 2022) [9]. For example, Musk restored the accounts of thousands of users who had been suspended, with the intention of making people think of Twitter as a place where they can say what they want. But now the platform has seen a huge increase in hate speech. With Musk firing or laying off more than half of Twitter's staff, there are not enough people left to clean up the mess. This includes teams dealing with bug fixes, content moderation, and attracting advertisers. These factors threw Twitter's website into chaos and flooded the platform with spam (Ghaffary, 2023) [10].

Employee satisfaction is also no longer a highly focused area. Not only have the cut employees been responding negatively about the business' decision, but the remaining employees have also been complaining about the confusion in the direction that the business is taking. Yet feedback was not taken much into consideration by the current management team of Twitter (Hutchinson, 2022) [11]. Furthermore, transparency, which is also a major factor in the confusion, also no longer existed like before in the business. Musk's reform of free speech stance also had significant negative consequences; even some popular figures who supported his free speech stance - like independent journalist, Bari Weiss - have recanted their support (Ghaffary, 2023) [10]. Even if Musk's conservative fans like the way he runs Twitter, if more people continue to abandon it, Musk's management will have ultimately been unsuccessful (Wu & Calic, 2022) [12]. Yet, in return for all of this, orders and requests from the management team become more direct and clear for the employees, thus potentially increasing the basic productivity of work where innovation is no longer a required or exercised idea in the business (Callahan, 2022) [13].

3. Comparative Analysis

Table 1. Corporate Culture Evaluation

	Criteria Weight	Amazon	Google	Twitter Before	Twitter After
Revenue	*30%*	4.5/5	4/5	4/5	2/5
Employee Satisfaction	*40%*	3/5	4/5	5/5	2/5
Compensation & Benefits	*15%*	2/5	5/5	4/5	2/5
Innovation	*15%*	4/5	5/5	5/5	2/5
Total Score	*100%*	3.45/5	4.30/5	4.55/5	2.00/5

Table 1 shows the decision matrix that we used to analyze each company's culture with these factors to measure which company possesses the most effective company culture. We analyzed corporate cultures based on four criteria: revenue, employee satisfaction, compensation and benefits, and innovation. We assumed these factors to be the most critical in generating successful outcomes for these companies.

We assigned Employee Satisfaction the highest criterion weight because this factor has strong, significant impacts on a company's corporate culture and overall efficiency (tying into revenue). According to Indeed Editorial Team (2022), high levels of employee satisfaction result in lower turnover rates, improved company culture, increased profits, and increased productivity. Therefore, we gave this measure the highest weight of 40%.

Revenue is the second highest in the criteria weight at 30% because although companies may have benefits and employee satisfaction, they also need to have effective corporate cultures that promote ambition and efficiency to generate enough revenue for sustaining themselves as a business. When corporate culture aligns with strategy and leadership, an effective company culture can lead to positive organizational outcomes, such as increased revenue (Groysberg et al., 2018) [14].

Compensation and Benefits and Innovation are given the criteria weight of 15% because a company can create a positive company culture by providing a fair compensation and benefits system and allowing room for innovation. We assumed that 'flexibility' would also fall under this category.

3.1. Analysis for Amazon

Revenue (4.5/5): Amazon's revenues have seen incredible increases through the years: in the decade from 2012 -2022, its net sales went from USD $61.09 to $513.98 billion (Statista, 2023). A large portion of its revenue comes from the selling of physical products as the world's largest online retailer, more than Google (Statista, 2023) [3].

Employee Satisfaction (3/5): Employee satisfaction at Amazon tends to be on the extreme side, either scoring very high or low. Those who are able to keep up with the intense routines find great satisfaction and meaning in their business. For others with disadvantages and values beyond work, the culture can be overwhelming and difficult to work with. Amazon takes pride in its erosion of work-life balance, contrasting Google and Twitter (before acquisition) (Kantor & Streitfeld, 2015) [1].

Compensation/Benefits (2/5): Amazon makes no attempt to show that catering to employees is one of its priorities. In fact, compensation for workers operates on a competition basis (Kantor & Streitfeld, 2015) Amazon also offers bonuses to employees who have worked for more than two years in the form of stocks, rather than cash (Yurchenko, 2023). Therefore, employees are not able to be compensated fairly during economic downtimes [1,15].

Innovation (4/5): Amazon strives for its workers to think big and dive deep. The intense competition stems from workers presenting their ideas and engaging in open disagreement or criticism to deliver the best. Because the culture is so harsh on ideas, it can discourage workers from engaging due to fear of judgement (Kantor & Streitfeld, 2015) [1]. This can potentially act as a barrier to innovation, which is why we rated Amazon as a 4 for this measure.

3.2. Analysis for Google

Revenue (4/5): Google's total revenue comes largely from advertising revenue, reaching $279.8 billion USD in 2022 (Bianchi, 2023) [16]. We rated Google as a 4: compared with other search engines, such as Bing, Yahoo, and Baidu, Google takes the lead as the leader of the industry with a share of around 84.69% (Bianchi, 2023) [16].

Employee Satisfaction (4/5): There are two perspectives for Google maintaining its high employee satisfaction: providing convenient facilities and accommodating flexible time management. By offering on-site facilities, such as gyms, laundry rooms, barbershops, employees tend to waste less time on their daily needs. Employees can feel the care and belongingness of their company when they are accessing these amenities. The flexibility in managing employees' time, workload, and work location give employees more freedom and a sense of trust. Employees at Google have the right to make choices, like job sharing and telecommuting. As a result, Google implemented a series of actions and resources to relieve its employees' pressure on daily needs and time scarcity.

Compensation/Benefits (5/5): Google's strategy could be said to be almost the opposite of Amazon's: while Amazon emphasizes control through competition, Google uses a different kind of control strategy by offering employees many benefits. These include lavish physical structures like play areas, outdoor terraces, Broadway-themed conference rooms, secret rooms, and vintage subway-designed conversation areas (Stewart, 2013) [17]. The company even allows employees to design their own workspace - some have standing desks, others have attached treadmills - contrasting the bare-bone, frugal desks of Amazon workers. There are also coffee bars, open kitchens, and gourmet cafeterias for the employees to enjoy as they work.

Innovation (5/5): For the technology firm, innovation is the origin of all online products and online services. It is obvious to see how successful Google is as a technology company by its tons of creative ideas. To keep the high innovation in their team, Google encourages its employees to pursue their own projects and research.

3.3. Analysis for Twitter

3.3.1. Before transfer of ownership

Revenue (4/5): While not one of the top businesses in revenue compared to other giants we have analyzed in our report, Twitter still remains to be the most influential and the company that makes the most revenue in the media industry (Iqbal, 2023) [18]. Twitter's revenue totalled about $4.4 billion USD in 2022.

Employee Satisfaction (5/5): The majority of the workers at Twitter have given positive feedback about the work environment and culture on Twitter. Employees are provided with a lot of freedom in their projects, and the business tends to be very flexible and encouraging toward employees' requests for job rotations. Overall, Twitter proves itself to be an employee-caring business.

Compensation/Benefits (4/5): The business provides basic facilities and benefits for its employees just like other companies that are analyzed in the report; however, there does not seem to be anything unique that Twitter has to offer.

Innovation (5/5): Due to the freedom of transparency and freedom that the business grants its workers, they can focus and innovate on their personal interests in the projects, thus providing Twitter with many new functions and ideas to try in their application or advertisement.

3.3.2. After transfer of ownership

Revenue (2/5): The acquisition of the business has caused Twitter's revenue in 2023 to have reportedly decreased by 40% (Iqbal, 2023) [18]. Yet, this result could be flawed, as Twitter has transitioned from being public to private, and earnings will no longer be publicly reported; however, since a large variety of factors and feedback occurred after the acquisition, we are inclined to believe that the business will have a downfall of revenue in this new year (Twitter Inc., 2022).

Employee Satisfaction (2/5): Surveys for employee satisfaction and feedback are no longer conducted, yet workers themselves have instead been posting negative reviews, mostly from the cut workers as expected; however, workers that remained in the business are also explicitly stating about their confusion for the lack of transparency about the company's steps in the future, and the ignorance from the management team on their voices for the business.

Compensations/Benefits (2/5): Many benefits that Twitter workers used to enjoy are no longer sustained; the most renowned one is that the "work from home" policy has been removed, which has been met with many controversial, but mostly negative reviews for this decision. Elon has also further stated the idea that "Employees at Twitter would no longer be entitled to allowances and perks like training and development, daycare facilities for children of staff, quarterly team activities and amenities for employee wellness and productivity" (Das, 2022)[19].

Innovation (2/5): Group work has also mostly been abandoned where Elon Musk has attempted to transition the business culture and environment for the employees to be more automated instead of encouraging teamwork. This causes a lack of innovation where employees work through orders and no longer through their own individual ideas.

4. Recommendations

Based on the Analysis above, we recommend that companies foster cultures with high transparency, abundant creativity, and strong collaboration, just like Google and Twitter before Musk's acquisition (two of the most successful technology companies in the world). They are known for their unique internal policy and controls that have contributed to their success. By understanding their company culture and identifying the merits and demerits, we believe that there are three main values in building the company culture for technology firms:

First, both companies prioritize transparency in their operations. Google has an open communication policy where employees can access information about the company's strategy, financials, and even salaries. Likewise, Twitter encourages transparency by regularly sharing company updates with its employees. Twitter's high level of transparency leads to a high level of employee participation. Employees can not only view the details of the company's projects but also check the progress of the company's plans (Deering, 2016) [7]. These transparent processes empower employees' rights and lead to a sense that they are tied to the fate of the company. We recommend transparency to build trust among employees, customers, and shareholders. This value is efficient for operations and administrations, which strengthens the flow of production and weakens the negativeness of information asymmetry.

Second, Google and Twitter both decide to foster a strong culture of creativity and innovation. They encourage their employees to experiment, take risks, and think outside of the box. Google is famous for allowing its employees to dedicate up to 20% of their time to work on projects outside of their core job responsibilities, which has resulted in several successful products like Gmail and Google Maps (Hakobyan, 2022) [4]. "Try on new things and take the risks" - this concept is deeply rooted in every Google employee's mind. By building the most innovative teams, Google is able to obtain the key to the future. Twitter also promotes creativity by holding hackathons and giving employees the freedom to explore new ideas. We would recommend a culture that emphasizes these aspects; the technology industry is the kind of industry that needs to be constantly evolving, making creativity an important component of the products and services they offer.

Third, both companies value collaboration and teamwork. They encourage their employees to work in cross-functional teams and to share their knowledge and expertise with others. This helps to break down the working frameworks and fosters a culture of collaboration that leads to better products and services. Employee feedback is very important on Twitter: employees are encouraged to challenge or speak out about any issues on Twitter, ensuring that their voices are heard. Twitter also conducts regular surveys to make sure employee satisfaction is real and not fake. According to employee satisfaction rankings, Twitter had been at the top for several years before Elon Musk bought it. The emphasis on teamwork enables each employee to better integrate into the collective. Twitter's unique roof meetings allow employees to work as a team and connect more closely at work (Kruse, 2013) [8]. Twitter's model was successful before Musk bought it. The key to its success is its focus on employees' rights and its "people first" organizational culture.

Based on the success of Google and Twitter, we have a recommendation for all companies. A successful organizational culture is one that focuses on its employees. Whether it is a sufficiently open and transparent system, creativity and innovation, or collaboration and teamwork, making employees feel involved and valued is a hallmark of a successful organizational culture. For instance, one of Google's strategies for generating innovation and collaboration is by having an environment that makes it easy to talk; they have huge floors with many gathering spaces, physically removing any barriers to communication (Stewart, 2013) [17]. Companies can emulate Google's office structure to foster collaboration, transparency, and innovation by providing spaces for employees to casually chat and openly discuss their ideas, whether that be a lounge or meeting room. Fostering effective communication with employees and clients can enable companies to build transparency into their nature. We also recommend having job rotations, which can offer opportunities for more communication and business understanding, like it did for Twitter (Kruse, 2013) [8]. Unlike Amazon's view that workplace harmony is overvalued, Google highlights its employee relationships, aiming to create "the happiest, most productive workplace in the world" (Stewart, 2013) [17]. Overall, when companies attempt to cultivate successful corporate culture, we recommend focussing on transparency, creativity, innovation, collaboration, and teamwork.

5. Conclusion

Google and pre-Musk Twitter demonstrate that employee-centric cultures—rooted in transparency, creativity, and collaboration—drive sustainable success. Companies should prioritize cultural alignment with employee needs to enhance productivity, innovation, and long-term revenue growth.

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