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THE CULTURE SOFTWARE

CREATING A START-UP CULTURE AT ANY SIZE

A Best Practice Guide for Intentionally Building Your Culture

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ABOUT HUMANTELLIGENCE

Humantelligence is the leading cloud-based platform for the accurate measurement of culture at every level of an organization, from individuals and teams to overall corporate culture. HT has the quickest, most comprehensive self-assessment that measures behaviors, motivators, and work energizers so that leaders have the culture and talent intelligence needed to measure, manage, and hire for fit, optimize collaboration while reducing turnover, and build engaged high-performing teams across the organization.
To learn more, visit www.humantelligence.com.

SUMMARY

Ping pong tables, kegerators, and catered lunches, oh my! Is this what pops into minds when we think of start-up companies? Sadly, the answer is probably yes, but these employee perks don't define or even contribute to the culture for which start-ups should be most known.

Rather, the open, often casual communication, transparency, and people-first focus set start-up culture apart from its corporate counterpart. It's true...the foosball tables and bring-your-dog-to-work days might help you attract more applicants for your roles. But what's more important is a uniquely defined culture aligned to the company's strategy – and flip flops, ping pong, and the notion of having fun on tap all the time is not what keeps employees engaged and ultimately helps you grow. FYI...culture is also not employee engagement surveys. They only measure happiness/satisfaction and cannot tell you if you have a culture aligned to your strategy -- one that drives performances and fosters results.

This guide is intended to help founders planning to launch a new business, business leaders of an already established start-up, or those managing functional teams as part of a start-up. This guide will provide strategies and recommendations for investing in building, re-building, or strengthening your start-up culture. Read on to learn what start-up culture is (and is not), what to address and pay attention to early on in your start-up, how to address culture as you grow, and how technology fits into the equation.

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PLANNING AHEAD: DEFINE YOUR CULTURE BEFORE IT DEFINES YOU

In the land of start-ups, it's common for some founders to compare their businesses to raising a child. There is good reason for this, as certain aspects of running a business do feel like raising a child, and a founder can develop a level of attachment to that business. While admittedly not the best kind of comparison and can often lead to less-than-stellar cultural dynamics within your organization, we get it – it's your baby, and to honor that, we'll address the importance of *raising* your start-up culture akin to the importance of laying a strong foundation of love and support for your new bundle of joy!

So what is start-up culture?

According to **Deloitte**, culture drives strategy. When aligned with business strategy, organizational culture can drive results, without having to rely on command and control – it's how things get done in your organization. Similarly, for Juan Betancourt, Chief Executive Officer of Humantelligence – a culture intelligence software start-up with 18 employees – culture is your company's **B-M-W**: the sustained patterns of (1) **B**ehaviors over time that are supported by the shared experiences, (2) the values or **M**otivators, and beliefs of the organization, and (3) the way work happens or **W**ork energizers of its people. Together, culture is what transforms individual employees into a collective, cohesive whole.

It's important to define your culture because by defining it, you – and your employees – can commit to better supporting the work itself, improving operations, and making valuable as well as impactful contributions to the market you serve. All too often, start-up leaders fail to realize that not defining their cultures will have a negative impact on the operational side of their businesses, while being able to define it from the start ensures less culture-related stress down the road as you grow.

Before defining it, what's also important to note is what culture is not. As Don Sull tells us in **When It Comes to Culture, Does Your Company Walk the Talk?**, it's not the values you post on your website or the laminated one-pager you give to employees. He goes on to explain that company practices often conflict with corporate values – with data demonstrating little to no correlation between official company values and actual culture as perceived and lived by employees. Closing that gap starts with communication and a plan to address culture at its core.

Senior Human Resources Director Tiffany Davis-Ransom, who leads recruiting for a SaaS start-up serving higher education, notes that when potential new hires are considering coming aboard, what they'll really be looking at when it comes to culture is the following:

- The team's work habits
- What and how the team is motivated
- How the team interacts or socializes
- Diversity or lack thereof
- Mentorship opportunities to build knowledge, skills, and abilities
- How the team collaborates and communicates
- Where and how new ideas are fostered
- How feedback is solicited, acknowledged, and implemented
- Company and team planning processes
- Recognition for work well done

"That is...they'll be looking at how work gets done, who makes the decisions and why, how people are rewarded, and opportunities to grow through leadership and mentorship – all of the expectations, values, and norms associated with working at your company – that is your culture defined."

In some aspects and unlike corporate cultures, a start-up culture – because teams begin small – typically and inevitably reflects the personalities of early team members and becomes an output of the people who work there. A company with a large sales team might have a more customer-centric and extroverted-style culture. If you have a team that hates conflict, the culture will probably be indecisive and passive aggressive. A company with more experienced people will draw on established best practices, where a company full of greener hires may tackle problems based on intuition and require more oversight. Matthew Bartel, who founded Digital Measures – a faculty activity reporting software start-up in 1999 – tells us that this should be a deliberate activity.

"While it's difficult to know where to start when it comes to creating a company's culture, a key exercise we did early on was to identify our rockstar teammates and then think about each of their positive attributes. It was a helpful exercise to define a short but specific list of traits we value in our teammates. Once a company has a set of values, you almost can't talk about them enough. We ensured our values were reinforced when hiring, conducting performance reviews, in monthly all-hands meetings, during team recognition ceremonies, and even in front of clients. It's important to consistently recognize and call out when team members exemplify your company's values because it reinforces and better defines these behaviors and encourages your full team to follow suit."

All that to say, the composition of your team is important in how your culture plays out day to day. But ultimately, culture is set first by its leaders, starting with the founders or CEO. Alexander Nicolaus, Chief People Officer at Paysend and author of *Startup Culture: Your Superpower for Sustainable Growth*, recommends getting specific from the start: define your organization's why, who you are, and who you want to be.

"You design the operating structure, organizational chart, and put together the team. You decide who, when, and how to reward and promote. You either welcome feedback and challenges or are threatened by such. Your behavior sets the example for the rest of the team, and the rest of the team ends up modeling it, which then builds culture from the bottom up."

Reminder:

Culture is not HR and it's not engagement surveys, Davis-Ransom reminds us.

"An HR leader can help you think about the culture you desire, find ways to move the culture in the right direction, and monitor progress, but the culture of a company is set early and is set by the leaders. "Most small companies don't even have HR, and by the time they add HR, it might be too late to influence the culture much. Culture IS NOT foosball tables and free food. Culture IS how the company does its work, how it communicates, and how it supports and recognizes employees.

Key Action:

Don't neglect culture as you plan the launch of your business.

Make it a key component of your business plan because it will influence the work. Set aside time early on to evaluate what you value when it comes to what success looks like for your team, your company's growth strategy and identity, as well as relationship building, communication, and collaboration. Once you're able to do this, you will be able to articulate your desired culture and set in place a strong foundation for how that culture develops.

> ***Your goal should be to build a company – a culture so good, so positive – that people would want to join it for free – that's your competitive advantage."***
>
> **Alexander Nicolaus, Chief People Officer at Paysend**

EARLY STAGE: HOW TO LAY A STRONG FOUNDATION FROM BIRTH

Like the birth of your baby, you're going to want to start developing a solid foundation for trust and support from day one. Culture starts to develop the day a team – even if it's just two or three people – starts working together. Because it's one of those things that is hard to fix later because it takes deliberate and collective acts to change people's habits (also kind of like developing little humans), the team needs to think about it from day one, monitor it carefully, and build the culture with care.

Although culture is hard to measure and to control directly, start-up leaders can execute some very tangible things out of the gate to develop their desired culture early on. The most important thing, Betancourt notes, is to make sure that during your business planning, culture is aligned to your company's strategy – a simple but often neglected step.

"When you align culture to your goals from the start, employee engagement becomes a byproduct. Data shows that start-ups that failed in the first year or two, are the ones that failed to shift their hiring patterns during different phases. You cannot keep hiring for your current state but rather must hire for your future state, which means you must know from the start and be very clear and specific on your desired culture, vision, values, and goals – you must hire for the people who will help you get there."

How can you do that? Keep these three elements in mind:

1 **First, determine what you value.** The culture will reflect the founders' and early employees' personalities, so it's critical that this team be deliberate and careful to expose the attributes they want people to emulate and keep the ones they don't under control. Be as specific as possible about the traits and things you value. Discuss in depth the culture you want to build and make sure everyone is in agreement before hiring in others. When you start talking about adding in new employees, figure out what's needed to shore up weaknesses, supplement strengths, and counterbalance existing personalities.

2 **Second, hire for fit to reach business goals.** The biggest lever in moving culture is who you hire. Seek and interview for cultural fit more so than for skill. Assess candidates' behaviors, motivators, and work styles. It's human nature to hire people like ourselves, so it's imperative to leverage a variety of networks to support diversity of backgrounds/ perspectives vs. simply hiring people to whom you gravitate, happen to already know, or who come recommended.

3 **Always, lead by example.** You already know this, but it must be said – you, as a leader, are under a microscope. As Bartel reminds us, a company's values start at the top; they're defined and reinforced by a company's executive team. Small behaviors, what topics you talk about, who and how you recognize team members, your nonverbals, your response to feedback and criticism, and anything else will play a key role in setting the culture. Your employees will take notice of your executive team's cues, emulating the traits that you model. For that reason, it's important to ensure that your and your leadership teams' behaviors reflect and reinforce your company values.

Nicolaus adds, "Time never stops, and culture addressed at a later stage is an opportunity missed. You cannot go back or replicate culture at a later date. The organizations focused on culture building from the start and are invested in defining vision early on are the ones that will attract the right people – and most importantly, doing so from the start will help de-select those who are not."

If you've missed the opportunity to align your culture to your business strategy, there's still hope! It's difficult to change people's behaviors, especially collectively, but here are some key tips to implement without delay, especially if you're setting out to secure funding (the ability to attract the right talent is important to investors – and that won't change any time soon!).

START:
- Valuing behaviors, motivators, and competencies
- Praising innovative thinking and initiative
- Encouraging people to speak up and provide feedback
- Building traditions with your team
- Using CaaS (Culture-as-a-Service) solutions to manage culture effortlessly on an ongoing basis

STOP:
- Valuing titles and position
- Over-praising rules & punishing for broken rules
- Allowing information to flow via channels of gossip
- Creating silos of work and US vs. THEM situations
- Relying on engagement surveys to identify & measure culture

CHANGE:
- Communication to a clearer, accountable, and more honest version of its former self. Allow people to ask for the "why" behind decisions, and be patient and open in explaining that. Double down on communication – just when you think you've communicated enough, do more!
- The physical environment in ways that support your cultural values and help to shape the behavior of groups in a positive way – now more than ever, this means enabling better remote and hybrid work environments that are rooted in trust.
- Any practices that are perceived as unfair. It might mean redesigning how you do things – but remember bullet one...explaining the "why" can be game changing.

Culture building is an area of expertise in its own, not unlike being a solutions architect for an IT company. And like any other expertise comes with its own required set of know-hows and past experience. So if you are a founder or start-up CEO and not very good at this culture building thing yet, you just need practice. After all, it's why you're reading this guide, right?

Reminder:

Don't confuse your aspirational culture with your actual culture.

Many times, especially in the corporate world, leadership will write down some cultural values, laminate it, ask employees to post it at their desk, and then proclaim to their team: this is our culture. Queue the eye roll when the day-to-day reality of working at the company does not match. Instead be clear when you are talking about your aspirational culture, acknowledge the work you're doing to bridge the gap, and ask each employee to play a role as an agent of change.

Key Action:

Identify what you value, demonstrate it, and always hire for fit – even if it's hard.

Think through what your culture needs to be in order to accomplish what your business is setting out to do. It will be the people you hire who will propagate your culture, so be sure they're a fit. This might mean switching out folks who don't handle uncertainty well with people who have a high tolerance for ambiguity and confidence in their core abilities. They won't feel threatened when challenged, and hence won't perpetuate a culture of fear or distrust. "Culture should revolve around shared values; they're specific and defined, modeled by all, demonstrated through activity, and a guidepost by which you hire," advises Bartel.

GROWTH STAGE: EVOLVING INTO A CULTURE ALL ITS OWN

It's right around this time that your baby starts developing characteristics, personality traits, mannerisms, and ways of doing things that become unique to him or her.

It's the same for your start-up. No two companies – even if they're both start-ups – are exactly the same. Culture is the ethos — the personality — of your organization and a combination of all the uniqueness of its team members. It constitutes your values as an organization, your company vision and mission, the way you do business, and how you treat your employees. And all of these elements that make your culture what it is should be intentionally aligned with your product, services, and your market so that you can drive performance and results for your customers.

In research conducted for Harvard Business Review's **How Morale Changes as Start-ups Grow**, David Niu, CEO of TinyPulse, and Mark Roberge, Managing Director at Stage 2 Capital and former Chief Revenue Officer at HubSpot, found that 70% of startups at the three to four year mark often experience a rough patch in their culture known as the "cultural chasm." This refers to the dystopian feeling that permeates the workspace as the company grows.

Essentially, long-term employees begin to display negative feelings and feel disheartened over changes from the early days to present day, which ends up leading to an onset of employee dissatisfaction and engagement problems – no less at a time in the business lifecycle when the company needs a real push.

So how can you curb these 'terrible threes' – and keep the unique ethos and family flavor of your company strong?

Of course, as Betancourt has seen from experience, culture is hard to change a few years in, so from the minute you write your business plan and try to get funding, be defining your values and laying a strong foundation for a positive culture – this cannot be stressed enough! Regardless of how you launch your start-up, the following are key to monitoring, assessing, tweaking (or overhauling) as needed during this phase.

1 Accurately Perceive Management Transparency: Part of transparency is being upfront about what changes employees can expect as the company grows and changes. In years three and four, you're likely to be hiring more specialists and putting more processes in place, shifting from what feels like more free form to a "corporate" feel which may rub some team members the wrong way. Regardless of how transparent you think your management team is being, your employees' opinion is what matters. Be **specific**, **clear**, and **use ongoing polls**, **surveys**, and **solicit feedback** to figure out ways to become more transparent about changes to the business and communicate them as a natural and exciting part of the growth process.

2 Engage Employees in New Ways: As a pivotal moment in the growth of your company, it will be your people who have the most impact on this phase and on the evolution of your culture. In this same study, research-ers found that ongoing recognition of employee contri-butions can be a major culture and contentment booster. These kudos can come not only from managers to employees but should also be encouraged among peers on teams and across the entire company. Employees who both received and gave plenty of positive feedback performed better than their colleagues.

Davis-Ransom recommends implementing a **High Five** or **employee recognition programs** – both of which she has executed and been able to track dramatic shifts in attitudes both from the bottom up and top down. Furthermore, involve your staff in the decision-making process at this stage. Perhaps form a **business review**

committee that meets periodically to monitor strategic goals, discuss organizational issues, and contribute innovative ideas. Praising your team and involving them in the decision-making process will help keep the sense of community achieved in the 0-2 year start-up phase.

3 **Support your Employees' Growth:** Just as your business grows, it's important to empower your team to grow both personally and professionally. Implement a **well-being program** focused on both physical and mental health – both of which impact productivity levels for your business. Staff who are enduring stress or not prioritizing their health are more likely to suffer from illness, which leads to increased disengagement and absenteeism.

Professionally, make **continuous improvement** and **lifelong learning** a priority. Retention is critical during growth phases, so be sure to provide employees with opportunities to learn and grow – whether it be with formal schooling, certifications, professional memberships, hackathon programming, training programs or other resources, they will add value to the business and are more likely to stick around if they feel valued and invested in.

"Culture isn't something you only focus on when there are issues, and it isn't built by developing a list of values that you post somewhere. When a company really invests in culture instead of just paying lip service to it, you can feel it," says Chris Kontes, COO and Co-founder of Balto – a start-up he founded in 2017 that delivers an AI-powered real-time guidance for contact centers.

"Balto sells real-time guidance, sure. But that's not what changes the world. What really changes the world are groups of people who promote reason, stand for hard work, for trust, for accountability. It's the organization and its culture – and a startup is one of the truest forms of meritocracy out there where smart, kind, hard-working people get recognized and make an impact. If you've made culture a priority from the start, then you're empowering people to talk about their ideas and to figure out how to make it happen – and that's how we affect change."

At Balto, values mattered from the start and continue to be demonstrated through its fourth year in ways that engage employees and make the community outside the organization better – and Kontes believes that this, coupled with the growth and advancement opportunities a strong start-up culture provides people, will enable the company to continue succeeding in its fifth year and beyond.

Reminder:

Make hiring the right people a key priority as you grow.

Cultural fit is important, but when managers are under pressure to recruit quickly, it's easy to hire employees that don't align with the company's values. Remember that hiring for "Best Fit" could mean both cloning and complementing what you currently have ('culture add'), so that you can ensure diversity of thought. Keep hiring-for-fit top of mind during this phase – it could help make or break your evolving culture.

Key Action:

*Solicit input to ensure communication, transparency, and support is satisfactory.*

Formalize opportunities to recognize team members and involve them in continual business review and decision-making processes. Show your employees how much you value them by investing in their personal wellbeing and professional development. Healthy, happy, involved start-up employees are essential for maximizing productivity.

A LITTLE HELP FROM SOME FRIENDS: OPTIMIZING CULTURE WITH TECHNOLOGY
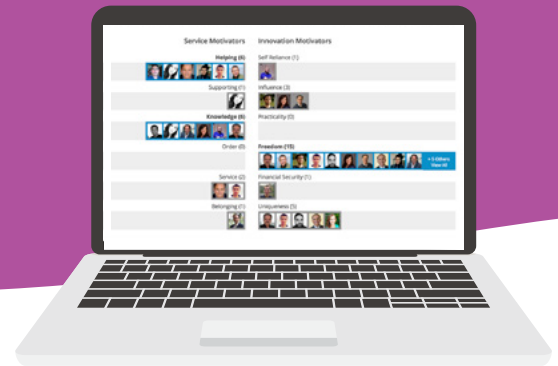
Chances are your start-up is some sort of Software as a Service or technology designed to better serve a particular market, yes? So as you continue to build and optimize your product, don't forget to invest in software for your people. It's culture's best friend!

Your employees are taking notice of and forming opinions on the technology your company has in place. It plays a huge role in your employees' engagement now and in the future. If you're lacking tools and tech that will help your workforce perform their jobs more efficiently and effectively, they'll soon take notice of other companies who have realized technology's value. If the systems you do have in place don't work properly and break on a regular basis, your team will begin to lose confidence with the company and wonder if they can really rely on leadership. Employees will soon become disengaged.

> " *While it's a huge but necessary effort to untangle a misaligned culture, technology can help you start to get a handle on it and give you a snapshot of your organization's culture. If you want to be at the forefront of the future of work – that is, of our new remote and hybrid workplaces – consider this sooner..."*
>
> **Alexander Nicolaus, Chief People Officer at Paysend**

What's more, as you grow, your culture should change – depending on the phase of your company and how it needs to evolve. Investing in CaaS (Culture-as-a-Service) software will help you identify the ongoing shifts to be made across the company and within each functional area – and yes, your finance team might have a different culture (and hence, different needs) than your marketing team.

"While it's a huge but necessary effort to untangle a misaligned culture, technology can help you start to get a handle on it and give you a snapshot of your organization's culture," says Nicolaus. "If you want to be at the forefront of the future of work – that is, of our new remote and hybrid workplaces – you should consider this sooner rather than later because you most certainly need to understand how people are feeling, gauge engagement, and solicit feedback."

Addressing Remote & Hybrid Work Impact on Culture
With pandemic-imposed changes to business models, you'll also need to build and enable a culture and working environments that support those models – office perks can no longer be charged with this responsibility. As your company grows, the key is to implement solutions that empower cross-functional collaboration and increased employee productivity. There are ways now, using technology, to measure and address culture, connect more meaningfully with one another, assess team members' ability to work remotely and where to focus training and support, and to get a pulse on how people are feeling in our new normal. And it doesn't have to be a daunting, expensive undertaking.

A cost-effective way to think of this is to create a baseline KPI, such as profit per employee. As you invest in productivity tools, your profit per employee has the ability to increase. This assumes you are growing the business. If revenue is consistent, then you would be looking at productivity solutions that allow you to reduce costs and overhead.

Either way, explore implementing culture intelligence solutions – also known as CaaS (Culture-as-a-Service). It's one of the most important technology tools in the culture scaling toolkit. As we transition into more long-term commonplace remote and hybrid work models, it's going to be imperative to infuse culture and individual emotional intelligence into your day-to-day processes, especially if you're working to foster a culture of better understanding, inclusion, collaboration. This can begin as easily as putting EQ insights at the fingertips of every employee, where they communicate most often – and for most of us now, that's in virtual meetings and via email.

Your start-up probably already uses technology like Slack, Microsoft Teams, Gmail, and more! But you're probably not optimizing your use of those tools by integrating emotional intelligence for your team. With a simple integrated plug-in, you can give your staff the kind of information needed to better communicate and collaborate with one another, taking all of the guesswork out of it and allowing them to spend time on the work that matters.

Imagine being able to click on meeting participants and see real-time tips and recommendations for communicating, motivating, and influencing them. Imagine seeing this same information in aggregate for your meeting group. Imagine knowing who best to tap on for pre- or post-meeting action items, for helping lead certain initiatives while identifying those better suited to document or support, and who might benefit from a heads up on particular messages — all of which take into account your team members' behaviors, mo-tivators, and work styles in an easy-to-understand way. Think Grammarly but for psychometrics – at your fingertips, 24/7, in any communication solution you use to work with others.

Imagine being able to compare under- and high-performing teams within the organization to identify and address issues faster. You can culture map core values to your team's measured motivators, behaviors and ideal work environments to gauge alignment and identify gaps, allowing you to build an action plan to achieve your desirable culture. When you implement culture intelligence solutions, you're leveraging often unknown and unnoticed insights about your team to establish more effective communication, working structures, and talent acquisition plans – which will help you scale or transform culture.

It's important to give your employees the opportunity to thrive and do the job they were hired to do – instead of requiring them to spend their valuable time figuring how to work better with one another. This work will only wear them

down, when there are easier, faster tech-enabled ways to do it. Doing so drives trust in your processes and leadership ability, and keeps employees engaged and performing at their highest levels.

Reminder:

Despite some arguments, technology can help make your company feel MORE human, in addition to helping you scale and drive performance.

Offering tools that enhance your team's overall performance not only boosts their morale and gives them better opportunities to contribute value to the organization, it benefits your business by boosting profitability and likelihood of accomplishing business goals.

Key Action:

Consider culture intelligence solutions to identify gaps.

This will help you address issues in real-time, provide your team with the communication insights needed to collaborate more meaningfully with one another, and infuse emotional intelligence data into the tools you already use, like chat and virtual meetings.

MATURING: SUSTAINING YOUR CULTURE FOR THE LONG HAUL

The time has come. Your baby is no longer crawling or even walking – but rather running! Just as your young child moves from adolescence into young adulthood, your start-up is maturing too.

You've determined and articulated what you value, created a solid foundation by aligning your culture to your business strategy, worked hard to build that culture from the ground up, continuing to evolve it and course correct as needed, and have even welcomed technology friends into the mix. Your culture still remains a living entity. It will evolve as time passes and will shift as you remove or add new team members. Anticipate that culture is something that must be diligently monitored and fostered in order to be sustained, and technology is the most effective way to do that.

To sustain, one of the most important things you can do for culture, according to Nicolaus, is to act. While your core values and the why for which you exist shouldn't change much if at all, the way you do it, the way you achieve it, might have to change. Continue to communicate, engage, embed, and actively evaluate – and keep these elements top of mind to preserve your strong company culture as your organization grows.

1 **Monitor & Reevaluate Often:** Start-ups are liable to change overnight as business takes off, so regularly consider aspects of your culture like communication style and organizational structure – and don't be afraid to make purposeful adjustments when needed. For example, flatter hierarchies are customary at start-ups, but you may need to infuse more structure into your

teams in order to maintain a cohesive culture and scale processes as you grow. Start-up cultures often value adaptability and are highly flexible, so change is not something to shy away from. The most important part is to clearly explain the why behind these changes to your team. Nicolaus recommends soliciting feedback at least quarterly or monthly – annually is insufficient – and to save time automate it and leverage technology - because frequent and ongoing employee inputs are key.

2 **Reinforce Positive Behavior:** Reinforce positive behaviors by recognizing and rewarding your culture champions. These are the individuals who continually live out your core values and go above and beyond both within and outside of their roles. Create and centralize team member spotlights about standout contributors (like a Slack channel) for peer-to-peer culture champ shoutouts.
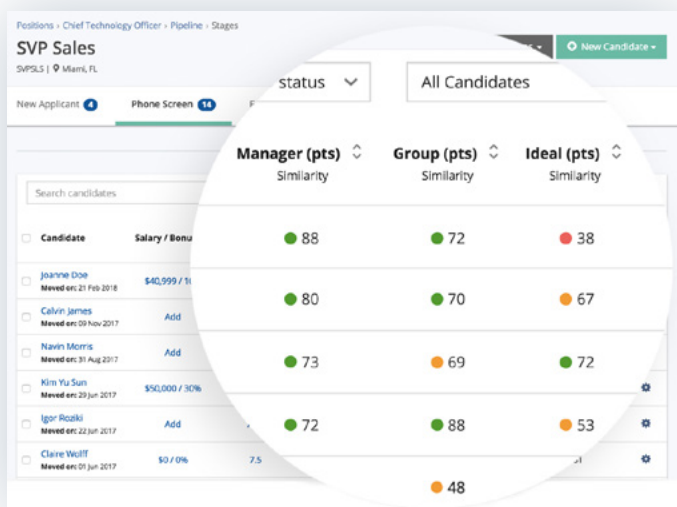
> "*This means forming a current vs target profile of your culture and then hiring in a way that allows you to achieve your target and best balances the behaviors, motivators, and work styles you need – that's managing culture by intention.*"
>
> **Juan Betancourt, CEO, Humantelligence**

3 **Walk the Talk:** Culture is not something to set and forget, and start-up culture is particularly susceptible to change as your team grows. You cannot plaster your values on screensavers and coffee mugs, into email signatures, or on slides at the company town hall and then act completely counter to them. Reinforce value-based actions and a mission-driven culture by continually embodying the core values you set forth. Doing so encourages the same behavior from team members and builds trust between employees and leadership. If senior leaders operate outside of the rules and values, your leadership comes across as disingenuous, and this only breeds resentment.

4 **Recruit and Replace Intentionally:** Culture fit, Betancourt asserts, does not only mean hiring who you like but rather being open to hiring people unlike you or any others in your organization. For each role, region/geo, and industry, the needs will be different and there is no out-of-the-box formula. Each individual you add or remove will play a part in your culture's evolution. Hire in individuals who share or have demonstrated the values you have identified as paramount, believe in your vision, and are excited about the work your team is doing. Avoid recruiting cookie-cutter replicas of your current employees and rather hire for culture adds and gap fillers – those are candidates who will enhance your culture, as well as bring unique and valuable experiences and a diversity of thought to the team.

Hire for Fit: Leverage technology to take the guesswork out of candidate fit and predictive success.

Reminder:

Like Rome, culture isn't built in a day.

Whether a growing company is defining its culture or an established company is redefining its culture, the important thing to remember is that workplace culture consists of the values, people, and communication of a company. It forms a community that thrives on the participation of all parties. So the best way to hire based on culture fit is by ensuring those involved in the hiring process have a good, data-informed grasp of the culture and know how to evaluate for culture fit without discriminating.

Key Action:

Keep a pulse on what matters to your team and continually find ways to reinforce positive culture championing behaviors.

And make sure you're the biggest culture catalyst of all! When it comes to recruiting, use culture intelligence data about your current and desired team to make the right kind of hires -- you'll reduce the costs, time waste, and inefficiencies associated with misaligned hires.

CONCLUSION

It's not hard to imagine how we would suffer if companies and individuals forgot the definition of workplace culture and defined it solely based on Nerf gun hijinks, gaming rooms, office scavenger hunts, beer bash Fridays, or engagement surveys showing how happy employees are. These kinds of things create a cool atmosphere, but they don't fill the void or fix a mis-aligned or worse yet toxic culture. In fact, they may attract mis-fit applicants, prompt bad hiring decisions, or create false ideas of your workplace culture.

As your company grows and changes, as new faces join, and as roles and teams shift focus, remember so too does your culture. Use this guide as a reminder to regularly assess your culture and consider the changes you can make in communication and organizational structure, as well as how Culture-as-a-Service technology can help you foster improved collaboration and performance in order to sustain – and more importantly – scale your company for success.

So how will you define culture for your start-up?

Need some inspiration?
Here's some suggested reading from our contributors:

- *Primed to Perform: How to Build the Highest Performing Cultures Through the Science of Total Motivation* by Neel Doshi & Lindsay McGregor
- *Startup Culture: Your Superpower for Sustainable Growth* by Alexander Nicolaus
- *Built to Last: Successful Habits of Visionary Companies* by Jim Collins
- *Change the Culture, Change the Game: The Breakthrough Strategy for Energizing Your Organization and Creating Accountability for Results* by Roger Connors and Tom Smith
- *Journey of Souls* by Dr. Michael Newton

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THE CULTURE SOFTWARE

LET US HELP!
Humantelligence is the leading cloud-based platform for the accurate measurement of culture at every level of an organization, from individuals and teams to overall corporate culture. HT has the quickest, most comprehensive self-assessment that measures behaviors, motivators, and work energizers so that leaders have the culture and talent intelligence needed to measure, manage, and hire for fit, optimize collaboration while reducing turnover, and build engaged high-performing teams across the organization.
For a consultation, contact us at www.humantelligence.com.