How to build and maintain culture during hypergrowth

For any company today, building and maintaining a good corporate culture is critical. In an employee-driven talent economy, culture can be a significant draw to or detractor from your business, and as such accelerate or hinder growth plans. For startups and scaleups who need to foster this positive, inclusive culture while building out their team, the task is much harder. And when that company is doubling in size year-on-year, it's even harder still.

As a company that prides itself on its culture and has been in hypergrowth for a number of years, we think there are a few things that we do particularly well that others may be able to learn from.

20:20 visibility

The first is radical transparency. There are quite a few companies who might say they're fully transparent with staff, but few are as open and honest with their employees as we are. Virtually all of our staff can access virtually all of

the information we hold, from company financials to information on how we support our customers.

This isn't a gimmick — it's a fundamental part of how we operate as a business, and it's been there since the day we were founded. Our founders believe that you never know how knowledge will impact people's thinking until you give it to them, but that a wealth of knowledge is almost always better than a dearth.

As opposed to most businesses that simply give staff access to the knowledge that applies directly to their role (and little else besides), we find our employees appreciate being kept in the loop with how we're operating and better understand the role they play within the larger team. Not only that, but as our teams can see details of what we're doing for each of our customers and can unpick how we're doing it, there's a wealth of knowledge sharing and cross-pollination of information and expertise that means we're always learning and delivering for our customers.

'Managers of one'

The second key concept inherent in our business is the autonomy of our employees. There is very little hierarchy in our organisation, and while typical manager-report relationships do exist at DoiT, the reality is that most of our staff self-manage most of the time. In fact, we often talk about our employees being 'managers of one'.

This is a feature, not a bug. However, it's not something that's going to work for everyone.

It's also not an excuse to cut operating costs and remove structures that help employees do their jobs. This isn't about management shirking their responsibilities, and it isn't letting employees do whatever they want. What it is, is trusting people to know what they need to do their jobs to the best of their ability and empowering them to work in the best way for themselves and for our customers.

Almost every business will tell you that they never micromanage their people. Few will place as much trust and responsibility with their employees as we do.

The way our business works does lend itself to this approach. Our employees are highly experienced experts in their fields and thrive with the level of autonomy they're given. Some work almost entirely independently, and some bring teams together to collaborate on tasks – but the choice is theirs.

Investment in personal development

This may be something you hear a lot in the people and _talent_ business, but investment in the personal development of employees is invaluable. The returns are remarkable, yet the funds and resources allocated to personal development by most organisations – even in the startup and scaleup world – can be quite pitiful.

Not so with us. We place a ton of emphasis on growth and skill development so we can stay ahead of the needs of our global team and customers. For our Cloud Engineering team in particular, we encourage everyone to use up to a third of their time for learning and development opportunities so they can ensure they keep pace with the constant innovation within the multi-cloud ecosystem.

Yes, you read that correctly. One third. We also provide funds for learning and development that people can tap into, but employees are free to use their development time as they wish.

Some of our engineers and cloud architects have used the time to gain or renew certifications, some have used the time to work on open source projects, some have used the time to write books – _this one_ is quickly becoming the #1 best-seller in software engineering on Amazon – but the only direction or intervention we have as a company is to ensure all employees block out that time.

There are other things we do, of course.

We host regular meetups with times that allow our colleagues in different regions and time zones across the world to join when it's convenient for them. We work remote-first (after all we're a business that deals in the cloud) and asynchronously. And we ensure our founders and senior leadership have the opportunity to speak with our employees often, sharing their thoughts, reiterating our goals and objectives, and hearing the views of their colleagues across the globe.

These structures and foundations have been part of the company since its first founding, and will be with the company for many years. They're part of the reason we're a successful business. They're fundamental to our hypergrowth. They're here to stay, and so are our employees.

We firmly believe that no one knows more about what makes a better professional than the person themselves, and so with radical transparency, empowerment and investment in personal development, we put that front and centre in our culture and our company.

It's not just our point of difference. It's our fuel for hypergrowth, and an approach we believe will benefit the startup ecosystem.

Kristen Tronsky is Chief People Officer at _DoiT International_

Article by KRISTEN TRONSKY