

Gore case study

Education



Since its humble beginning in 1958, W. L. Gore and Associates (Gore) fostered a strong working environment by encouraging its staff to become creative thinkers while implementing an employee empowerment approach to management. Gore's self-developing teams have proven to be leaders in creativity, design, and productivity. The company's "Superteam" has been the key to their successful growth in electronics, medical, fabrics, and industrial products. Their highly efficient flat corporate structure creates an atmosphere of leadership within a lattice organization that has proven to be one of the most effective approaches to business success.

Effective market performance driven by four operating principles of fairness, freedom, commitment, and waterline, dictate the company's promise that is "Committed to the fitness-for-use of our products where culture drives innovation to create a broad range of high performance products that make a difference in people's lives." The corporate philosophy of having a flat and lattice organization translates into leaders, associates and sponsors. Each Gore employee is considered to be an associate. By having associates and no titles, the company eliminates the need for managers and cultivates leaders.

To further stimulate leadership, each associate becomes a sponsor to new employees. Gore believes that each of us needs a guide to act as a mentor, an advocate of corporate philosophy, and a voice of experience. Sponsors encourage new employees to be creative thinkers and communicators while providing feedback and discussion of contributions and areas for growth. Although sponsors work closely with associates, they never give assignments

or act as gatekeepers to new assignments and approvers of projects. With this philosophy in place, Gore's team orientations proliferate.

The team building and collaboration on projects allow no room for competition but instead encourage workplace productivity. Gore's workplace productivity improvement process is centered around its corporate culture of having a non-traditional working environment based on direct communication. Their culture energizes associates, builds effective teams and produces superior business results. Gore encourages creative and entrepreneurial thinking by communicating directly rather than having a chain of command.

This position of trust with little oversight provides associates the opportunity to use their judgment in pursuing new ideas. Through the creativity of each employee, a commitment to projects and a unified pursuit of success is inherent. There are numerous programs at Gore that support workplace productivity improvement which associates growth and development with a distinctive culture that is maintained and strengthened. Promoting diversity is an important part of workplace values at Gore as they raise awareness of potential micro-inequities in daily routines through training and workshops.

A healthy work environment is found in each Gore plant by having a smoke-free environment, healthy plant-like settings, and recreational opportunities. Face-to-face communication is also the preference of corporate leaders as they directly speak to employees on specific issues and facilitate direct group discussion. Compensation within the organization is given in proportion to the contribution the associate makes to the financial success of Gore. Each associate is compensated based on peer rankings and job

effectiveness. Gore is considered to be one of the best workplaces in the U. S. as corporate researchers such as Great Place to Work Institute, Inc. , placed the company very favorable amongst other Fortune 100 companies. The corporate structure of the U. S. Navy shares some of Gore's workplace improvement values. Sailors share and own activities that make up a specific process. Each individual is known as a " process owner" and it is ultimately their responsibility for accountability and the proper working conditions of projects. The Sailor is driven to be a leader and has control over the entire process from beginning to end.

A teamwork approach is intrinsic to life in the Navy. By utilizing total quality tools and methods, the Navy organization continuously reinforces teamwork. Through the utilization of team members' collective knowledge, experiences, and efforts, the Navy continues to improve its processes. These benefits describe the " Total Navy Experience" which through teamwork and process ownership, the whole becomes greater than the sum of its parts. Gore's organization consists of self-managing groups that share responsibility and are aligned in a flat hierarchy of functions.

In this organization, there are no subordinates; there are only peers negotiating with peers. Gore's workplace is free of the barriers that are typical of more traditional companies. The company has done away with titles and special entitlements, and encourages direct, one-on-one communication. Multi-disciplined teams of associates in clustered plants organize around technologies and market opportunities. This unique corporate culture contributes directly to its product successes and workplace productivity.