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1. What’s it like to work atGoogle? What’s your assessment of the company’s workenvironment? Ans: Google has a reputation for being a fun place to work, full of toys and intelligent people working on world-changing projects. To look at the company’s brightly coloured campus images, you could be forgiven for thinking that working at the company is all about ball pools, gourmet canteens and bumper bonuses. But what's life really like inside the secretive search company? When we asked Google to discuss campus life and daily routines for workers it declined; the majority of former employees are equally coy. However, we've spoken to people that have worked on campus, and trawled former employees' disclosures to uncover what it's actually like to work at the company with the " don’t be evil" mantra.

Party time?
Part of Google's image as an energetic company stems from almost college-like campuses where everything is laid on, with young employees and, indeed, founding staffers enjoying a riotous time, particularly in the early years. Founders Larry Page and Sergey Brin created an image of a hip company willing to work hard and play harder. Folklore includes tales of company ski trips, TGIF meetings and other junkets that became the stuff of legend. Founders Larry Page and Sergey Brin created an image of a hip company willing to work hard and play harder In his book, I'm Feeling Lucky, Douglas Edwards, Google’s 59th employee, described some of the debauched parties that staffers were expected, rather than invited, to attend – even at the expense of domestic unrest.

" When I let Kristen [his wife] know that Google required my presence on the slopes at Lake Tahoe for an employee-only bonding trip, what she heard was: 'Please stay at home with our three children while I head out with a bus-load of adrenaline-charged, hormone-drenched post-adolescents for three days of bacchanalian binge-drinking, substance abuse and room-key swapping.' She got it mostly right," he wrote. Edwards tells of a ski-trip bar stocked with $75, 000 of booze – " and an ample supply of other social lubricants" – and naked frolics among staff. However, as the company grew, and the economy started to turn sour, many of the travel perks were slowly withdrawn; the hell-raisingculturehas certainly become more corporate over time. The culture may be more sober, but many of the perks that drew some of tech’s brightest minds to Google remain.

" From the beginning, the founders wanted to provide employees with free and goodfood," says Annika Steiber, an innovation management expert who has been interviewing Google employees for almost a year as part of a Chalmers University ofTechnologystudy. " The company wants to take care of them and reduce theirstressabout things outside work – whether it’s adoctor’s visit, haircuts, getting the dry cleaning done or help with daycare. Google wants to provide this so people can focus on the job. My interpretation is that Google truly cares – it really didn’t feel like it was just a message.” Alongside working with hyper-intelligent colleagues, the perks are still held in awe by staffers. " I had access to plenty of perks and more privilege than I’d ever had before, and it was all free – free meals, free gym, free electric scooters to ride around on; it was all very cosy and comfortable," says Andrew Norman Wilson, who worked as a contract Google video producer until last year. Employees are also impressed with the work-orientated facilities.

" All conference rooms are wired for everything you need to make your life easy," says Google Analytics evangelist Avinash Kaushik. " In companies I’d worked at prior to Google, I had to reserve a projector and carry around my power bricks and Ethernet cables. At Google, all the power adapters you need are in the conference room – Apple or ThinkPads; there are two projectors; and most have high-bandwidth videoconferencing." The Google I was passionate about was a technology company that empowered its employees to innovate The fabled Friday afternoon company-wide TGIF meetings are also still going strong, with a weekly catch-up offering workers a chance to mingle with management. " The TGIF meetings were quite relaxed, with people eating and drinking," says Wilson. " It was part celebration of the company, part a weekly catch-up meeting and a way of breaking down the business-social divide."

Time to grow up

Yet as Google has grown, it has lost some of its adolescent enthusiasm and unruliness – the inevitable consequence of maturing into a company with almost $12 billion in profits in 2011. Indeed, some former employees believe the company’s culture has transformed beyond recognition. " The Google I was passionate about was a technology company that empowered its employees to innovate," reads a now-infamous blog post from James Whittaker, a former test director with the company. " The Google I left was an advertising company with a single, corporate-mandated focus." Such criticism by former employees does, of course, require an element of scepticism.

Trawling forums shows that most staff genuinely enjoy working at the company, and Google has tried to create an environment where people want to work hard. In 800 ratings from current or former employees on recruitment site Glassdoor, Google scores 3. 9 out of 5, which is stronger than the scores of both Apple (3. 8) and Microsoft (3. 4). It does rely on finding the right sort of person to begin with, however. Unhealthy work hours?

To the outsider, some of the hours that people are willing to put in might seem unhealthy, but Google selects people who will fit into a culture of working hard, and who believe that doing so can make a difference to the company and its users. " The semi-structured organisation works when you have a certain kind of person; the people in Google are selected through a very long recruitment process," says Steiber. " They put in a lot of investment to pick the right people. Qualities of the Google person include being self-organised and self-driven; these people usually don’t needleadership, they need mentorship. " They need a visionary to pinpoint the priorities, but then they want the leaders to back off and not micro-manage. These people are highly intelligent."

However, to progress, workers need to make an impact, and that often comes at the expense of long hours. Google workers at its major campuses are often on site earlier than necessary – in time to pick up a free cooked breakfast – and leave late, having stayed behind to get their free dinner, too. The food on site is without fail championed by staffers: healthy, fresh, inventive dishes are served up daily. However, Google isn’t providing free food out of mere charity. Communal eating means many people work an extra hour in order to pick up their food, and there’s a feeling workers are still on the clock even while eating. " Google wanted people to meet in a natural way, since it believes in a sharing of knowledge and experience – in a campus restaurant, staff could meet a number of different people, and functions and groups," says Steiber.

" They have tables with signs saying ‘ if you want to share interesting thoughts, sit here’. Most employees were in their mid-20s - these kids don’t have a life yet so they spend all of their time at work " The kind of knowledge they share is very tacit – it’s hard to code in a knowledge management system; hard to write down. It’s easier and faster to share in face-to-face meetings, so the restaurant could be such a natural meeting place." Eating free food and sitting talking with like-minded colleagues may not sound likehard work, but from Google’s point of view it’s productive. Although Google might not actually demand staffers put in long shifts, there’s certainly a suspicion that staying online – both at home and in the office – will be recognised in appraisals and rewards discussions.

Remember, this is the company that gave all of its staff a free Android phone for Christmas, and invented Google+, the most compelling feature of which was videoconferencing tool Hangouts. " Most employees were in their mid-20s," says one former Googler on the company reviews section of the Glassdoor recruitment website. " These kids don’t have a life yet so they spend all of their time at work. Google provides nearly everything people need, from clothes to on-site healthcare, dental care, laundry service and a gym. " Imagine going from college to this environment and you can see how much everyone works. People are generally in the building between 10am and 6pm every day, but nearly everyone is on email 24/7 and most people spend their evenings working from home."

That isn’t to say the workaholic lifestyle doesn’t meet with the approval of the hungry young minds who work for the company. " You get a free shuttle to work, use available vehicles to run errands, and grab a coffee and gourmet breakfast before starting work with some of the most interesting people around," one employee writes on Glassdoor. " During the day, you visit a tech talk and learn something new, have lunch with a colleague and grab an espresso on the way back to your desk, before collaborating on a new project with someone in a different working group. Back to your own work, then it’s time to grab dinner starting at 6. 30pm and woah, it’s late – time to grab the 8. 30pm shuttle home.

Work-life balance
Of course, not everyone wants to work in that environment and, while concerns weren’t ubiquitous, employees did question the work-life balance, particularly as they got older. " You’ll be way older than most of the people you work with, and your manager may or may not understandfamilycommitments," says another Glassdoor contributor, while another complains that " yes, I am motivated, but don’t want to work on weekends to get a promotion."

Despite Google’s flat management structure and rapid growth, a common complaint is that there’s no obviouscareerprogression, and recognition and feedback from management varies greatly between departments. The " fairness andrespect" category on Glassdoor ranked a relatively lowly 3. 6, with reviewers complaining it was impossible to work on high-visibility projects, and that promotion could often boil down to a popularity contest. Office politics, it seems, are just as prevalent in Mountain View as they are elsewhere. 20% time

Despite several high-profile research projects, such as Labs, being closed down in recent months, Google remains a company that touts itself as a centre of innovation, focusing on the 20% rule: workers can explore other projects during 20% of their working time. There are conflicting opinions, however, on whether staffs really have the time to work on non-core projects.

" The truth is that while every Googler has the opportunity to take 20% of their time to work on whatever they wish, it isn’t carte blanche to take Fridays off and play on the Xbox," says Chris Smith, a Google software engineer in a blog. " Having a 20% project doesn’t mean you’re responsible for 80% of your job; more like you’re volunteering to put in 120% effort." The ability to work on side projects will inevitably depend on whether somebody is on top of the day job. " At Google, performance is measured by impact – benefit to Google and its customers," says Smith.

" If an engineer is able to have a big impact, then spending some cycles on a 20% project is no big deal. However, if someone was having difficulty meeting expectations as-is, then contributing to a 20% project would be a poor decision." Other employees are more enthusiastic. Innovation management expert Steiber found that the 20% time scheme had a positive effect on innovation in the company. " The 20% projects were something people I spoke to talked about a lot," she says. " First, it’s actual time to work on a new idea. Second, the 20% rule is a symbol that the company will give you freedom to try your own ideas.

There’s therefore an embedded expectation that you should do some creative stuff." Looking for extra work will suit some workers more than others and that, in the end, could dictate what it’s like working at Google. As it’s grown up, Google has evolved and staff – like everywhere else – are expected to get through their work regardless of the pool tables or other distractions. Free-spirits and cynics may hate the corporate-centric campus culture and almost institutional enthusiasm, but others with drive and a less weary outlook may find the immersion motivating. " I knew people, and still do, that are really into it," says Wilson. " There were other people for who it was just another job, another company, and they might consider moving on. There were also people who were very clever and capable, but were critical of the ways things were done and the corporate culture."

Of course, as Google moves increasingly to the beat of shareholders, its decisions may make even the evangelists think twice about its direction, such as the Microsoft defector who fell out of love with the company. " Recruiters often asked me to help sell high-priority candidates on the company and… no-one was more surprised than me when I could no longer do so," Whittaker wrote. " In fact, my last three months working for Google was a whirlwind of desperation, trying in vain to get my passion back."

2. Google is doing a lot for its employees, but obviously it’s not done enough to retain several of its talented employees. Using what you’ve learned from studying the variousmotivationtheories. What does this situation tell you about employee motivation?

Ans: Google, Inc.’s founders believe that successful organizations thrive by dreaming big and providing people with resources to implement their ideas. Google Inc. is described as a university where employees work in small groups to collaborate, dissent, and debate their ideas and projects. What other employees can show up to work anytime they want, can bring their dog, wear pajamas, eat gourmet food for free, enjoy a free fitness center and trainer, see the onsite doctor if sick, wash their clothes and partake in free espresso at each corner of their “ office”?

This relaxed, fun environment has worked well for Google, Inc. because it provides a psychological benefit to encourage employees to be more committed, more creative, and more productive. Google Inc.’s method of job design is staying away from monolithic hierarchies that stifle and distract creative ideas. When highly motivated and highly capable people have a common vision, they do not need to be micromanaged. Google, Inc. relies on the feedback from peer to peers, not peer to middle managers. Schmitt states “ If employees want complete control then join the Marines.”

Google Inc.’s radical decentralized approach to management structure is due to Google, Inc.’s founder’s belief that breakthroughs come from questioning assumptions and smashing paradigms (Hamel, 2007). Their motto is “ Do not do something because someone told you to do so.” To question authority is not an anarchist bumper sticker, but an innovator’s imperative. There is no time for middle managers or type “ A” personalities (Hamel, 2007). Group interaction is the fuel for Google, Inc.’s ideas. The decision making process is highly consultive not the traditional control and command. Google, Inc. thrives in a “ I think I can” culture, not the traditional “ no you can’t” bureaucracy. Just Google It!

Contemporary companies and start up companies can learn from Google Inc. by implementing change to create mechanisms to attract top talent, retain top talent, and motivate top talent for maximum performance. Companies are wise to put front line employees first because without them, there would be no customers—no company. Google, Inc. has changed the landscape and raised the bar on how companies should treat and reward their employees. Many companies talk about treating employees well and creating a culture where employees can grow and thrive; however, Google, Inc. put itsmoneywhere its mouth is and invests in their most valuable assets—employees. Google, Inc. is unique because it focuses on noble missions and has convinced its employees to believe in their mission to change the world.

Their employees believe that they are a part of something big that is a conduit for world peace and an agent of change. More that creating unique perks and extrinsic rewards, leaders must create intrinsic rewards and create vision that employees believe in. Leaders must understand that a new generation of young entrepreneurs have emerged, ready to conquer the next big challenge and create the next big start-up. Thousands of students are thinking about huge ideas in basements who are going to come out with the next blockbuster product. Google, Inc. is trying to attract those young people.

Companies can learn from Google, Inc. by changing their management structure, working environment, and the way they treat employees in order to attract and retain talent and to succeed in the next decade. Talented people do not want to be told what to do; they want to interact in small intimate groups, they want feedback and challenging projects, they want time to work on their creative ideas, they want a genuine effort to promote improved personal life, they want a cool place to work in, and they want food. The Google, Inc. formula is a good glimpse for what employees are looking for in organizations; therefore, leaders must lead in finding the best methods in finding what rewards motivate employees.