

“Work Rules”
A look inside Google
Laszlo Bock
Book Notes by Dave Kraft

Google is the most sought-after place to work on the planet according to LinkedIn,

Our employees are empowered around this vision to give their best and let no customer leave unhappy.

A reporter from CNN International called for an article about the future of work. She argued that the model exemplified by places like Google—what I’ll call a “High-Freedom” approach where employees are given great latitude—was the way of the future.

This global cadre want to be in high-freedom companies, and talent will flow to those companies. And leaders who build the right kind of environments will be magnets for the most talented people on the planet.

The default leadership style at Google is one where a manager focuses not on punishments or rewards but on clearing roadblocks and inspiring her team.

The best way to arrive at the beating heart of great management is to strip away all the tools on which managers most rely.

Larry and Sergey had ambitions beyond developing a great search engine. They started out knowing how they wanted people to be treated. Quixotic as it sounds, they both wanted to create a company where work was meaningful, employees felt free to pursue their passions, and people and their families were cared for

Larry and Sergey always insisted that hiring decisions be made by groups rather than a single manager.

Talented people are attracted to Google because we empower them to change the world.

“Culture Eats Strategy for Breakfast” If you give people freedom, they will amaze you

A mission that matters

Our mission is “To organize the world’s information and make it universally accessible and useful.”

The most talented people on the planet want an aspiration that is also inspiring. The challenge for leaders is to craft such a goal.

We all want our work to matter. Nothing is a more powerful motivator than to know that you are making a difference in the world.

Ethan Burris of the University of Texas at Austin found that “Getting employees to voice ideas has long been recognized as a key driver of high-quality decisions and organizational effectiveness.”

These three cultural cornerstones—mission, transparency and voice

Time and again, we’ve let our cultural cornerstones of mission, transparency, and voice anchor us in tackling difficult and divisive issues, debating them, and resolving them into clear strategies.

If you give people freedom, they will surprise, delight, and amaze you.

Think of your work as a calling, with a mission that matters. Give people slightly more trust, freedom, and authority than you are comfortable giving them. If you're not nervous, you haven't given them enough.

Lake Wobegon, Where All the New Hires Are Above Average & Why hiring is the single most important people activity in any organization

Designing effective training is hard, really hard. Some experts go so far as to say that 90 percent of training doesn't cause a sustained improvement in performance or change in behavior because it's neither well designed nor well delivered.

Companies continue to invest substantially more in training than in hiring, according to the Corporate Executive Board.

The presence of a huge training budget is not evidence that you're investing in your people. It's evidence that you failed to hire the right people to begin with.

You do have to make two big changes to how you think about hiring. The first change is to hire more slowly.

How can you tell if you have found someone exceptional? My simple rule of thumb—and the second big change to make in how you hire—is: “Only hire people who are better than you.”

Some of our best performers never set foot on a college campus.

I'll detail how we do this at Google by looking for a wide range of attributes, among the most important of which are humility and conscientiousness.

The lesson of “The Talent Myth” was not “Don't hire smart people.” It was “Don't hire exclusively for smarts.”

It's about finding the very best people who will be successful in the context of your organization, and who will make everyone around them more successful.

Refocusing your resources on hiring better will have a higher return than almost any training program you can develop.

Given limited resources, invest your HR dollars first in recruiting. Hire only the best by taking your time, hiring only people who are better than you in some meaningful way, and not letting managers make hiring decisions for their own teams.

Searching for the Best, the evolution of Google's “self-replicating talent machine”

Get the best referrals by being excruciatingly specific in describing what you're looking for. Make recruiting part of everyone's job. Don't be afraid to try crazy things to get the attention of the best people.

Don't Trust Your Gut. Why our instincts keep us from being good interviewers, and what you can do to hire better

In other words, most interviews are a waste of time because 99.4 percent of the time is spent trying to confirm whatever impression the interviewer formed in the first ten seconds.

In addition to testing technical hires on their engineering ability, we realized that there were four distinct attributes that predicted whether someone would be successful at Google:

General Cognitive Ability.

Leadership.

We have a strong bias against leaders who champion themselves: people who use “I” far more than “we” and focus exclusively on what they accomplished, rather than how.

“Googlyness.”

(we want owners, not employees),

Role-Related Knowledge.

Until we hit about twenty thousand employees, most people in the company spent four to ten hours per week on hiring, and our top executives would easily spend a full day each week on it, which worked out to between eighty thousand and two hundred thousand hours per year spent on hiring.

A good rule of thumb is to hire only people who are better than you. Do not compromise. Ever.

If you're committed to transforming your team or your organization, hiring better is the single best way to do it.

Set a high bar for quality. Find your own candidates. Assess candidates objectively. Give candidates a reason to join.

Let the Inmates Run the Asylum Take power from your managers and trust your people to run things

It turns out that we are not skeptical about managers per se. Rather, we are profoundly suspicious of power, and the way managers historically have abused it.

Managers have a tendency to amass and exert power. Employees have a tendency to follow orders.

If you believe people are fundamentally good, and if your organization is able to hire well, there is nothing to fear from giving your people freedom.

The first step to mass empowerment is making it safe for people to speak up.

Googlers continue to feel the company is innovative and that they can contribute to our mission.

The mistake leaders make is that they manage too much and do not believe that their colleagues will successfully complete a task or discharge a responsibility even when they say they will.

Managers find many reasons not to trust their people. Most organizations are designed to resist change and enfeeble employees.

Organizations put tremendous effort into finding great people but then restrict their ability to have impact on any area but their own tasks.

What managers miss is that every time they give up a little control, it creates a wonderful opportunity for their team to step up, while giving the manager herself more time for new challenges.

Eliminate status symbols. Make decisions based on data, not based on managers' opinions. Find ways for people to shape their work and the company. Expect a lot.

Why Everyone Hates Performance Management, and What We Decided to Do About It. Improve performance by focusing on personal growth instead of ratings and rewards

No one is happy about the current state of performance management. World at Work and Sibson Consulting surveyed 750 senior HR professionals and found that 58 percent of them graded their own performance management systems as C or worse. Only 47 percent felt the system helped the organization “achieve its strategic objectives,” and merely 30 percent felt that employees trust the system.

Even if you’re a small company, you’ll have better results, and happier employees, if assessments are based on a group discussion rather than the whims of a single manager.

Set goals correctly. Gather peer feedback.

Split rewards conversations from development conversations.

In fact, manager quality was the single best predictor of whether employees would stay or leave, supporting the adage that people don’t quit companies; they quit bad managers.

The research showed eight common attributes shared by high-scoring managers and not exhibited by low-scoring managers: The 8 Project Oxygen Attributes

- Be a good coach.
- Empower the team and do not micromanage.
- Express interest/concern for team members’ success and personal wellbeing.
- Be very productive/results-oriented.
- Be a good communicator—listen and share information.
- Help the team with career development.
- Have a clear vision/strategy for the team.
- Have important technical skills that help advise the team.

Sample Feedback Questionnaire

- My manager gives me actionable feedback that helps me improve my performance.
- My manager does not “micromanage” (i.e., get involved in details that should be handled at other levels).
- My manager shows consideration for me as a person.
- My manager keeps the team focused on our priority results/deliverables.
- My manager regularly shares relevant information from his/her manager and senior leadership.
- My manager has had a meaningful discussion with me about my career development in the past six months.
- My manager communicates clear goals for our team
- My manager has the technical expertise required to effectively manage me

- I would recommend my manager to other Googlers

Building a Learning Institution Your best teachers already work for you; let them teach!

The average employee received thirty-one hours of training over the year, which works out to more than thirty minutes each week. Most of that money and time is wasted. Not because the training is necessarily bad, but because there's no measure of what is actually learned and what behaviors change as a result.

Most organizations measure training based on the time spent, not on the behaviors changed.

It's a better investment to deliver less content and have people retain it, than it is to deliver more hours of "learning" that is quickly forgotten.

Donald Kirkpatrick, who was a professor at the University of Wisconsin and past president of the American Society for Training and Development, came up with a model that prescribed four levels of measurement in learning programs: reaction, learning, behavior, and results.

Pay Unfairly. It's okay to pay two people in the same job completely different amounts

Recruiting, you'll recall, always comes first, because if you're hiring people who are better than yourself, most other people issues tend to sort themselves out.

It came down to four principles: Pay unfairly. Celebrate accomplishment, not compensation. Make it easy to spread the love. Reward thoughtful failure.

Fairness is when pay is commensurate with contribution.

We're not very good at predicting what will make us happy, or how happy it will make us.

The joy of money is fleeting, but memories last forever.

Simple, public recognition is one of the most effective and most underutilized management tools.

We found that trusting people to do the right thing generally results in them doing the right thing.

The biggest lesson was that rewarding smart failure was vital to support a culture of risk-taking.

As Larry often says: If your goals are ambitious and crazy enough, even failure will be a pretty good achievement.

The Best Things in Life Are Free (or Almost Free) Most of Google's people programs can be duplicated by anyone

We use our people programs to achieve three goals: efficiency, community, and innovation.

Why would we care how many hours people work, if their output is good?

It's not up to us to tell people when they should be creative.

At Google we believe in transparency as one of our cultural cornerstones.

"New grad hires who didn't understand their job expectations left... 5x more often than those who did."

Freedom is not absolute, and being part of a team, an organization, means that on some level you've agreed to give up some small measure of personal freedom in exchange for the promise of accomplishing more together than you could alone.

Can Do Starting Tomorrow. Ten steps to transform your team and your workplace

Building immense bureaucracies to control their people. These control structures are an admission that people can't be trusted.

The "low-freedom" extreme is the command-and-control organization, where employees are managed tightly, worked intensely, and discarded. The "high-freedom"

Extreme is based on liberty, where employees are treated with dignity and given a voice in how the company evolves.

Here are steps that will transform your team or workplace:

- Give your work meaning.
- Trust your people.
- Hire only people who are better than you.
- Don't confuse development with managing performance.
- Be frugal and generous.
- Pay unfairly.
- Nudge.
- Manage the rising expectations
- Enjoy
- Be open to crazy ideas
- Find some way to say yes