The toxicity of forced company culture and the need to move to an authentic culture

With many companies offering similar work, similar progression opportunities and a similar level of job satisfaction, the challenge has always been how to entice the most talented staff - especially those who are just entering the workforce, fresh with ambition and an understanding of newer, emerging technologies.

Temps de lecture : minute

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The answer to that has been a surge in perks and benefits - such as cars, gadgets, beer fridges, ping pong tables - anything to make the company feel like the most exciting one to work at. And the result was an integration of employees' personal and working lives, as offices strived to recreate an atmosphere of youth and enjoyment that were typically not what to expect from a professional environment.

Many corporate businesses took this as the cookie cutter approach, offering these perks as the defining aspect of their 'company culture'. While these perks certainly appealed to a younger, millennial workforce and helped to secure talent, these benefits are only surface level and don't offer any meaningful connection to the business, just a 'forced culture' that attempts to mimic a genuine one.

These perks and benefits can also breed a toxic culture of entitlement. Believing that they are owed early Thursday drinks, cars, phones and gadgets, encourages some employees to make decisions based on their own personal gain, not for the benefit of the company they work for.
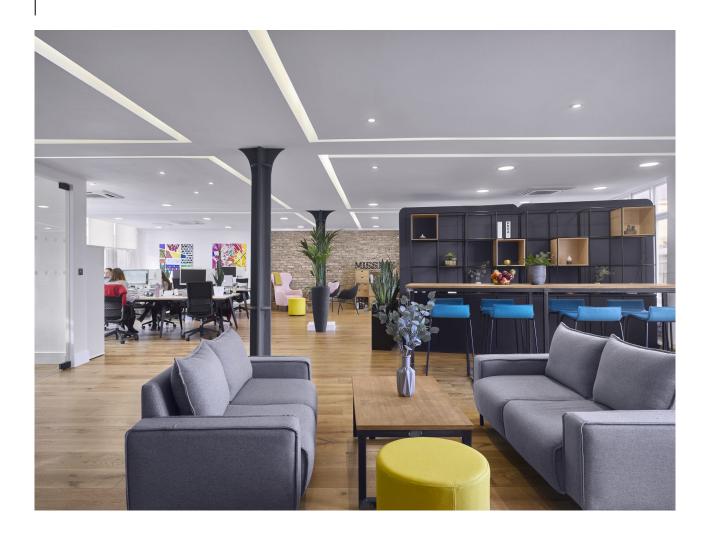
This 'forced' company culture, based on superficial benefits, is easiest to spot in times of hardship and crisis. When the company is faced with a situation out of their control, such as the current pandemic, there are inevitably unavoidable and difficult decisions to be made. Do employees stand by the business and each other, rallying around to support? Or do they take the first opportunity to look for an alternative when certain perks have to be stripped away?

An authentic company culture is first and foremost about vulnerability, the ability to show it and openly discuss difficult and deeper issues with your colleagues.

It requires a willingness to do so from those in charge at the very top. There should be honesty and authenticity from the top down, helping others within the business to be the same and encourage those values within new joiners. If you're transparent with your employees and invite

open conversations on each person's strengths and weaknesses, then they will grow to develop a level of self satisfaction unmatched by any amount of free coffee and biscuits.

Companies with an authentic culture unite people around a goal

Employees should have the autonomy to make their own decisions, which with the right culture, will not only be for their benefit but for that business as a whole as teams work more collaboratively for a common purpose. When their own goals align with that of the business, they have a sense of belonging that goes further than the pay cheque at the end of

the month.

In smaller businesses, this is especially crucial as they require that level of commitment from all their employees in order to successfully grow. When making hiring decisions, cultural fit is key. Naturally, being skilled at the job is essential, however if you hire someone purely based on performance, then you can easily bring in someone who doesn't fit the core values of the business.

> ## Currently, remote working questions this sense of belonging

Employees no longer have access to the surface level perks that their companies offered, and are now looking for more meaning from their work to reflect the changes in the work/life balance that everyone is experiencing in the pandemic.

With a lack of genuine interaction with their company, they create a more transactional relationship with work and it becomes harder to engage teams. With many businesses looking to decide on the ratio of remote working and in-office working in the New Year, they need to be looking at the benefits of interaction in connecting with an overarching purpose.

Reaching authenticity will always be a continuous movement within the company and the key aspect is to keep core values tailored to the business and stay true to them.

> ## If you can do this, then a beer or prosecco tap is simply an added extra

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