

**This document is a shared set of values for the Product and Engineering team.**

**Why do values and culture matter?**

*Why is culture so important to a business? Here is a simple way to frame it. The stronger the culture, the less corporate process a company needs. When the culture is strong, you can trust everyone to do the right thing. People can be independent and autonomous. They can be entrepreneurial. And if we have a company that is entrepreneurial in spirit, we will be able to take our next “(wo)man on the moon” leap. Ever notice how families or tribes don’t require much process? That is because there is such a strong trust and culture that it supersedes any process. In organizations (or even in a society) where culture is weak, you need an abundance of heavy, precise rules and processes. - Brian Chesky*

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## Company Values:

- Transform Customers' Lives
- Build A Legacy
- Think Differently, Act Together
- Be Passionately Curious

## Values:

- We have a set of team values that drive how we work.
  - **Growth & Teamwork:**
    - Growth Mindset
    - Team player
    - Holds themselves accountable
  - **Execution:**
    - Doers
    - Favors pragmatism over idealism
    - Willing to jump on an emergency anytime
    - Believes in maintainable code and testing
    - Great work ethic (Grit)
  - **Behavioral Skills:**
    - No ego
    - Positive attitude
    - Startup pace
    - Excited about our mission
    - Integrity

## Communication:

- Hierarchy of communication (most → least urgent): Face to face → Call → Text → Slack → Email.
- In emergency (site down, critical bug on the site), immediately grab someone or call them. Take action ASAP!
- Push vs Pull:
  - If you get an email, there needs to be a written acknowledgement (“got it, ETA EOW” or “needs investigation, let me give you an update by EOD”).
- It is the expectation of the team that you push problems/updates/etc to others. It is not your lead’s responsibility to ask you for updates or find problems. You should proactively raise problems as soon as possible. Speed matters. This makes team-wide communication faster and more efficient.
- Over-communicate:

- Under-communication can lead to poor execution. If team members lack information or context then they may make suboptimal decisions. They may also miss the opportunity for healthy debate or brainstorming that leads to improved decision making. You should over communicate via email/slack
- Less is more:
  - Make things easy for the other person to understand
  - Think about who the receiver of information is, and what information/context they will need when you communicate to them

## 10X vs 10%<sup>1</sup>

- [Prioritization](#) can be the difference between a good team and an exceptional team.
- Always ask and understand why this is the most important thing you should be working on.
- Focus matters. Hyper-focus puts our efforts on the 1 or 2 initiatives that move the business forward.

## What is an Effective Engineer?<sup>2</sup>

1. Focus on High Leverage Activities
2. Optimize for Learning
3. Prioritize Regularly
4. Invest in Iteration Speed
5. Measure what you want to Improve
6. Validate your ideas early and often
7. Improve project estimation skills
8. Balance Quality with Pragmatism
9. Minimize Operational Burden
10. Invest in your team's Growth

## Meetings

- Some meetings are high leverage:
  - 1:1s
  - Team meetings
  - Daily standup
  - Retros/5-whys
- Some meetings are low leverage:
  - Recurring check-in meetings (can be eliminated with proactive communication)

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.kennorton.com/essays/10x-not-10-percent.html>

<sup>2</sup> Effective Engineer, Edmond Lau (<http://www.effectiveengineer.com/>, <https://www.effectiveengineer.com/book>)

- Status meetings (can be eliminated with better process)
  - Meetings with a purpose not aligned to our goals
- A meeting should have a goal. If your day is full of meetings then those meetings should move the company forward in the same degree than it would have if you spent your day cranking on code (or something else).
- Every calendar invite created should include an agenda of what will be covered in the meeting. This will help members prep beforehand, and allow attendees to understand why this meeting is or is not worth their time.
- Be on time
  - Some companies always start every meeting 5 minutes late. This is a waste of everyone's time. If we create a culture of starting meetings on time then we can avoid this.
  - It is not polite to have others wait for you.
  - If you are running a meeting with 10 people, don't spend the first 3 minutes setting up...that wasted 30 minutes of people's time!
- Have your laptop closed and be fully engaged.
- If you attended a meeting and did not say anything meaningful, learn anything, or receive action items then should you have been in that meeting?

### Fix problems when they are small:

- Some teams have huge problems or so many problems that it seems insurmountable. We should have a culture of continuous improvement via 1:1s, retros on features, and [5 whys](#) on problems. When we see a problem we should raise it, talk about it, and prioritize it.

### Goal-oriented:

- We have company, team, and individual goals. Our work should be aligned with those. If they are not or they are deviating from them, then this should be escalated immediately.
- Goals should be discussed with your manager, written down, and revisited frequently. A goal that is not written down is simply a wish.

### 1:1s:

- This is your time and agenda
- Invest time in making this meeting effective for both you and your manager. Don't come unprepared.
- This will be weekly
- This is one of your most important meetings each week:
  - Here is a great blog post on [why 1:1s matter](#)

- Expect a running google doc so you have a place to share objectives with your manager, and so you can revisit previous action items, and make sure you are progressing

## Servant Leadership<sup>3</sup>

- The leader is the servant
- We are here to help you achieve your work and career goals by investing in your development.
- We are here to take roadblocks out of your way and build a team that trusts each other
- As you grow and the team bonds, we will continue to increase our capacity to win
- Qualities:<sup>4</sup>
  - Values diverse opinions
  - Cultivates a culture of trust
  - Develops other leaders
  - Helps people with life issues (not just work issues)
  - Encourages
  - Sells instead of tells
  - Thinks long-term
  - Thinks “you,” not “me.”
  - Acts with humility

## Team Effectiveness<sup>5</sup>

- An effective team always starts with trust.

$$\text{Trust} = \frac{\text{Credibility} + \text{Reliability} + \text{Authenticity}}{\text{Perception of Self Interest}}$$

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- This allows us to have healthy debates
- Where we can give commitments
- That we hold ourselves accountable for
- Which will lead to results

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.greenleaf.org/what-is-servant-leadership/>, Robert K. Greenleaf

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.slideshare.net/rcafriz/servant-leadership-43978508>

<sup>5</sup> The Five Dysfunctions of a Team, Patrick Lencioni

<sup>6</sup> <http://firstround.com/review/use-this-equation-to-determine-diagnose-and-repair-trust/>



## Hiring:

- We want to hire the best. If you know great people, we will invest in getting to know them (whether they are looking for a job or not).
- We invest a lot of time in hiring because every hire matters

## Vacation:

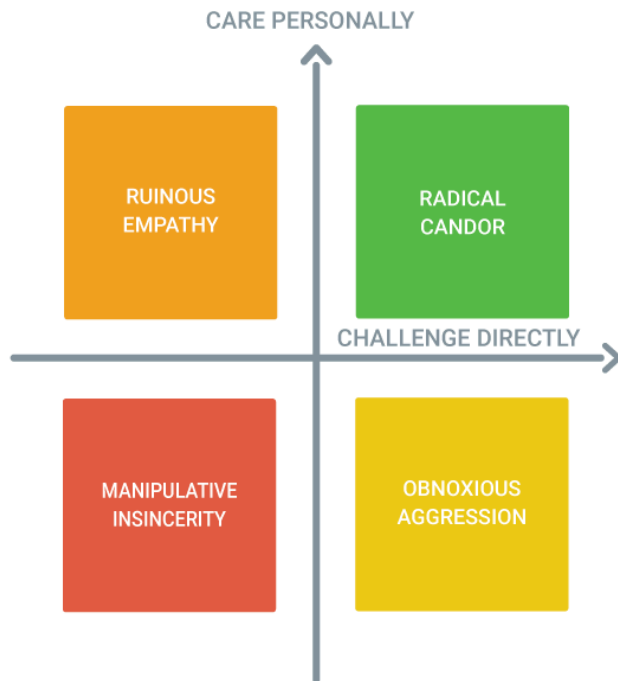
- We try to protect people's time off so they are not thinking of work while recharging.
- Your manager will work with you to make sure this happens.

## Feedback:

- The best way to grow is to ask for feedback all the time. 1:1s are a great opportunity to ask for feedback.
- Please give feedback to your manager about the team, the company, and them as well. We need your help to get better!
- Self-reflection at the end of the week or in timely feature retrospection is a valuable use of your time. Taking Strengths finder or [MBTI](#) can give you more self-awareness to your potential strengths and blind spots.
- We want you to grow and we care about your success. We've found radical candor to be a great framework for feedback<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Radical Candor, Kim Scott



### Growth Mindset<sup>8</sup>

- Get 1% better everyday
- Mistakes are normal. Never hide them. Let's learn from them together as a team.
- There is nothing you can't learn. Let's work together to make the impossible reality
- Every quarter, you should look back and feel like you really progressed in your personal development

### Make others better:

- Go the extra mile to help others
- Surface problems and drive solutions
- Mentor, advise, and help everyone grow

### Managers & Team Leads:

- A manager is a coach. They must care deeply for their team, coach aggressively, and push you to grow.
- Engineers are students of software engineering. Product Managers of product management. Similarly, people managers must be students of management and put effort into learning that discipline.

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<sup>8</sup> Growth Mindset, Carol Dweck



## Fun:

- Life is too short for work to not be fun
- Expect a lot of cheering, clapping, and laughing
- Look for ways to give back to the community - especially in areas related to our company's mission. (but not limited to)

## Growth:

- The company is growing fast and we expect both you, and the team as a whole to grow at a steep trajectory. If you're not accomplishing more here in a month than anywhere previous in your career then something is wrong!
- When you are out of your comfort zone or pushing new skills, we will be involved to help you succeed. If this feels like micro-management then we should talk about it. We are a fast growing company and you want to grow so we will always push you to new challenges so this will be a common occurrence.
- We invest in our growth. Your manager will work with you on a personal development plan so that every quarter is a big step forward in your career.

## Chaos:

- Fast growing startups can feel like organized chaos. Sometimes, just chaos. This means we can move fast and change direction quickly. This can also be jarring. Your manager and teammates are here to help you adjust.
- As an organization, we want to always move fast, but improve our process. Push us to get better every quarter.

## Grit:

- Working at a startup is hard work. We agree with the studies that talent is not the determining factor in success, but passion and perseverance is.

## Important/Urgent Matrix:

- There are so many things you can possibly work on at the same time. This is a simple framework to help us prioritize the most important work.

# THE EISENHOWER BOX

	URGENT	NOT URGENT
IMPORTANT	<b>DO</b> <i>Do it now.</i>  Write article for today.	<b>DECIDE</b> <i>Schedule a time to do it.</i>  Exercising. Calling family and friends. Researching articles. Long-term biz strategy.
NOT IMPORTANT	<b>DELEGATE</b> <i>Who can do it for you?</i>  Scheduling interviews. Booking flights. Approving comments. Answering certain emails. Sharing articles.	<b>DELETE</b> <i>Eliminate it.</i>  Watching television. Checking social media. Sorting through junk mail.

*"What is important is seldom urgent and what is urgent is seldom important."  
-Dwight Eisenhower, 34th President of the United States*

## DRI & Accountability:

- DRI = directly responsible individual
- Each meeting should end with a list of action items, dates, and a single DRI
- We should hold ourselves and each other accountable for doing great work
  - We can only get 1% better each day by setting goals and measuring ourselves against them

## Buy > Build Culture:

- Let's debate our core competencies and focus our limited resources in those areas
- For non-core competencies, we should buy them
- For example, we buy hosting from Heroku and AWS vs. hosting our content/building our own servers

## Be a Multiplier<sup>9</sup>

- What type of leader do you want to be? The multiplier or an accidental diminisher?

Diminisher		Multiplier	
<b>The Empire Builder</b>	Hoards resources and underutilizes talent	<b>The Talent Magnet</b>	Attracts talented people and uses them and their highest point of contribution
<b>The Tyrant</b>	Creates a tense environment that suppresses people's thinking and capability	<b>The Liberator</b>	Creates an intense environment that requires people's best thinking and work
<b>The Know-It-All</b>	Gives directives that showcase how much they know	<b>The Challenger</b>	Defines an opportunity that causes people to stretch
<b>The Decision Maker</b>	Makes centralized, abrupt decisions that confuse the organization	<b>The Debate Maker</b>	Drives sound decisions through rigorous debate
<b>The Micro-manager</b>	Drives results through their personal involvement	<b>The Investor</b>	Gives other people the ownership for results and invests in their success

Source: pg 23

If you have any questions or feedback...please comment in this document directly. We'll consider adding your input to our user guide!

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<sup>9</sup> Multipliers: How the Best Leaders Make Everyone Smarter, Liz Wiseman, Greg McKeown  
<https://medium.com/@hannahsalzl/lessons-from-multiplying-a-summary-and-analysis-of-themes-from-multipliers-by-liz-wiseman-5152988a0843>