

Finding the Right Company Culuture

6 Ways To Learn About It

You want to find a place to work where you feel you belong, right? You want to do work you enjoy alongside people you like. Your happiness and success depend on both.

It comes down to finding a company with the right culture for you.

Company culture is a hot topic among both companies and individuals, but it can be difficult to define.

I had the opportunity to talk with [Josh Bersin](#), founder and principal at Bersin by Deloitte, about engagement and company culture. Bersin and Deloitte recently conducted [research on company culture and engagement](#), and found these two factors are the most important issues facing leadership today. Here's the headline:

In an era of heightened corporate transparency, greater workforce mobility, and severe skills shortages, culture, engagement, and retention have emerged as top issues for business leaders.

Identifying the right culture impacts you as a job seeker and employee so let's take a deeper dive and look at six things Josh Bersin recommends you do!

So What Is Company Culture?

The best way to describe it is to talk about the "artifacts of culture," or the examples of culture, says Josh Bersin, founder and principal at Bersin by Deloitte, a provider of research and advisory services focused on corporate learning. Culture can be represented by the company's facilities, charismatic executives annual events or awards received.

And as difficult as it is for a company to define its culture, it's even more challenging for a candidate to learn about it. Bersin says the best way to discover the authentic company culture is to observe it:

Learn A Lot By Looking Around

Bersin often tours companies he consults with and says he can tell in less than two minutes what the culture of the company is like. "Culture is something you can feel," he says. Do people look excited? Are they talking and collaborating? Does it look like the company is investing money in the facility? Look around. Are there people your age who you would enjoy working with? As a candidate, pay close attention to these types of details as a way of assessing your fit within the company.

You'll also need to ask questions to learn more about the company. "Candidates should have their own set of questions. Early in your career, sometimes it can be intimidating" Bersin says, but he adds that there are many questions to help all levels of employees uncover the company culture.

Question If the Company Understands Your Needs

Early in your career, look for an organization that understands your unique needs. Bersin suggests looking for companies that have programs for young careerists, such as onboarding and career development programs for new people. Bersin also recommends asking questions such as: What does an early career look like here? How will I be evaluated? What have other people my age done during their first two or three years here? Some progressive employers even offer rotational development programs.

Later in your career, Bersin says you may want answers to these questions: Is this a company that builds leadership? What can I do at this stage? Can somebody come in from the outside and instantly build enough credibility, or does he/she have to be here a long time?

Talk To Employees

There is no better insight than speaking with someone who works in the company. Bersin recommends asking the recruiter or interviewer if you can talk to other people who work there. If so, ask them how they got ahead and what developmental experiences they had. Other questions to ask: How easy is it to make friends? What assignments and projects were you able to take on? What do you do when things don't go well around here?

Technically, you can also identify employees in advance of a formal interview, by researching the company on LinkedIn, and ask those same questions.

Ask: What Will I Learn?

It isn't just the warm and fuzzy stuff that matters. One question that Bersin recommends asking is: What am I going to learn in my career two to three years from now as a result of working for you? It should go without saying that you commit to giving the company 100 percent of your effort. Bersin says he can look back on each job during his career and "point to exactly what I learned during those periods of time and contributed to who I am today."

If you are new in the workplace, understand that your job isn't just about how much money you'll make, the fun you'll have or if you enjoy the work. "You want to look back knowing what you got out of that experience," Bersin says.

Don't Fear Asking Questions

Do you feel like asking too many or too tough questions could turn off the interviewer? Don't worry about that. Bersin says he likes being asked questions that challenge him or that he may not be able to easily answer. It shows you are interested, serious and actually did some research.

Bersin uses the example: If you ask about the patterns of successful leaders, a recruiter might say, "That's a great question; let me connect you with someone who can answer that." This can result in the opportunity to speak with a person you normally wouldn't have met.

Research Online

You can also research companies using Glassdoor, LinkedIn and Facebook, Bersin says. And don't forget to check past and present employees. Look for patterns or trends in where employees came from. "Some companies tend to have, for better or worse, a pattern for hiring similar people from similar backgrounds and experience or companies," Bersin says. This could indicate how difficult it may be for you to get in if you are not from the same groups.

Is there a manifesto or videos of employees on the company's website? Bersin has noticed more companies are attempting to capture the culture with these types of tools.

"Research the stock price and where the company is financially and where they have been," Bersin recommends. Any changes in these numbers could show an investment in the company culture. Bersin notes that companies that recently experienced a crisis may be poised to make the right types of cultural change.

By conducting research, making observations and asking smart, insightful questions, you should be able to determine if these are "your people." In other words, Bersin asks: "Do you feel like you belong there?"

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