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TED^x Youngstown **F.A.Q.**

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1) “Were you really a barista? And an angry one??”

Oh yes, the opener is a very true story.

I served some time at a well-known coffeeshop wearing a lovely green apron as a part-time barista for about a year of my life, and I was probably one serious sit-down conversation from being fired multiple times.

I tend to be a high-performer in life, and to this day I remember trying reasonably hard to be a decent barista... but looking back, it was like my body and behavior just refused to play along.

I thought I was hiding my antipathy towards serving coffee reasonably well... turns out, not so much.

Now I realize that most of us think we can be pretty good actors when it comes to our work—we can “play the work game” and fake it, even just a little, and people won’t notice.

This is usually a lie—humans are VERY good B.S. detectors.

2) “You address a very heartfelt problem with a very mechanical metaphor: an ‘operating system’—why?”

In the TEDx, I didn’t have much time to get into the details of this metaphor, but there’s a LOT of richness and depth to this analogy.

Many people speak of “company culture” in phrases like “the way we do things around here,” or “the sum of all beliefs and communication.”

These things are true, but we’ve found the metaphor of an Operating System to be more complete and helpful in understanding the complexity of what company culture actually IS and how it functions in day-to-day practice.

Just like the OS in a piece of technology, culture is invisible, ignored, and always on. It’s also (historically at least) quite difficult to “upgrade.” But when we start to understand culture as a company’s OS—as “that thing ‘running in the background’ that dictates HOW we work”—it becomes easier to positively impact it.

We begin to see that our culture/OS (the way we work) can be upgraded, but it will take a new “source code” (in organizations, this happens via new language) to “run” a different OS.

3) “You refer to top-down command hierarchy as a ‘technology’ — why?”

The dictionary defines technology as "the application of science, especially to industrial or commercial objectives."

When Frederick Winslow Taylor codified his theories of work in his 1911 book *Principles Of Scientific Management*, he was effectively executing the very definition of technology—applying science in order to (theoretically, at least) make business work better.

We don't think of things like “managers,” “org charts,” or “performance reviews” as invented technology, but they quite literally ARE. These are all attempts to apply science—specifically, industrial-age, factory-mindset science—to the way we work.

Top-down command hierarchy has completely run its course as an effective technology. Using it in an organization today is the equivalent of using an obscenely-expensive version of Windows 95 on our devices in an iOS/Android world.

4) “How do I help my organization create a Magnet (noble cause)?”

An effective Magnet (noble cause) is a VERY simple statement, but that doesn't mean it is easy to create. Here are a few tips to get your organization started...

1) MAKE IT SIMPLE SIMPLE SIMPLE

A good Magnet (noble cause) is one SHORT sentence (you can see some of our favorite examples below).

People need to be able to remember it.

They also need to be able to repeat it readily and easily.

2) MAKE IT DEEPLY IMPORTANT (FOR SOME)

It needs to encapsulate a cause that is important enough for everyone in the organization to get SO excited about they'll actually be willing to endure pain on behalf of it.

The word “passion” in its true form (meaning “suffering”) is applicable here. All paths in life require some amount of hardship, struggle, and pain. (Whatever you're doing at work right now is painful in some way, is it not?) People need to be passionate enough about the cause that they're willing to struggle on its behalf.

We say it needs to be important “FOR SOME,” because it should also be a bit polarizing—the people you want to work with you should be “switched on” by it and drawn in by its magnetic power.

The people who aren’t turned on by it? It’s better for them AND for you if they go work somewhere else.

3) MAKE IT UN-CHECK-OFF-ABLE

A good Magnet (noble cause) can never be “checked off” as completed as long as your organization exists.

In other words, if your Magnet (noble cause) were to be “completed,” you would be out of business and you’d have to find something else to do... and you’d be ecstatic about it!

*** EXAMPLES ***

A few examples we like are:

- ♦ Create a world where everyone can love work (#lovework, our company)
- ♦ Use the power of business to build a better world (Barry-Wehmiller)
- ♦ Reconnect people through transportation and bring communities together (Lyft)
- ♦ Help people listen to whatever music they want, whenever they want, wherever they want (Spotify)

- ✦ Improve the health and happiness of the world (Headspace)
- ✦ Help create a world where you can belong anywhere (Airbnb)

ADDITIONAL NOTE

To learn more about the idea of a “noble cause,” read Chapter 9 in the fabulous book Tribal Leadership.

5) “How do I help my organization create Riverbanks / collectively-agreed-upon principles?”

Full Riverbanks will look like a Culture Book/Culture Deck—this is a fairly comprehensive “Constitution” that outlines in detail all the organization’s most important “hows.” (Download ours [here](#).)

But you don’t have to start with that; in fact, we’d recommend you don’t. Start smaller, by creating something we call Vital Behaviors.

Many organizations have a list of “core values” that have been somewhat articulated and defined. If this is the case, the best place to start in creating Vital Behaviors is with those. (A group of people from your organization likely spent a considerable amount of time and energy articulating those things, so use them as a starting point if you have them!) But as-is, they are not likely to be actionable/behavioral enough to truly act as Riverbanks, so we need to turn them into Vital Behaviors.

Vital Behaviors are a list of 3 to 7 statements (the closer you can get to 3, the better!) that describe the behaviors you want every person who works in your organization to strive to embody.

Values that currently exist are likely to be articulated as nouns—“Excellence” / “Customer Service” / “Integrity”—and will need to be switched to active verb statements that are behavioral in nature to become Vital Behaviors. Once re-articulated in this way, you’ll then

describe what each Vital Behavior looks like when done well with 3 bullets underneath.

For example, a value of “Customer Service” might become...

Wow customers every time

When done well, this looks like:

- ✦ **Going above and beyond with a customer to provide something that surprises and delights them**
 - ✦ **Customers actually use the word “Wow” when they interact with me**
 - ✦ **We hear from a customer about something that impacted them positively**
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Once you’ve articulated your Vital Behaviors, put them into a one-page PDF so people can print them or put them on the desktop of their computer and reference them frequently. (You can download our one-pager [here](#) if you want an example.)

Then—this is the most important part—add 5-10 minutes into your weekly check-in meeting for the team to discuss/share: “Who’s seen someone on our team LIVE one of our Vital Behaviors in the last week? What did it look like?”

Simply by asking this question, you are starting to “hack” the old OS and install new “code!”

NOTE: If you don’t have anything resembling core values and need to start from scratch, and/or just want more information about this, download our full process right [here](#).

6) “How do I help people in my organization start to ‘open their batteries?’”

First, don’t start with “all those other people”—start with yourself. For most of us, our personal Energy Intelligence is very low, and not through any fault of our own—it’s just not something we’ve learned!

So, we get started by opening our own battery to look inside it.

By far, the best way we’ve discovered to do this is through an assessment instrument called Strengthscope®. Despite its name, it’s NOT designed to measure what you are good at or bad at, but what specific activities make up the ingredients of your battery!

If you’re ready to move into a way of working that gives you energy, helps you be at your best regularly, and creates more great days at work, start with our “Upgrade Your Energy” course — access it online [right here](#).

If you’re ready to discuss how to bring this into your organization, the #lovework team would love to talk with you—please email us at hello@lovework.team or give us a call at +1 (855) 367-4493.

7) “Can the future of work really be heliocentric? Isn’t that a bit idealistic?”

The way we work today has been entirely invented by humans just like you and me. The systems in place that run our organizations were created by humans just like you and me. The rules we follow (often blindly) were made up by humans just like you and me.

I mean this in the most objective way possible: there is literally nothing stopping the human species from making new rules about how we work with each other.

Enough of us just have to say, “The way we are working isn’t working” and then decide to do something different.

Many, many companies are already taking this alternative approach to organizing, and even using traditional metrics like turnover, revenue, profits, and productivity, they are experiencing results that obliterate their old-system counterparts.

A heliocentric model of org design isn’t crazy; what would actually be absurd is to rely on outdated and inefficient technology to take us into the future...!



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