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**An investigation into whether organisational culture is directly linked to
motivation and performance through looking at Google Inc.**

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Abstract

This article examines the relationship that exists between organisational culture and performance, and how these factors influence employee motivation. The issues are discussed at length, firstly through a review of the current literature relating to the topic, and secondly by means of investigating the organisational culture of Google.

Through examining the work of Denison (1990) and Truskie (1999) it is shown that some authors believe certain cultural aspects are important for organisational cultures to be successful. The frameworks of Martin (1992) and Goffee and Jones (1996) show that strong cultures exist where employees' values are aligned to the values of the organisation. Though looking at the empirical evidence of Kotter and Heskett (1992), it is shown that there is indeed a link between strong organisational cultures and performance, but only strategically appropriate cultures are successful. Finally, it is suggested that there has been a trivialisation of organisational culture, (Alvesson, 2002) and culture is a facet of an organisation not an object of an organisation.

Consequently, the manifestations of Google's culture is analysed by evaluating the artefacts at Google (Gagliardi, 1992). Through looking at the various aspects of Google, it is shown that Google has an integrated culture (Martin, 1992), and one which comprises of four key elements; mission, innovation, fun and reward. Through selecting the four core components which summarise Google's culture, it is proven that the work of Denison (1990) and Truskie (1999) is fallible as the key to Google's success differs to those suggested by the authors. Furthermore the culture of Google shows the importance of having a strategically appropriate culture, a culture which 'fits' the needs of the organisation and the marketplace.

Introduction

As Joanna Martin (1992) comments, the objective of studying organisational culture is to help understand organisational life more. Understanding organisational life is important as it is widely acknowledged that organisational cultures have an impact upon company performance (Denison, 1990; Kotter and Heskett, 1992; Truskie, 1999; Schein, 2004). However some critics, such as Alvesson (2002) cite that the extent to which organisational cultures have a direct link upon performance is somewhat ambiguous. These issues will be discussed at length, firstly through a review of current literature, and secondly by means of investigating the organisational culture of Google. Through the literature review and the case study, the importance of 'culture fit' will be demonstrated as a key concept in how performance and motivation can be affected by organisational cultures.

Literature Review

An introduction to Culture

It is important that what is meant by the term organisational culture is understood before looking at the relationship between organisational culture and motivation and performance. Within the last twenty years there has been a great deal of writing concerning culture within organisations. Anthony (1994) believes that culture is an abstract and general concept, a term that is used to encompass many aspects of organisations. Although there is considerable diversity within the literature relating to organisational cultures, many authors recognise that essentially, cultures consist of both visible and invisible aspects (Kotter and Heskett, 1992). Furthermore, numerous authors adhere to Schien's fundamental definition of organisational culture. Schein (1985, 2004) defines culture as consisting of levels ranging from overt outward manifestations of culture to the deep underlying assumptions that drive the organisations action.

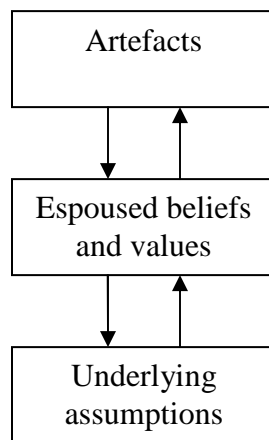


Figure 1.0 (Levels of Culture. Schein, 2004, Organizational culture and leadership, 27).

Within Schein's model of culture, 'artefacts' refers to the visible structures and processes, 'espoused beliefs and values' to the strategies, goals and philosophies, and 'underlying assumptions' to the unconscious beliefs, perceptions, thoughts and feelings of individuals within organisations (2004: 27). Thus, Schein's model helps demonstrate that culture is

something of great importance to organisations as it is something that can either unite or alienate individuals.

Schein's model is not only a useful tool for analysing organisational culture, but it also demonstrates the difficulty in deciphering culture from an external perspective. Despite this fact, countless research has been carried out into organisational cultures, how cultures are unique to organisations and whether there is a link between organisational effectiveness and culture (Denison, 1990; Kotter and Heskett, 1994). Some of the research has offered suggestions in how to improve organisational culture and certain writers have suggested that particular elements need to be prevalent within organisational cultures for the cultures to be effective (Denison, 1990; Truskie, 1999).

United cultures

Culture is by no means a superficial concept, but a term used to describe a dynamic part of all organisations. As cultures exist within all organisations, it stands to reason that some organisational cultures are better than others. Cultures where employees' goals are aligned to the organisations goals are often thought of as 'successful' cultures (Kotter and Heskett, 1994). Martin (1992) refers to cultures where employees are unified and there is no collective dissent as 'integrated'. Within this framework, Martin (1992) recognises that basic values and assumptions are shared and enacted by all members of the culture, and the members know what they do and why they do it. In contrast to the integrated culture, Martin proposes two other perspectives of organisational culture; 'fragmented' when there is little consensus between employees organisational culture and 'differentiated' when the organisational values are only embraced within parts of the organisation. Through examining these three perspectives, it can be seen that the integrated perspective is inevitably the most rewarding in terms of organisational cohesion.

Martin's integrationist perspective shares some similarities with the cultural model which Goffee and Jones proposed in 1996. Goffee and Jones (1996) simplified culture into two

dimensions; sociability and solidarity, and created a matrix using these dimensions. The matrix suggests that four cultures exist; cultures which are 'fragmented' (low sociability and low solidarity), 'mercenary' (high sociability and low solidarity), 'networked' (high solidarity and low sociability) and finally; cultures in which employees have a high level of sociability and solidarity are referred to as 'communal' cultures. Within communal cultures, employees get the job done efficiently and effectively and help each other succeed. This model can be seen to have some similarities with Martin because both models recognise that organisational cultures do exist where employees' values are aligned to the organisations and where communication within the organisation is effective.

Aspects of effective cultures

Whilst Martin (1992) refers to the most espoused for cultures as 'integrated', and Goffee and Jones (1996) as 'communal', Denison (1990) refers to effective organisations as having corporate cultures which consist of four factors; involvement, consistency, adaptability and mission. In Denison's model involvement refers to employees having responsibility, being involved in decision making and thus being committed to their work. Consistency implies that values and expectation are aligned within the organisations. Adaptability infers that the organisation is able to adapt its behaviour, structures and systems when there is need to. Finally, through the final dimension of mission, Denison refers to the existence of a shared definition of organisational purpose. Denison concludes that the most desirable organisational cultures integrate these four values of involvement, consistency, adaptability and mission.

Denison's (1990) work on the effectiveness of organisational culture is reflected through the later work of Truskie (1999) in what he refers to as 'high-performance organizational cultures'. Truskie's work has striking similarities to that of Denison's, as Truskie identifies that an 'integrated and balanced culture' exists when four key elements are at play, all of which complement each other; cooperation, consistency, achievement and inspiration (1999: 7). Truskie's 'L⁴ strategy' draws upon the positive elements of four

institutional groups: the family, social institutions, scientific institutions and law enforcement establishments. Truskie argues that organisational cultures are most enriched when the positive elements of each of these groups are combined into one culture. Truskie proposes that the positive elements of family are the caring, sharing and teamwork elements which he summarises with the term cooperation. The positive elements within social institutions are referred to as human growth and development which forms the inspirational part of model presented. Achievement and advancement are the positive elements of scientific institutions which Truskie sums up as the achievement value. Finally, the law enforcement establishments have consistency and efficiency which is summarised in the word consistency. As can be seen through looking at the four values that Truskie (1999) comes up with, and the institutions from which he draws these values, the findings are remarkably similar to those of Denison (1990).

Furthermore, Truskie (1999) expands his work in a way similar to Martin (1992) and Goffee and Jones (1996) in that he talks about different states of organisational cultures. Each of these cultures are drawn from the social groupings in which he views positive aspects thus he asserts there are cooperation cultures, inspirational cultures, achievement cultures and consistent cultures. However, Truskie maintains that organisational cultures embedded with the positive elements of each of these cultural facets are the most successful ones, drawing reference to blue-chip companies such as HP, IBM and Intel. Truskie cites that such companies are dynamic and able to adjust to the external environment effectively.

The culture and performance link

In a similar way to Denison (1990) and Truskie (1999), Kotter and Heskett (1992) go beyond describing the characteristics of organisational cultures (Martin, 1992; Goffee and Jones, 1996) and actually state that strong organisational cultures can be advantageous as they help employees align their values with the values of the organisations. Kotter and Heskett argue that this should therefore give unusually high levels of motivation, and thus the performance of the organisation as a whole is

enhanced. When performance is discussed in organisational literature, exactly what is meant by performance is somewhat ambiguous. However, in the studies conducted by Kotter and Heskett, performance was recorded as long term economic performance. Between 1987 and 1991, Kotter and Heskett carried out four empirical studies to investigate the relationship between corporate culture and long term economic performance. The studies have shown that corporate cultures can have a significant impact on a firm's long term economic performance and secondly that corporate cultures are likely to become even more significant in the success and failure of firms in the next decade (1992: 11). These findings are essential as they show empirical evidence that strong cultures, can impact upon company performance. Furthermore, the comments made by Kotter and Heskett (1992) in relation to the growing importance of corporate culture does appear to be true, as was highlighted by Truskie (1999) when he comments on the effective cultures of blue-chip companies. It appears that if blue-chip companies did not have such strong cultures, they would never have become blue-chip companies. Kotter and Heskett argue that strong cultures can have 'powerful consequences' and enable the organisation to react rapidly to the external market (1992: 8)

It has been demonstrated therefore, in respect to the relationship between organisational culture and performance, that there is considerable agreement in the rationale of Denison (1990), Kotter and Heskett (1992) and Truskie (1999). Martin (1992) and Goffee and Jones (1996) do not explicitly link culture to performance. However, the authors imply that integrated and networked cultures are essentially 'good' cultures and therefore to be aspired towards. The issue of motivation is related to culture and has been highlighted by the authors which have been considered. Motivation can be seen to be linked to culture by looking at the five sources of motivation proposed by Kanter (1989). Kanter (1989) details that employees are motivated through mission (inspiring employees to believe in the importance of their work), agenda control (enabling employees to control their careers), a share of value creation (rewarding employees for successful efforts), learning (providing learning opportunities) and reputation (giving employees opportunity to get a name for themselves). These five sources of motivation link in with the work of Denison (1990) and Truskie (1999) as all three sources focus upon the same general areas.

Consequently it can be seen that there is a link between motivation and culture, as strongly integrated cultures will often result in motivated employees.

Nevertheless, within most cultures there are normally 'ambiguities' and 'confusions' of ideology (Anthony, 1999). Organisational cultures often conflict with the culture the management envisage, resulting in subcultures within organisational cultures which have a different set of values to the corporate culture of the organisation. Organisations with cultures like this, termed as 'differentiated' by Martin (1992) generally perform less well because the subcultures work contrary to the organisations direction. Even strong cultures will typically have subcultures but the organisation will seek to reinforce its culture upon subcultures in an attempt to discourage dissent and attempt to encourage organisational unity. This is important because as Anthony (1999) concludes, organisations which are successful in the marketplace usually have corporate cultures which are unified and independent of subcultures.

Culture fit: a pragmatic analysis of culture

Although it has been shown that there are consistencies within the literature documented in this paper relating to organisational culture and performance, the link between culture and performance is not as comprehensive as some authors such as Denison (1990) and Truskie (1999) suggest. For example, although L⁴ organisational cultures (Truskie, 1999) may exist and be effective within blue-chip companies, this does not prove that L⁴ cultures are generically appropriate or if companies had similar cultures they would become blue-chip companies. Kotter and Heskett (1992) recognise this through what they call 'culture fit'. The idea of culture fit is essential to the discussion of culture and performance because it recognises that fundamentally there is not 'one best' culture. As Kotter and Heskett (1992) recount; only cultures which are strategically appropriate will have excellent performance, thus the better the cultural fit, the better the organisation will perform (Schein, 2004). When the conclusions of Denison (1990) and Truskie (1999) are evaluated in light of what Kotter and Heskett (1992) term culture fit, their work becomes much more credible. The work of Denison (1990) and Truskie (1999) is not always

appropriate, but within some industries their framework for culture will 'fit' and thus be appropriate.

However, the majority of the research which evaluates culture and suggests models and theories for improving it, comes from the view point that culture is an object which can be manipulated. From looking at Schien's (2004) model of organisational culture, the complexity of culture is shown; although artefacts can be changed, the deep underlying assumptions that exist within organisational cultures represent a greater challenge to the cultural re-engineer. Therefore, organisational culture should not be seen as merely a 'part' of the organisation, but an embodiment of what the organisation is. Smircich (1983) is one of the main proponents of this concept, arguing that organisations don't possess cultures but rather they are cultures.

Viewing culture as an embodiment of what an organisation is also of fundamental importance to Alvesson. Alvesson (2002) argues that there has been a trivialisation of organisational culture and criticises prominent proponents of organisational culture such as Schein (1985) as having focused upon superficial aspects when carrying out empirical studies. Alvesson (2002) particularly disputes the explicit link that has been made between organisational culture and performance. Literature relating to organisational culture has put an emphasis upon the positive functions of culture and in particular its relation to issues documented by Denison (1990) and Truskie (1999) such as adaptability, involvement, cooperation and inspiration. This can be seen to have led to quick fix solutions whereby organisations which lack key attributes of a successful culture simply incorporate them into their organisation in order to see improved performance.

It should be emphasised once again that organisational culture is not an object within an organisation, but cultures reflect organisations (Smircich, 1983). Because Kotter and Heskett (1992) showed that there is a relationship between organisations with a strong culture and a high performance, it could be considered that high performance organisations actually lead to strong cultures. Thus, it is not necessarily strong cultures which drive organisational performance and motivation, but good performance within a

company leads to a strong organisational culture as success unites employees in terms of beliefs and values. This view originates from the idea that as an organisation grows, the founders assert their values on the organisation, and if the organisation is successful it is likely to lead to a strong organisational culture (Schein, 2004)

Commentators on culture such as Anthony (1999), suggest that strong cultures demonstrate entrepreneurial qualities. Entrepreneurship is often something which becomes part of the organisational culture through the values of the founders. Both Denison (1990) and Truskie (1999) recognise the importance of adaptability and innovation. The ability to be able to adapt to the market place, is however a hallmark of a successful company, indeed a firm that is unable to adapt is likely to go out of business. Perhaps then the cultures within organisations reflect the external pressures of the organisation. This hypothesis complements the idea that culture fit is necessary, because if organisations need to be successful in particular areas, the culture of these organisations should reflect the needs. Furthermore, the concept that the most successful organisations have a culture which enhances their capabilities in the marketplace makes logical sense and also helps to explain why all successful organisations have unique ways of doing things. This will be shown to be the case with Google, in that they are a tremendously successful company, with a culture which helps them be successful. However cultures are not manufactured to generate success, moreover cultures become strong and successful because the culture is well matched to the needs of the marketplace.

Summary of the literature review

In conclusion therefore, it has been shown there does appear to be a link between organisational culture and performance. However as Alvesson (2002) states there has been a trivialisation of organisational culture in which culture has been used as a means of offering quick fix solutions for companies wanting to enhance company performance. Although there is value in the suggestions made by Denison (1990) and Truskie (1999) their work should not be seen as flawless. One of the problems in the discussion of organisational culture and performance is that it has produced some 'sweeping

statements' (Alvesson, 2002) about culture. To guard against such sweeping statements, Alvesson (2002) suggests a more appropriate way to look at culture is to examine specific cultural manifestations and study the consequence of the outcomes. Proceeding to examine the culture of Google in this way will show that management ideology and real culture can be very similar. As the model of Schein (1985) shows, espoused beliefs and values influence underlying assumptions, thus management ideology can impregnate culture patterns (Alvesson, 2002).

Google Case study

Methodology

Analysing through the use of a case study is coherent with other organisational theorists and complements the previously discussed literature review, enabling appropriate conclusions to be drawn. It seems most appropriate that when analysing the organisational culture of Google, it is done by looking at how the culture is manifested (Alvesson, 2002). Through looking at the outworking of Google's culture, in a number of ways including; exploring the corporate culture, the employee environment and how employees are managed, it will be considered to what extent the Google case study supports the literature outlined earlier and the view that performance, motivation and culture are related.

The information relating to Google within this paper has come from a variety sources, ranging from academic journals and books to online blogs from ex-Google employees. Some of the most insightful information on Google has come from reports and interviews with Google employees. Because the author has not carried out any of the research, there are a number of limitations to this study which are included in the limitations section near the end of this paper. Whilst all the information from within this case has come from journals, newspapers, websites, television interviews and radio broadcasts, there is an apparent lack of thorough academic investigations into Google's culture. Consequently this paper brings together much of the current research on Google, drawing on the strengths of a variety of resources.

The Google case will be analysed in a similar way to other writers on culture; through dividing the case into a number of related sections. Some authors such as Nelson and Quick (2006) analyse case studies through dividing the study into various time periods. Whilst this longitudinal method may be appropriate for companies with an extensive history, because Google is new company the proceeding analysis will not be carried out on a historical basis. Furthermore, analysing Google historically was not possible as that

approach would have required time and resources not available during this investigation. The analysis within this paper will focus upon the success of Google's culture, thus a framework will be developed which can effectively highlight the areas in which Google's culture has tangibly given birth to success. Following the demonstration of success, the case of Google will be considered in relation to what was discussed during the literature review in terms of particular aspects which make up strong cultures, the culture-performance link and the concept of culture fit.

Kotter and Heskett (1992: 2) state that strong cultures can have 'powerful consequences'. These consequences can be analysed through exploring success in three specific areas: firstly through examining financial success, secondly looking into the company image from the customer perspective and finally internally from the employee's perspective. These three tiers of success will form the framework of the initial analysis of Google.

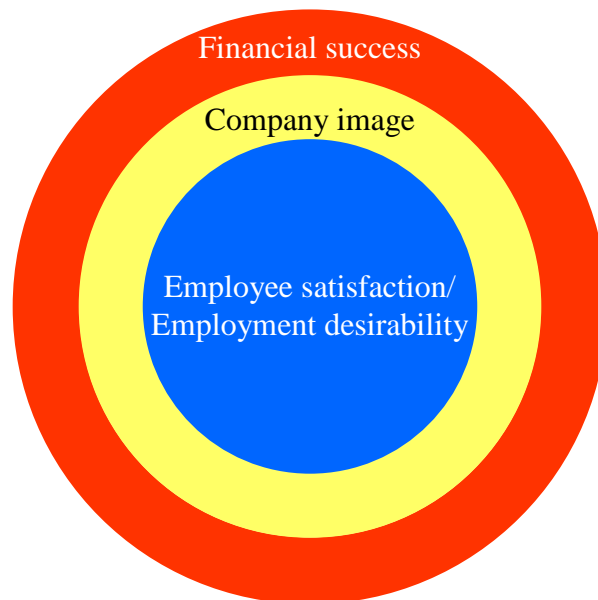


Figure 2.0 Three tiered success

The financial success will be tackled first and a brief introduction will be included in this section. In keeping with Schien's model, in the second and third section of the case, the most visible aspects of organisational culture, the artefacts at Google will be analysed. Gagliardi (1992), states that aesthetic elements of organisations should be studied as they

are an expression of an organisations culture, indeed they are the most concrete and tangible manifestations of culture.

Financial Success

Google was founded in 1998 by Sergey Brin and Larry Page, two PhD. students at Stanford University. Brin and Page developed a revolutionary way of searching the internet's information that quickly grew in popularity. Google is a company that has experienced phenomenal growth and success within the market place. Last year, Google had a turnover of over \$5 billion, and is worth more than General Motors and Ford combined (CBS Broadcasting, 2005). Although Google was only set up eight years ago, according to the New York Times (2006), it is valued at around \$135 billion. Because Google is such a profitable and valuable company, already worth more than IBM, it is interesting to investigate what role the culture of the organisation has played in Google's rise to success.

Customer perspective on Google

Google currently receives more than 300 million search requests a day and is the largest search engine in the world. It has an international cult following with many websites in existence with the sole purpose of writing about Google and looking forward to future Google developments. To the millions of its users, Google is a reliable and fun service that they use frequently. Google present's itself as a fun and innovative company using all the touch points it has with customers to present itself as unique, and this creativity is expressed throughout Google's culture.

Through corporate architecture, companies are able to establish individuality in the eyes of the employees and the public, which exploit general symbolic codes and set the organisation apart from its environment (Gagliardi, 1992: 59). This is exactly what Google has done with its headquarters called 'Googleplex'. Like the word 'Google' is a play on the word googol, 'Googleplex' is a play on a word Googolplex, both of which have mathematical meanings. Googleplex is distinguished from other corporate headquarters in that it is extremely *wacky*. As people enter the Googleplex they are

overcome by a sense of extravagance and fun (De Cagna, 2005); in the reception there is a grand piano, a large fridge full of drinks and a spinning electronic globe that displays real-time searches happening all around the world. When one ventures further into Googleplex; bean bags, large rubber bouncy balls, football tables, fridges stocked full of free drinks, couches, lava lamps and meeting rooms named after rock stars are just some of the unusual examples of furniture. As Russ Cohn (Director of B2B at Google) reports, Google does not provide a traditional working environment (2005).

Successful and creative employee environment

Google generate a truly unique and attractive working environment for their employees, which is a very visible manifestation of the culture. Within the Googleplex there is a gym, washing machines, massage rooms, pool tables, table tennis tables, video games machines even an outside beach volley ball court. The employees' dietary needs are also met with through 'snack rooms' and the reputable cafeteria. The 'snack rooms', which are completely free, offer an array of snacks like, yoghurt, carrots, gummy bears, fresh fruit, M&Ms and coffee. The cafeteria is one of the most documented aspects of Googleplex as Charlie Ayers (former chef for the rock band 'Grateful Dead') prepares gourmet meals. The food at the cafeteria is so excellent that it is rumoured that workers from Google's biggest rival (Yahoo!) sneak into the Googleplex to eat at the restaurant (TechCrunch, 2005). Google even go beyond providing for the basic physical needs of their employees by having on site dentists, doctors, financial advisors and massage therapists to help employees be stress free at work (Ten reasons to work for Google, 2005).

If as Gagliardi (1992) states, office designs are symbols produced by organisational cultures, it is evident that the organisational culture of Google is very special. According to Hammonds (2003: 74) Google is a 'geeks dream house'. Cohn (2005) comments in the article 'Google: Searching for talent', Google is quirky and the employment package has been designed to make life easier for staff. In terms of organisational culture, the very visible signs of corporate culture have profound effects upon the motivation of

employees. Google employees seem to have a motivation for working at Google which is unrivalled at other firms. The extent to which Google offer excellent employment packages is shown by the fact that Google receives over 1000 applicants a day; essentially people are desperate to work for Google. Colvin (2006) comments, by treating employees well, the firm thrives in a virtuous circle like effect. Activities such as free movie nights for employees and families, and free ski holidays and other social excursions have created a social bond between employees. Through the provision of free holidays, sports facilities at work, nursery care for children and 25 days holidays a year, Google encourages its employees to work hard and play hard. At the same time as providing very attractive fringe benefits for them, the activities create a social unity between employees, something which is essential to the effectiveness of the organisation. Using the analysis of culture by Goffee and Jones (1996), Google have created an organisational culture which has high levels of sociability which results in informal knowledge and ideas sharing.

Aspects of culture apparent within Google's united culture

At Google, there are extremely high levels of motivation (Karlgaard, 2005). For example one programming engineer was married in the morning and was at work in the afternoon to make some changes to his project before going off on his honeymoon in the evening. Similarly, of Google's 4000 employees, one quarter of them became millionaires through the Google's stock market flotation. However, few employees stopped working and employees still work as hard as they did before they became millionaires because their motivation is beyond monetary rewards. Google's extremely high levels of motivation and employee retention is not merely because of the working environment, monetary rewards or the fringe benefits of working at Google, the answer is much more deep rooted. If Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of needs is considered, Google have created an organisational culture which goes beyond the basic physiological, safety, social and esteem needs. In keeping with what Truskie (1999) refers to as 'mission', and Denison (1990) as 'inspiration', employees at Google genuinely believe they are making a difference to the world. Google's mission objective is to organise the world's

information and make it accessible and universal (Google.com). Employees have a profound belief in the organisation's mission and are excited about the company and the opportunities that they have at Google (Nelson and Quirk, 2005). The result of this belief in the organisation is extremely high levels of motivation. People within the organisation believe whole heartedly in Google because the values of the employees are aligned to that of Google. In this respect Google has an 'integrated' organisational culture (Martin, 1992). Unity between employees and Google is further enhanced through the empowerment of its employees and encouraging innovation.

At Google, employees are encouraged to innovate; there is a 20% rule, whereby 20% of employees' time is spent on whatever project they desire (Byte, 2005). If the projects become popular, the employee can concentrate on developing the project as their main task. The 20% rule has been pivotal to Google's success as it has encouraged employees to think 'outside of the box' and develop new products otherwise unheard of. Google's 20% rule, is similar to 3M's 15% rule as within both organisations setting aside time for innovation has led to competitive advantages which are demanded by the marketplace. In this area, it can be seen that Google has an organisation culture which 'fits' and is relevant to the technology industry which they operate in. Encouraging innovation has not just led to success externally in the marketplace, internally the 20% rule has had a profound impact upon organisational culture. As all employees are trusted with the development of new products, the future of the company rests upon the shoulders of all those within the organisation. Because employees at Google believe in the organisation, giving employees time and resources to innovate has encouraged employees to become more involved in the organisation.

Formal organisational structure can also be seen as a manifestation of organisational culture. As innovation is a cornerstone to Google's culture, the formal organisational structure has been made to facilitate innovation. The organisational structure is very flat with a huge amount of responsibility given to employees. Doug Edwards, (Director of consumer marketing and brand management for Google, between 1999-2005) explains how empowerment is 'inherent' in Google's culture (2005). Google is unlike other

organisations where levels of the hierarchy have to be consulted to ensure that individuals' actions are not contrary to the organisations when implementing change. Edwards (2005) reports employees are trusted with the corporate welfare, as Google emphasizes acting over deciding. In 2001, as Google was rapidly growing it employed managers to oversee the engineers work. However it was noticed that managers appeared to be restricting the innovativeness of the engineers so the managers were removed. Empowering engineers to make decisions and act upon their decisions had led to Google developing a core competency in innovation and the ability to do things quickly (Edwards, 2005). Encouraging innovation and having a flat organisational structure are demonstrations of Google's organisational culture which recognises achievement (Truskie, 1999) and is adaptable (Denison, 1990).

Culture fit: the culture performance link

The reason Google can encourage innovation and empowerment is because Google have one of the most talented workforces in the world. Cohn (2005) acknowledges that Google has been very careful when recruiting as attracting the right staff has been crucial for the continuation of Google's culture. It is widely stated in literature that organisational culture is often a result of the values of the founders which become accepted within an organisation (Schein, 2004). Brin and Page were both PhD. students when they founded Google, and both their fathers were University professors. As Brin and Page are both very intelligent men with impressive backgrounds the consequence has been that Google has been founded on inherently intellectual grounds. Brin and Page have always played an important role in the recruitment process, even in 2005 when there were 25 new people starting every day at Google. Through the founders playing a key role in recruitment, Google are able to recruit individuals who are a 'good fit' with Google's culture (Nelson and Quirk, 2005). Google's recruitment policies are strikingly different to most companies, where work experience counts for less than educational background. Day (2005) comments that Google won't typically hire people who have worked for more than two years out of University. Google favours intellect over

experience because the assumption has been passed down from the founders that intellect solves problems.

In addition to Brin and Page being exceptionally clever, they are also fun and relaxed characters. These character traits of the founders have permeated the culture of the organisation. Everyday work life is relaxed and Sergey Brin describes the dress-code as the 'dishevelled students' look (CBS News, 2005). Roller hockey once a week and regular volley ball games are visible manifestations of the fun aspect of life at Google. However these interesting 'fun' aspects ensure that Google remains an attractive employer for the brightest minds in the world. As the majority of those who join Google are just out of University, Google needs to have a culture which is appropriate for such individuals. The fun aspect of Google is one of the cornerstones of the successful organisational culture at Google. However, fun is not an aspect of culture mentioned by either Denison (1990) or Truskie (1999). Even though Google is an organisation where having fun is encouraged, it does not mean that this would be appropriate in all organisations. The fun and relaxed part of Google's culture has diffused from the founders of the organisation and is an effective tool in helping the organisation remain attractive to young people leaving universities. However within some organisations it would be completely inappropriate for cultural re-engineers to attempt to input fun into a culture. Google's culture includes fun because it has been there since it was founded. Through careful recruitment, Google has ensured that the right sort of person enters the organisation and maintains the same culture. Sergey Brin said in the Google recruitment video 'We built the place in a way that we like, so we have a great environment for software engineers' (2005).

Google has identified ten reasons for people wanting to work at Google. Because these points have been produced by the organisation, they provide an insight into the Google management philosophy and the type of culture they attempt to define:

1. **'Lend a helping hand'** - Google help people find what they want, so working at Google means helping people.

2. **'Life is beautiful'** - Working at Google is working on something that matters (which is fulfilling).
3. **'Appreciation is the best motivation'** - Google provide a fun and inspiring workplace.
4. **'Work and play are not mutually exclusive'** - Working in a good environment can be fun.
5. **'We love our employees, and we want them to know it'** - Google provide financial rewards and great fringe benefits.
6. **'Innovation is our bloodline'** - Google is the technology leader in organising the world's information, so there are endless opportunities to innovate.
7. **'Good company everywhere you look'** - Google employees are very talented; working at Google means working with talented and interesting people.
8. **'Uniting the world, one user at a time'** - Google is a global company, making the world a better place.
9. **'Boldly go where no one has gone before'** - Google encourage innovation into new fields. The impact could be millions of people finding it useful.
10. **'There is such a thing as a free lunch after all'** - Google looks after its employees by providing free healthy food throughout the day.

[Adapted from www.google.com]

These ten points are useful because they show what sort of a culture Google are attempting to maintain. Essentially these ten points can be summarised through the following four words; purposeful, creative, fun and rewarding.

Summary of the Google case

The evidence presented throughout this case study of Google has shown that the manifestations of Google's culture show that the organisation has a strong culture. It seems to be true that the management philosophy which has descended from the founders of the organisation has established an organisational culture where; innovation, fun, mission and reward are joined together. As Google has been careful in recruiting the

'right sort' of people for the growing number of jobs within the organisation Google has successfully maintained its culture. If Google did not have a culture where creativity was encouraged, they would not be as successful as they have been because the industry they are in demands rapid change. Fun and mission attract intelligent University leavers to consider working for Google because working at Google is unlikely to be dull and the work is fulfilling as it benefits the world. The financial rewards at Google are also considerable and this has been essential in Google retaining employees from being head hunted by competitors. Interestingly however, employees rarely leave Google because the employees are so involved with the organisations mission. It is more often the case that talented individuals leave companies like Microsoft to work for Google. Recently there have been a number of high profile cases, such as that of Kai-Fu Lee, a Microsoft Executives who left Microsoft to join Google in their mission.

Consequently it has been demonstrated that Google's culture, founded upon a sense of mission, innovation, fun and reward is currently manifest within the organisation. Through analysing the artefacts such as Googleplex, the organisational structure, social unity, the founders' values, and the management philosophy, it has been demonstrated that Google's culture is appropriate for the industry they are in. Google certainly possesses all of the attributes of a successful organisational culture outlined by Denison (1990) and Truskie (1999). Furthermore, according to Goffee and Jones (1996), Google is an excellent example of a communal organisation, as there are high levels of both solidarity and sociability within Google.

Nevertheless, although culture within Google is strong and one that is attuned to its environment, there are examples in which it has alienated employees. In 2004, Brian Reid, Director of operations at Google, claimed he was fired unfairly because he was not compatible with the company's culture which he claims is one of 'youth and energy' (Lohse, 2004). This is a demonstration of how Google may have tried to reassert its young and creative culture by alienating and disposing of older employees. If Reid's accusations are shown to be true in the courts, it complements what was mentioned

earlier in terms of organisations wanting to have cultures which are unified and independent of subcultures (Anthony, 1999).

Conclusion

Through reviewing literature relating to organisational culture and performance it has been shown that several authors claim there is a link between strong organisational cultures and company performance. Denison (1990) and Truskie (1999) suggest particular elements combine to make up strong organisational cultures, which help organisations perform well. Through looking at the case study, it has been suggested that Google's organisational culture does include the points emphasised by both authors; adaptability, involvement, cooperation and inspiration. In the case analysis, Google's three tier success can be seen to be the manifestation of similar values to those proposed by Denison (1990) and Truskie (1999). However, through evaluating various aspects of Google, it has been shown that the core components of Google's success are more than what Denison (1990) and Truskie (1999) suggest. Moreover, the essence of Google's culture has come from the founders of the organisation; Sergey Brin and Larry Page. Consequently, the four cornerstones of Google's culture are mission, innovation, fun and reward. The main difference therefore between the findings of Denison (1990) and Truskie (1999) and the proposed cornerstones of Google's culture highlighted in the case analysis can be seen to be the importance of fun within Google. Because Google is a tremendously successful company with exceptionally high levels of motivation, the findings of the four main aspects of Google's culture casts doubt upon the suggestions of Denison (1990) and Truskie (1999).

Consequently this study has actually shown that there is not necessarily one best model for culture; the work of Denison (1990) and Truskie (1999) should not be considered as universally applicable. Organisations do not need to have certain distinctive aspects of culture to ensure it will be successful as culture stems from the founders of organisations and needs to be relevant to the pressures of the marketplace. The Google case analysis has shown that a key factor to Google's success has been its relevance to the industry. The organisational culture attracts young and creative individuals and enables them to cultivate and share their ideas, resulting in an organisation which is constantly developing new products relevant to the market place. This reaffirms the notion that strong cultures

can have 'powerful consequences' (Kotter and Heskett, 1992) as Google's culture has enabled it be relevant to the external market.

Furthermore, in agreement with Kotter and Heskett (1992) the case study of Google shows that Google has been so successful because its employees have their objectives aligned with that of the organisation. The founders of Google have a missionary zeal with regards to organising the world's information that permeates the organisational culture enthusing others in the Google mission. This sense of mission is one of Google's core strengths (Edwards, 2005). As a result of this, employees have a social bond and are united together in the mission to make the world's information accessible. Using the matrix of Goffee and Jones (1996), Google would fit into the category of a 'communal' culture. People within Google share similar values and attitudes (high sociality) and those working within Google pursue shared objectives (high solidarity). From Martin's description of organisational cultures (1992), Google has an integrated culture where employees work well efficiently and effectively and help each other to succeed.

However in concurrence with Alvesson (2002), the actual study of whether strong culture drives organisational performance or performance culture is not the most important issue. Through the study of the Google, it has been demonstrated that Google does have a strong organisational culture and Google has a well motivated workforce which performs exceedingly well. It cannot be proven exactly where the link between culture and motivation and performance lies, however it is clear a link does exist. Google is another example of a hugely successful firm with a very strong culture. Indisputably, the founders have played a huge part in the establishment of such an unusual culture. The fruit of this organisational culture are motivated employees who 'live' the Google brand calling themselves 'Googlers' (Nelson and Quirk, 2005). Thus from the case it can be inferred that strong organisational cultures are attractive because the most successful companies typically have strong cultures. However as has been noted even strong organisational cultures will have difficulty in gaining complete unity within the workforce.

Nevertheless, the most important message that management should take from this study is that there is no one individual culture which is appropriate for all organisations. This paper has demonstrated that whilst authors may argue certain attributes will result in successful cultures, these cultural aspects are never completely comprehensive. However organisational cultures are always diverse. Most importantly, management should recognise that the culture must fit the industry in order for it to be successful.

Limitations of study

Whilst the study of Google in this paper has contributed to the examples of organisations with strong cultures, there are considerable limitations in how the case has been analysed. In essence; the depth of the deciphering of Google's culture has not been as sufficient as it could have been. Schein (2004) argues that the artefacts of an organisation are actually the most difficult part of an organisations culture to decipher. This case has heavily relied upon the deciphering of the visible manifestations of Google's culture in order to presuppose the values, beliefs and underlying assumptions within Google. Whilst the deciphering of Google's culture has been done through analysing the cultural manifestations and reports of Google employees, this case study would have been more effective through in depth interviews with Google employees. This is particularly important because Google only allows employees who have had specific media training to communicate with the press (Cohn, 2005). Thus the majority of the comments included within this paper from Google employees have been from employees trained to portray a good image of Google. This will have inhibited the ability to analyse the culture of Google accurately, and cast doubt on the reliability of the sources used in this case.

In addition, all the research is an accumulation of publicised data from a variety of sources. Whilst it has been good to have used an array of sources the study of Google has suffered from relying on data published by other authors. This case would have greatly benefited from the opportunity to collate and present first hand information through operating within Google or having direct contact with those who have been Google employees.

Recommendations for future study:

In order for future research into the culture of Google to be more insightful and accurate, time should be spent gathering information and having relationships with employees within Google (Schein, 2004). This would mean a greater and more accurate assessment of Google could be made, and this is lacking in the current academic material describing Google. Furthermore, an accurate study would involve all levels of employees within Google. Additionally, it would be insightful if employees who have served in Google since it was founded could be interviewed along with those just recently recruited. This might reveal how Google's culture has changed since it was founded, and if the culture has been diluted. This information would contribute to the knowledge of organisational cultures and also be directly relevant to the question of performance and culture. Google has become more successful in the marketplace and more profitable in recent years, thus, if the culture within Google was stronger in previous years, it would demonstrate that the link between culture and performance is indeed ambiguous.

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* Xogglers is an online gathering spot for ex-Google employees to reminisce and comment on Google.