

# ENGINEERING — YOUR — HAPPINESS

**FIVE WAYS YOUR  
COMPANY'S CULTURE  
SHOULD MAKE YOUR LIFE BETTER**

Your responsibilities and projects will contribute a lot to your on-the-job happiness. But many engineers forget how important their work environment is for their happiness and success. This environment is usually called "company culture" - the values that drive how people in the company behave. So how do you determine if a workplace's culture is a good fit for you?



You might look to a company's social media accounts, word of mouth, happy hour recruiting sessions, websites, or even corporate campuses to get an indication of a company's culture. While all of these are useful, they might not show you the most important things... after all, corporate culture is more than what's on Facebook or what's in the keg. Here are five no-nonsense things to look for when you're interviewing for a job and investigating a company's culture.

# Will the company communicate with you regularly and honestly?

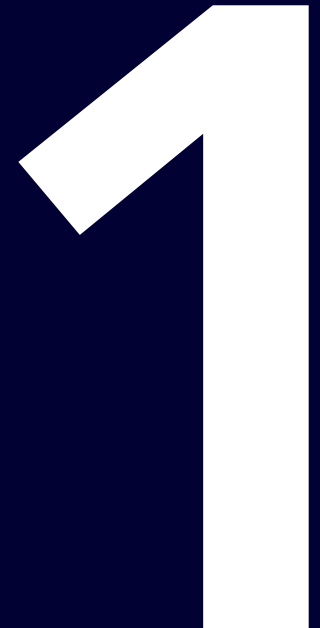


## **Know the good, bad, & ugly.**

Perhaps the most important indicator of a company's culture is how it demonstrates and values communication. You will want to know what is happening - the good and the bad - and you'll want to know it regularly. For example, each year at New Eagle, we develop a custom communication plan and cadence based on what's happening in the business - the staff mix, challenges we're working on as a company, and the information we need to share.

## **Look for the master plan.**

If a company says they value communication but doesn't have a clear communication plan, there's a good chance you'll be left in the dark about the most important issues that could impact your job. You'll be left with rumors and gossip, and that can eat up a lot of the time and energy that you thought you'd be spending on fun and interesting projects. Before you jump into a new position, make sure you understand how a company communicates with its employees.



# Will the company let you make mistakes & help you learn from them?



## **Know what happens when it hits the fan.**

What is the company's perspective towards mistakes and failure? No one is perfect. A company culture typically has an unwritten code when someone makes mistakes. Is it one strike and you're out? Or is there an openness to work together and do better next time? Will managers look at themselves when someone makes a mistake, and work to improve their leadership skills, or will they deflect blame to...you?

## **Look for room to breathe.**

Make sure you ask how much leeway you'll have to learn from your mistakes - and ask for examples, because many managers want to be understanding of mistakes, but fall far short when they actually happen. A healthy attitude toward mistakes also helps protect employees and customers when issues arise, because the focus is on learning rather than blaming.



# Will the company support career growth?



## Climb the ladder, know the rungs.

If you're talking with us, the most likely reason is that you are considering a job change to advance your career. If that's the case, self-assessment is key to determining where you'd be a good fit. Have you thought about your strengths and weaknesses? Your goals? The challenges and learning you're looking for?

When you set goals, it's easier to see if a company would help you realize them. Before you switch jobs, consider:

- 1. What do you want to be doing in 3-5 years?**
- 2. What skills do you want to grow and experiences do you want to have?**
- 3. How do you want your company and managers to support you?**

## Work your dream job, not a drone job.

At New Eagle, we build our career plans with our employees because we believe we have a personal responsibility to help you reach your unique goals and pursue your personal passions. When we do that, we help you create an interesting and exciting career path - and we get experienced, committed, knowledgeable engineers that can help our customers in many ways.



# Will the company listen to you?



## Open ears are key...

Earlier we talked about how important it is for a company to communicate with you. Well, the inverse is also true – the company should also listen to you.

As your career develops, you are likely to learn about what works and what doesn't work, and you'll want to contribute those thoughts to your company. You'll also have ambitions and see chances to grow. It's your responsibility to communicate those things and give your manager the opportunity to respond.

## ...but open minds are integral.

It's the company's responsibility to foster a culture where that kind of feedback and input is welcomed and used.

We recommend that you try this during your interview. Are they asking you about your interests and ambitions? If not, that's a concern – but then you still have a chance to share them anyway and see what the reaction is.



# Will the company adapt to fit your needs?



## **Find freshness in flexibility.**

One-size-fits-all...doesn't really fit anyone. You're at a unique stage of your personal and professional development...and things will shift again and again over your career. Employers that understand their employees' needs, wants and interests and can effectively adjust their responsibilities to maintain a win-win relationship that keeps employees and employers happy.

## **Work a job that grows with you.**

At New Eagle, we know that people grow and change at different life stages. For some, these changes are professional - maybe a new role or more responsibilities or achieving mastery of some technical field. For others, changes are from their life stage, maybe marriage, birth of children, divorce, or an empty nest. We encourage employees to take time to reassess their goals and passions and communicate with us.



# Putting it all together

Interesting work plays a big role in your happiness and satisfaction, but please do not underestimate the power your company's culture will have on you, too. You may have already learned that lesson, in which case you have a first-hand appreciation for one or more of the questions we posed.

In your interviews, ask these questions to gauge the culture of the company you're talking to:

- 1. How will I hear about important issues that the company is dealing with?**
- 2. Describe a time when one of your engineers made a mistake and what happened?**
- 3. Do you help employees develop their career goals?**
- 4. What kinds of issues or topics do you take feedback on, from a person in the role I'll have?**
- 5. How do you adapt roles and responsibilities for your employees over time?**

At New Eagle, we care a lot about our engineers, and we spend a lot of time creating a culture that works for them. It's what makes it possible for us to work with great customers and build a great business. We'd love to talk to you more about how we do things - and the interesting, challenging, rewarding project work we have for you to do, also!





# About the author

Mickey Swortzel is the CEO of New Eagle, a mechatronic control system creator, integrator and provider in Ann Arbor, Michigan. She is passionate about learning and improving company culture, beginning in her own business.

At New Eagle, she has nurtured a culture that attracts and retains exceptional employees by focusing on human needs, openness to new ideas, and common-sense company policy.

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