

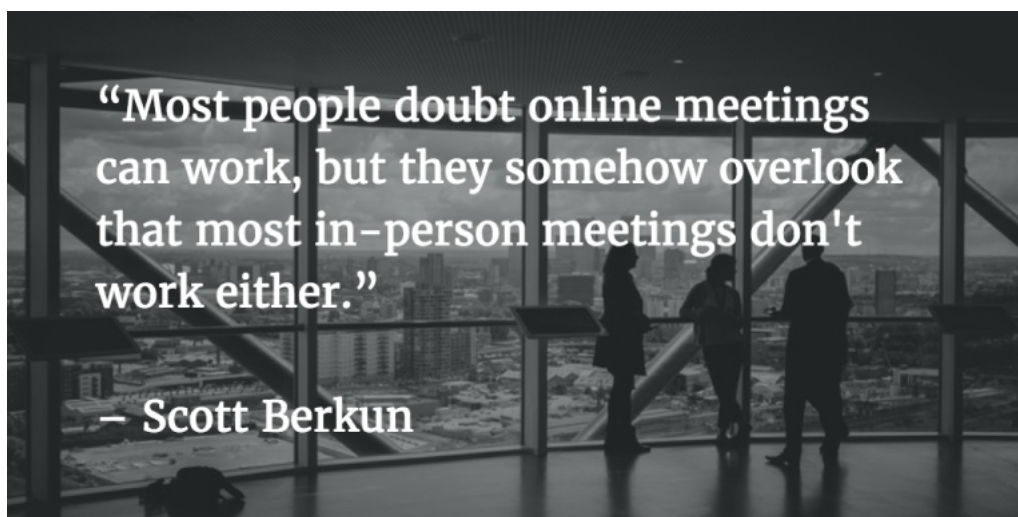
The Year Without Pants Summary

 fourminutebooks.com/the-year-without-pants-summary

1-Sentence-Summary: *The Year Without Pants* dives into the company culture of Automattic, the company behind WordPress.com and explains how they've created a culture of work where employees thrive, creativity flows freely and new ideas are implemented on a daily basis.

Read in: 4 minutes

Favorite quote from the author:



Scott Berkun only agreed to taking a job at WordPress.com (the software that powers about 30% of all websites – worldwide) in 2010, when the founders allowed him to write a book about his experience afterwards. *The Year Without Pants* is the result. Given that Automattic, the company behind it, is worth over a billion dollars, that might be a curious request to make for such a prestigious job.

He knew going in, that what he was about to experience would be vastly different from most other companies, and thus, worth sharing with the world. Thanks to Scott's request, you and I now get to learn some great lessons about company culture from one of the most creative companies in the world.

1. Hire the right people and train them instantly.
2. Don't filter people's ideas, let them implement them without barriers.
3. If it breaks, don't fix it – at first!

Lesson 1: Hire the right people and train them the minute they join the company.

"If you had 1 hour to fill this entire room with sand, what would you do?"

“How many ping pong balls fit into a Boeing 747?”

Ever heard questions like these? They’re usually part of extra difficult job interviews, consulting companies like McKinsey love to use them. They’re supposed to assess your ability of complex thinking and creative problem solving.

While I agree that those types of questions are better than “Where’d you go to school?”, they still miss the target. Don’t you want to hire whoever’s best at the job that must get done? Because with this process, you’re just hiring whoever’s best at the skill of being interviewed.

That’s why at WordPress, **job applications involve a small project similar to what the applicants would be doing later**. In addition, they’re given the exact tools available on the job, to make sure people are effective at what they’re supposed to be doing, not just answering questions.

Once people are hired, they’re immediately trained by **spending their first week in customer service**. A company is always about serving people and letting new employees spend 1-on-1 time with customers as their very first experience instills this thought in them. Whatever they work on later, they’ll always keep the customer in mind.

So once you hire someone, make sure you train them instantly to align them with your company’s mission.

Lesson 2: Let people implement their ideas without a filter.

Here’s how ideas go to die: You come up with an awesome new category for your company’s website. Your boss tells you to sketch it out on paper. When you hand him the sketch, he starts scribbling around in it.

Then a meeting is held, where everyone from the marketing department can give their input, until the sketch is finally ready to go into prototype mode. Now you can build it behind closed doors, and after several more meetings, you can eventually go into beta mode to get feedback from co-workers.

If the new category ever hits the actual website, it probably looks nothing like you’ve imagined. **It’s even more likely that it’ll never see the light of day.**

Stories like this one happen every day, and they’re the reason why most employees eventually just *stop trying*.

Not at WordPress. **WordPress releases new product features, every single day**. Employees can code and implement their projects instantly and release them as soon as they’re done.

People feel that their ideas and inputs are appreciated, and no, the world doesn't collapse, because if a feature is buggy or doesn't work it can easily be fixed or removed later. The risk of causing a storm of hate among customers is quite minimal.

But the risk of killing your employees creativity is real – so think about how you can make it easier for them to implement their ideas!

Lesson 3: If it breaks, don't fix it – at first!

Oh no! The commenting feature of your new app just broke, aaaaahhh! People can't write comments – oh my god, you have to fix that instantly, right?

Actually...no.

When something breaks, **it's a perfect time to validate how much it is really needed.**

Imagine running a car repair shop, and one of your 3 service lifts breaks. It might take a while to get a new one shipped and install it. But if you notice you can survive a week or even a month just fine, without really needing the third service lift, then why replace it in the first place?

WordPress does the exact same thing with software. When a feature breaks, **they wait to see how many customer complaints roll in.** If people really use a feature, they'll notice its absence. Only after enough people complain will they fix what's broken.

If not many people file complaints, the feature probably wasn't valuable and can just be removed. So the next time something breaks, wait to see if it really demands fixing – or whether you can make your job a whole lot easier by getting rid of a feature that wasn't all that useful anyway.

The Year Without Pants Review

It's fascinating to see how some startups can maintain an incredible flexible and lean structure, in spite of growing into billion dollar companies. And while Automattic's approach is vastly different from for example Google's culture, something all successful startups agree on is this: you must encourage creativity as much as possible.

All I'm waiting for is to see old giants, like Procter & Gamble, BMW or Coca Cola implement practices like these – I think whoever does so first will be at a huge advantage in the coming decades.

The summary on Blinkist was packed with actionable and uncommon advice, I highly recommend it. If you're really keen to learn more about the future of work, get *The Year Without Pants*, Scott's stories are priceless and nothing shy of visionary.

Read full summary on Blinkist

Get the book on Amazon

Learn more about the author

What else can you learn from the blinks?

- How the development of WordPress became part of the company culture itself
- What Automattic thinks of the 9 to 5 workday and “business casual” attire
- Which department of your company should have the most people (it’s not IT and it’s not HR)
- Why staring at data reports is useless
- The 3 rules of efficient meetings that make people happy, not tired
- Why your team needs running jokes and a lot of laughter
- How email breeds mistrust and which communication tools to use instead

Who would I recommend The Year Without Pants summary to?

The 27 year old with an itch to start his own company, the 36 year old manager at an older, bigger corporation, who would love to change up common practices, and anyone who’s never worked in a coffee shop before.