

Spotify engineering culture

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These videos talk about the culture and the way of working at Spotify which they say is an agile engineering culture, they talk about the structure they have at the company, essentially, it's about the working environment, process and methods they use to have a healthy productive company. Culture is a set of values, social forms, conventions or social practices associated with a particular field, social characteristic or activity; in this case we are talking about the culture at Spotify.

At the start of the videos we are shown that Spotify start as a scrum company, so it means that it was small team with an agile development approach which they say give them a good team based culture but as the company grow they threw out most of the rules they have in exchange for more agile principles. The structure they have is divided by small teams or "squads" formed with the idea of being autonomous, which mean they are a self-organizing and cross functional team that chooses how to approach and solve the problem they are tasked, autonomy makes work fast, as they say means that decisions are made locally in the team instead of being made in reunions by managers, thanks to this the teams don't lose time by depending on the decisions of others.

They talk about how alignment and autonomy are normally seen as two ends of a scale while at Spotify they see it as two dimensions where you can be low autonomy and low alignment which is a micromanagement culture, this one being the worst, low autonomy but high alignment means the leaders say which problem to solve but at the same time how to solve it, high alignment and high autonomy means the leaders communicate properly the problem and the team has the autonomy to find their own solution, this is the type of culture Spotify aims to have.

The result that gives having autonomous teams it's that there is not standardization, as every team can choose the way they work, but this is not a bad thing, they mention that in exchange from having standard methods and tools to work they have what they called "Cross-pollination", this means that different teams pick some tool or methods that other teams use, making a more consistent and flexible environment because they are able to pick up whatever they want from other teams and making use of that in their own work.

One thing they make a lot of emphasis is that failure is okay and a necessity to progress and grow, the CEO of Spotify Daniel Ek mentions that they aim to make mistakes faster than anyone else, the philosophy they have is that mistakes are not to be punished but to learn from them, that instead of asking “Who’s fault was it?” it’s more like “What did we learn?” to not be afraid of trying something and to support innovation.

After watching both videos about the culture that the Spotify team have or aim to have, I found interesting how flexible they are trying to be. I especially liked how they want to make all team autonomous and how they are able to choose the way they work, which make me believe that is a good way to maintain a productive and healthy workplace thanks to the freedom they are given.