How the Best Organizations Use Transparency to Get Ahead I The Org

6-8 minutes

Transparency builds trust. In a world full of misinformation, data breaches, and privacy concerns, it's understandable that consumers have started to demand more from the companies they buy from. People shop and consume information with a healthy dose of skepticism, aware that what they see online is often not the whole story. It's why consumers want brands to be more transparent.

A recent study from Sprout Social, which surveyed 1,000 consumers, found that 86% of Americans say transparency from businesses is more important than ever before. 58% of those surveyed believe that companies are morally obligated to be more transparent and 73% said they're willing to pay more if a brand is doing so. Brands that prioritize openness in their social approach earn great rewards — gains in consumer trust, increased sales, and a improved brand reputation.

Take social media management company Buffer, for example. For over seven years now, the Buffer team decided that radical transparency needed to be one of their top priorities. Right at this moment, you can look up a view-only Google Doc to see the salaries of every member of their team, from the CEO on down. As a result, Buffer was named one of Inc. Magazine's Best Workplaces of 2018 and the company has high brand awareness.

Businesses of all shapes and sizes have started to adopt transparency marketing to some degree, but while for some it's an important or even vital part of their company culture, for others, it's something that they simply have to do in the current environment. Here is an overview of how some of the best organizations use transparency to get ahead.

People

Many organizations these days have a public team page on their website. Unfortunately, most organizations only show founders, executives or board members, and don't celebrate the entire team. It can be time consuming to keep a detailed team page updated but being transparent can help attract and retain new talent. Some organizations, like GitLab, have gone the extra mile and share their full org chart on their website.

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Source: GitLab

Values

Explaining what an organization holds dear can be important for recruiting both talent and partnerships. The more open a company is about what they value, the easier it can be to connect with other people and organizations who hold the same values. And for companies in particularly charged fields, being clear about values is crucial to maintaining trust with consumers. At The New York Times, being upfront about value sets maintains a certain level of confidence between brand and customer.

Independence

Over a hundred years ago, The Times pledged "to give the news impartially, without fear or favor, regardless of party, sect, or interests involved." That commitment remains true today: We follow the truth, wherever it leads.

Integrity

The trust of our readers is essential. We renew that trust every day through the actions and judgment of all our employees — in our journalism, in our workplace and in public.

Curiosity

Open-minded inquiry is at the heart of our mission. In all our work, we believe in continually asking questions, seeking out different perspectives and searching for better ways of doing things.

Respect

We help a global audience understand a vast and diverse world. To do that fully and fairly, we treat our subjects, our readers and each other with empathy and respect.

Collaboration

It takes creativity and expertise from people in every part of the company to fulfill our mission. We are at our best when we work together and support each other.

Excellence

We aim to set the standard in everything we do. The pursuit of excellence takes different forms, but in every context, we strive to deliver the very best.

Source: The New York Times

Culture

Acquiring customers is hard. Acquiring talent is harder. But companies that are transparent about its culture generally have a much easier time finding both. Lyft, for example, created a snappy, inviting "life at Lyft" page that makes the kind of people they want to work with, and employ, crystal clear.
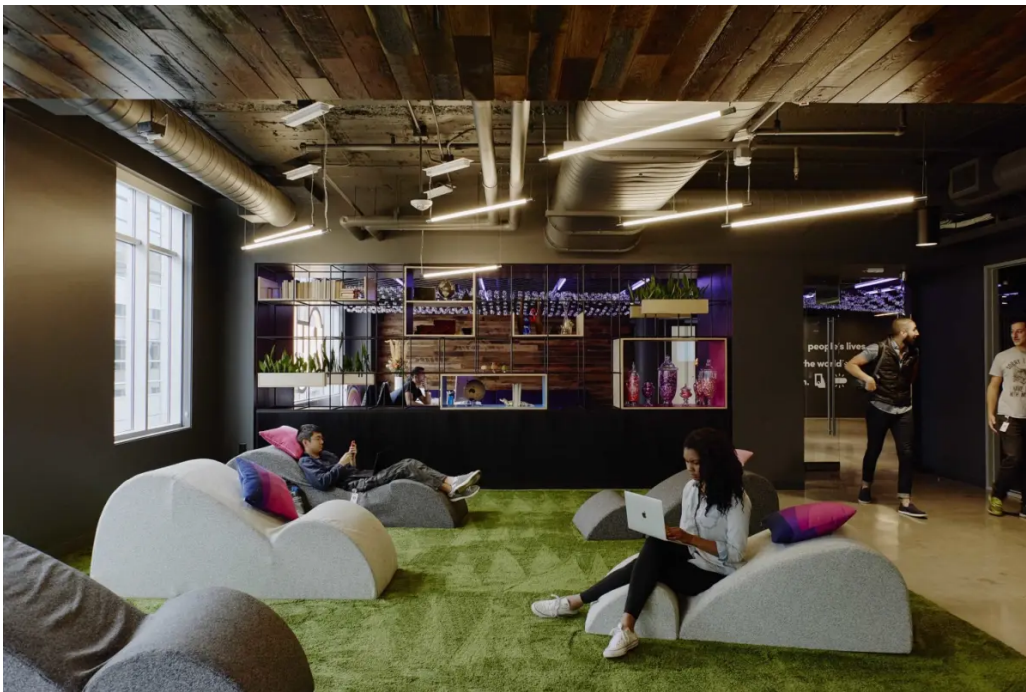
Source: Lyft

Processes

As a user, there is almost nothing more infuriating than falling in love with software, learning its ins and outs, and then waking up one day to find an unexpected large-scale design overhaul. Instead of feeling excited about the upgrades, you feel blindsided. Companies that are open and honest about their processes, like the collaborative design tool Figma, can eliminate that dynamic by making what they're doing and why they're doing it more clear. It also has the extra benefit of showing that it's a good place to work.
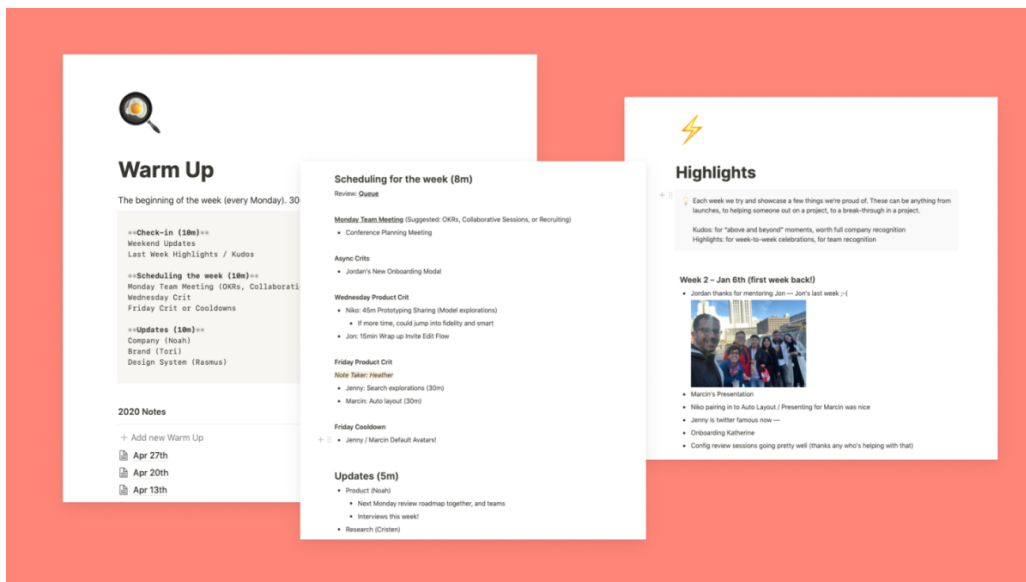
Source: Figma

Technologies

Modern businesses are not built in a silo. Companies use a whole swath of outside technologies to help power their operations, but often don't share what tools they're using. By keeping those technologies hidden from each other, we're stunting a more collaborative, efficient ecosystem of innovation. A tech stack is a good example of this, where software companies can analyze what tools a large company like Airbnb uses and then tailor their offerings and products to fill in the blanks.
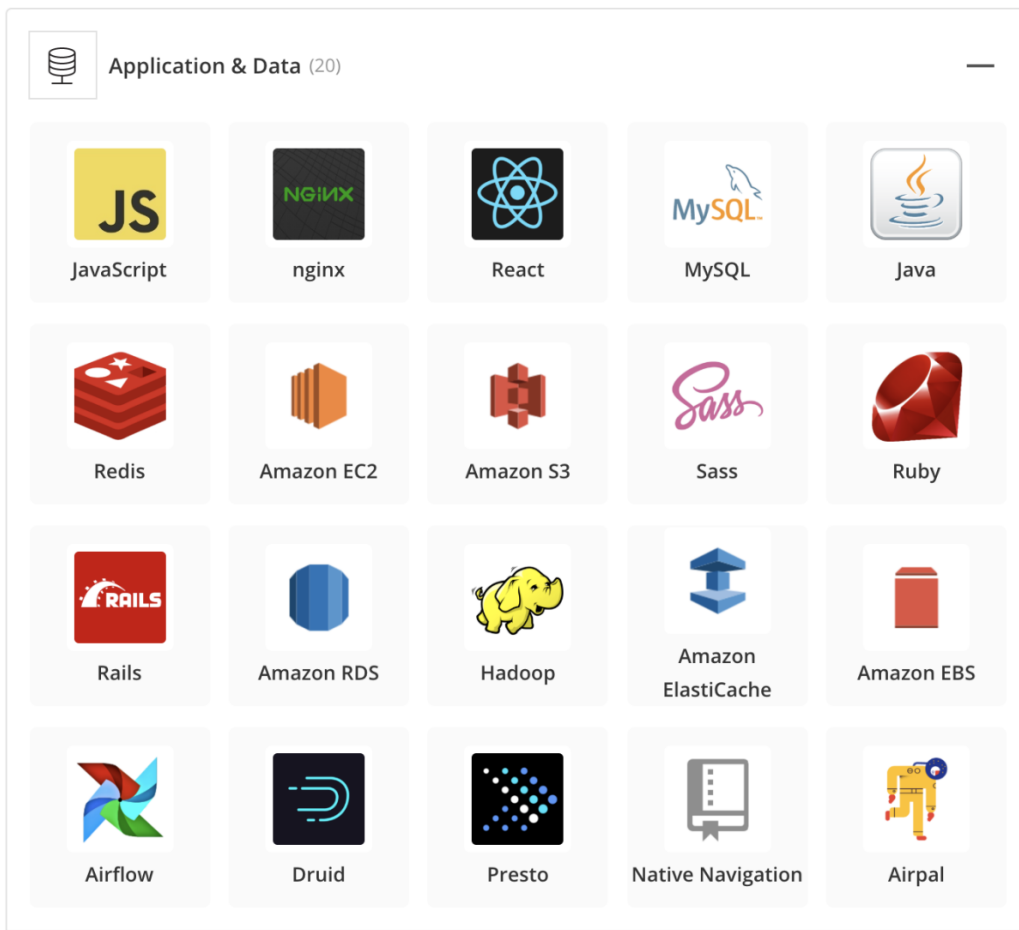
Source:

Roadmap

Keeping a company's roadmap secret can create division both internally and externally. If employees or users are left in the dark, they become much more resistant to change, making flexible innovation much harder than it should be. GitHub has more than 40 million users and yet in July, announced it was releasing a public roadmap in part to encourage feedback on what it's building.

Source: GitHub

Numbers

Despite the fact that every company in the world has experienced setbacks, it can be hard to admit to those failures. Keeping a drop in revenue close to the chest is the natural reaction. But companies that can be transparent about both their successes and failures have a much greater chance of earning and keeping brand loyalty. Take Tettra, an internal knowledge base business, and co-founder Andy Cook. By publishing and explaining Tettra's monthly numbers, he made the company seem more human and relatable.

Andy Cook
@AndyGCook

Here are @Tettra's Aug 2019 numbers. Will be up front that it was a tough month. More on that in the thread.

Also, my apologies for the delayed post this month. I was traveling and am just catching up.

P.S. Follow me, @nelsonjoyce, & @Tettra to keep up with our startup journey.

	Aug-19	Monthly Change	Jul-19	Annual Change	Aug-18
MRR	$63,959.11	1.53%	$62,992.68	65.09%	$38,742.43
ARR	$767,509.32		$755,912.16		$464,909.16
Product					
Monthly active users	3,775	6.58%	3,542	42.67%	2,646
Customers	557	0.91%	552	23.23%	452
Customer churn rate	3.44%		2.43%		4.04%
Revenue churn rate	1.52%		-1.42%		0.53%
Product Efficiency					
Revenue per account	$114.83	0.62%	$114.12	33.97%	$85.71
Lifetime value	$3,315.40	-27.69%	$4,585.21	59.31%	$2,081.12
CAC	$317.69	41.06%	$538.99	42.15%	$549.16
Company Health					
Team size	5	-28.57%	7	25.00%	4
Revenue per employee	$153,501.86	42.15%	$107,987.45	32.07%	$116,227.29

12:11 PM · Sep 19, 2019 · Twitter Web App

Source: Twitter

Handbook

Imagine how much time has been wasted on first days. A new employee sits down having a vague idea of their role and then goes through a swirl of paperwork, rules, and introductions until finally, they get to go home even more anxious than when they started. This process of wasting everyone's time can go on for weeks. But companies that are open about their handbooks generally see a rise in new employee efficiency. At Blendle, new employees have no excuse for being unprepared on the first day, ultimately making the process easier for everyone.

Blendle's Employee Handbook

This is a living document with everything we've learned working with people while running a startup. And, of course, we continue to learn. Therefore it's a document that will continue to change.

Everything related to working at Blendle and the people of Blendle, made public.

These are the lessons from three years of working with the people of Blendle. It contains everything from how our leaders lead to how we increase salaries, from how we hire and fire to how we think people should give each other feedback — and much more.

We've made this document public because we want to learn from you. We're very much

Source: Notion

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Despite the proven effectiveness of transparency, many companies don't yet have a platform to do that. They are not big enough to have their own following and they don't have enough money to spend on sales and marketing. Social media can be a good solution but most platforms are geared towards the employee rather than the organization as a whole. LinkedIn, for example, is built around individual profiles and the news of individuals.

The Org, the world's largest professional community for teams, is here to eliminate those roadblocks. Organizations can show off their team, announce new hires, and post jobs for free. They can highlight what makes them special and acknowledge the people who make that possible. We believe that transparency will lead to a business world that is more connected and more egalitarian.

Join our mission to make organizations more transparent here.