# Entrepreneurial Culture

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Culture is a hot buzzword among corporate and entrepreneurial companies alike. It’s what everyone is striving for, what brings on the loyalty, what attracts and keeps the really awesome employees. If done right, it seems so simple. Good corporate culture, in its purest sense, and at its most successful, has the look and feel of something organic and uncontrived, something that just exists. But alas, there’s the rub, and at once the wonderful twist: Corporate culture cannot, does not and never will exist “just because.” Culture is a balancing act between many elements of a company and requires careful execution at each level.

What Makes a Culture Entrepreneurial?

As one of our engineers once put it, in an entrepreneurial culture, work is more than a job, it’s a lifestyle. Employees are more like a team than in most companies, and in some cases, we’re even like a family. What also evolved was a set of rules for creating and maintaining NDA’s petri dish. In creating your own, consider these rules:

* Treat people with respect. This is a very simple premise, which threads through each and every complicated issue that can arise within a company. Respect and trust provide the necessary base for a vibrant and sustainable corporate culture.
* Help employees stay healthy. When employees get sick, they miss work, so it makes sense to offer health insurance as a benefit. We covered 100% of employee health plans. I never want an employee to experience a catastrophic illness and not be covered by insurance. We also offered unlimited sick time. While I had seen this type of policy backfire elsewhere, it nonetheless allowed people to be sick when they really were sick, and not feel obligated to gobble up each “allotted” sick day. You may also want to add a wellness allowance for health-club membership.
* Open doors to communication. Create an environment where people can interact with each other, support each other and recognize each other’s efforts and achievements. Provide positive rewards for positive behaviour. Share information, so that employees are aware of the direction of the company and are involved in it. Use all-hands meetings for financial and operational information, team-building and social events. Offer incentive programs to reward effort and improve quality of life.
* Build camaraderie. Make time for people to get to know each other and the company. We held an annual off-site meeting to build team spirit and discuss where the company was going. At such events you can also distribute and share your business plan and discuss issues and ideas raised by your strategies.

### BLACKBAUD’S COMPANY CULTURE

Blackbaud, a provider of cloud-based software for the philanthropic industry, built its company culture around a shared passion for giving back.**“You can’t truly be successful at Blackbaud unless you are passionate about serving the non-profit community,” says Brandon Phipps, Vice President of Sales and Market Development at Blackbaud.**

The company walks the walk by organizing team-wide service projects, providing time off to volunteer and offering a company match for employee charitable-giving. Employees are also encouraged to participate in the selection process of the company’s Blackbaud Community Grants program which awards grant money to local nonprofits in Austin, TX. Of course, it isn’t all work, as the company also hosts social events themed to topics they love, like pinewood derbies, Harry Potter and an annual Star Wars movie marathon.

**What makes Blackbaud’s company culture great:**Blackbaud built a culture of people passionate about non-profits. Uniting around a common cause brings the team together and ensures everyone is working toward the same goal.

### BLUECORE'S COMPANY CULTURE

Bluecore is a retail marketing platform that uses AI technology to help companies boost campaign performance. For them, customer success is deeply rooted in their culture — in fact, it’s one of their [core values](https://builtin.com/company-culture/company-core-values-examples). **“Culture is driven by a unique set of values and personality centred on clear goals that define success,” says Kim Surko, Vice President of Customer Success.”**

They also start career pathing during the recruitment process and continue throughout the employee’s time at the company. Senior leaders offer career coaching and guidance to help team members explore their passions and find roles within the company that allow them to utilize their unique skills — even if that means creating a new role.

**What makes Bluecore’s company culture great:**At Bluecore, customer and employee success and satisfaction are the top two priorities. The two go hand-in-hand, and as they build each other up, they create an external and internal army of brand ambassadors.

### CB INSIGHTS’ COMPANY CULTURE

CB Insights uses machine learning to analyse data to help companies understand industry trends and make informed decisions based on factual evidence. For a company that analyses trends, it’s important that their employees are up-to-date with evolving technology. **“CB Insights focuses on employee growth and learning,” says Alyssa Anchelowitz, Senior Marketing Manager. “They’ve expanded the training programs for managers and offered an education stipend that allowed me to learn more about Javascript my first year here.”**

Managers regularly talk with employees about their paths and where they would like to grow personally and professionally. They also encourage people to take on new challenges, even hosting a quarterly Hack Day where employees work on anything they want for the company for 24 hours.

**What makes CB Insights’ company culture great:** They hire people who are hungry for knowledge, and they continuously feed that hunger with stipends and opportunities learn.

### NERDERY’S COMPANY CULTURE

Nerdery is a digital consultancy that helps mid- to large-size clients in the healthcare, retail and manufacturing industries. That’s a broad customer base, and to get the job done the company built a team of people with a wide variety of backgrounds and experiences. Creating one culture that’s authentic to so many unique people may sound impossible, but it’s actually just the opposite.**“Trying to create a culture from the top down never feels quite right,” says Jim Butts, Principal Software Engineer and Team Manager at Nerdery. “So my focus has been in supporting activities Nerds are passionate about and encouraging everyone to share their interests — however obscure.”**

The company encourages individuals to explore their passions, and the office space reflects their range of interests with Jurassic Park and Chamber of Secrets themed conference rooms and a MAME Cabinet with 400+ games. When an employee is promoted, the team celebrates by filming a creative video centred around their interests and quirky personalities. Nerdery is one of the growing list of companies that’s [ditching the idea of “culture fit”](https://builtin.com/company-culture/cultural-fit) and moving to “culture add,” and if you ask us, it seems to be working.

**What makes Nerdery’s company culture great:**It’s centred on trust. Their team of Nerds are comfortable and proud to share their unique professional and personal passions.

### OPPLOANS’ COMPANY CULTURE

OppLoans is an online lender that uses technology to provide affordable credit to people who do not qualify for traditional bank loans. The company provides an invaluable service, but it’s a difficult industry with countless challenges. **“They’re great problems to have, but they’re still problems,” says CEO Jared Kaplan.**

Given the complexity associated with this work, the company built a culture of constant development and opportunity that supports its employees at every stage of their career. OppLoans provides continuing education opportunities based on individual aspirations and offers promotions both within and across teams so people can follow their passions and remain a valuable asset to the company, even if they’re looking to change their career path.

**What makes OppLoans’ company culture great:**Transparency and the notion to ‘rule by motivation, not fear.’ Their team is driven by success, improvement and rewarding top performers.

### SECURELINK’S COMPANY CULTURE

Rather than focusing solely on education and experience, they look for non-traditional candidates, hiring people with backgrounds in teaching, firefighting and philosophy. Joel Burleson-Davis, Vice President of Technology, studied philosophy, ethics, ancient languages, history and Greek in college, then went on to study systems science in graduate school before joining the team. They hire people who are passionate about learning because they’re more likely to stay motivated, enjoy their work and tackle challenges with unique perspective.

**What makes SecureLink’s company culture great:** Personality and motivation trump education and experience.

### TALA’S COMPANY CULTURE

Tala is a fintech company that provides financial services to underserved people around the world. They’ve built a team that’s passionate about the mission and as diverse as the customers they serve. **“We have team members from all walks of life, which brings in a diversity of opinions and experiences to meaningfully drive our innovation,” says Gaurav Bhargava, Vice President of Credit at Tala.**

The financial experts at Tala come from a range of backgrounds and experiences, which fuels creativity and growth. Their credit team alone speaks 10 languages, maintains equal gender representation and represents four nationalities. Tala also provides employees with opportunities to learn new business functions outside of specific roles to explore interests and gain a holistic understanding of the company.

**What makes Tala’s company culture great:**Equity and diversity are key to innovation. Their customers are their passion, and to serve them best, they built a team that encourages creative thinking and represents their customer base.