Cultural Discovery Process - Radial Values

Intentionality

Anecdotes

(From one of our developers): At Radial and with my first team at Simply Mac, the manager did an effective job of hiring a variety of people rather than hiring themselves over and over again. In both instances, people on the team said they love the *team* they work with or miss the *team* when it's gone.

(from the team): Radial's team is strengthened by how dissimilar we are. Groomings work better when we have both concrete and abstract thinkers present, client communications are better when both logical and emotional decision-makers consider the possible angles of the conversation, and a mix of extroverts and introverts means we can often find *someone* who feels what a client or coworker is feeling and can empathize by being able to properly put themselves in the other's shoes.

Goals

- Do things on purpose.
- Don't hire people carelessly.
- Hire for diversity, intersection, and inclusion -- beyond race, gender, ideology, sexual identity.
- Be deliberate. Don't let things happen. When things happen they should be purposeful.
- Keep work products clean.

Ideas

- Craftsmanship
- Self-reflection
- Reliability
- Focus

- Careful
- Deliberation
- Professionalism
- Strategy/Forecast/Foresight
- Wholism/Alignment
- Self-respect
- Pride
- Methodical
- Growth/Continuous Improvement

Summary

- Take the time to decide what you will do.
- Do what you mean to do.
- Do what you're asked to do. No creep scoping.
- Do what is necessary to complete the iteration of your work.
- Define your criteria in advance and find ways to look -- for tools, people or resources -- in the corners for the best hidden, underrepresented things.
- Do one thing at a time so you can focus on it.

Integrity - (Resiliently Consistent)

Anecdotes

From the owner: One of the key things we do as part of our customer recovery process is own our mistakes. We actively look for things we did wrong or could have done better and we genuinely apologize for something we did or did not do. Sometimes that means that a dev lead has to do more administrative work, or communicate more regularly with clients and sometimes that means we have to give credit or refunds to clients as a result because owning our mistakes is a powerful way to put the emphasis on our relationship with our clients.

From the owner: Sometimes we can't provide the best solution to a client. When we were working on Contact Mapping with Rick Manellius, we realized that we were better off hiring outsourced manual QA to check and re-check his app rather than writing tests, given the technology he was using and that we couldn't satisfactorily test devices as we had hoped. As a result, we wrote up a detailed report on what was wrong but ultimately advised him to go in a different direction, one that didn't keep him on our client roster.

From the owner: We have weekly retrospectives and I call them "Pick on Ben" days, even though I want feedback throughout the week. The reality is that always being open to criticism and receiving feedback is a difficult job but I (and other senior personnel) are not only open to it but welcome it. We want to know how we can do better, and we're willing to bear discomfort to get it.

Goals:

- Avoid creating scenarios where we pretend we are something we're not or complete more than we can.
- Add value to the company by being rigorously self-consistent year-over-year.
- Admit our mistakes.
- Listen genuinely to clients, partners, and one another.

Ideas

- Honesty/openness/transparency
- Vulnerability/listening/learning/hearing
- Introspection/self-reflection
- Consistency
- Genuine/authenticity
- Humility
- Courage
- Boldness
- Truth

Summary

- Create a consistent brand and identity by projecting company values in interactions with clients, partners and each other.
- Own our mistakes and enlist the team to recover.
- Consider in retrospect how we do things and how well they work.
- Tackle hard issues early, communicate when it's difficult, and do things other companies won't.
- Keep the things we do true to ourselves.

Cooperation - Shared Responsibility and Accountability

Anecdotes

From one of our employees: Sometimes when people are trying to be supportive they tell you "It is easy/simple", or "That won't take very long to do, it's pretty basic." In fact this type of talk can be discouraging because something might take me longer than you, or be easy for you but not for me. We try as an organization not to use this type of language to minimize difficulty, but rather let people know they are supported and can get resources to help from anyone on the team.

From one of our owners: We all know why juniors need their code reviewed, but the fact that senior developers get the same review is a huge cultural benefit to me because it makes everyone equally vulnerable. It means that we're not going to have a golden child or rockstar developers who can do no wrong. It creates a level playing field and acknowledges that everyone makes mistakes.

From our owner: We have a guest program at Radial that connects us with freelancers, juniors, and people between opportunities. We use that channel to answer their questions and help them with their problems. Obviously, this has advantages for hiring and marketing, as well as brand awareness and goodwill. We did this because we recognized it would have made us successful if we had access to something like this when we were in the same position. We want people writing code they can be proud of, that represents the best they can do -- which we believe means, with help and support.

Goals:

We want to:
- Help people solve their own problems.
- Cooperate with the community to make our entire industry better.
- Work together.
- Ensure code is readable by juniors and well-factored according to seniors.
- Conduct retrospects in a way that makes it safe to give feedback and raise issues.
- Allow processes to be updated based on changing needs.

Ideas

- Teamwork
- Positivity
- People as policy
- Fellowship/partnership
- Support
- Adaptability/flexibility
- Accountability
- Professionalism
- Approachability
- Communication
- Harmony
- Fairness/equity
- Diversity

Summary

- Radial is powered by the team, not individuals, experts, managers, or processes.
- Bad things happen in the dark. Ensure that the work you do is being reviewed by people in a position to be objective or critical.
- <u>Ask for help</u>. Trying to solve a problem on your own is gratifying but is not an effective way to help the team.
- Work with a partner. Two people working together are less likely to be distracted or confused, or to get stuck.
- Work on your relationship with other members of staff one-on-one. Ask management for support if you need mediation, time off, or money for coffee/lunch.
- Work within processes to ensure that we set and meet goals, and honor our commitments.
- Do not try to make others feel comfortable by minimizing difficulty. Everyone starts at different levels and what is easy for you may be hard for someone else. Rather, offer support for whatever help they need.
- Be interruptible so others can get help from you. Use appropriate channels to request help so that asking isn't a structural interruption.
- Dev leads only have the authority to make decisions on behalf of the team, not themselves.

Purpose

Anecdotes

From one of our owners/developers: Plan To Eat is a great example of a project where we get the full feedback cycle of building things that do real good for people. And, we reap all of the rewards of that relationship as a result. We learn which development techniques are effective at scale. Most of our employees actually use the app. We care about the project and work hard on it. This allows us to establish a higher level of trust with the client, Clint Bounds. The result is that Clint is not only our client but our friend.

Goals

- Don't build things that are never released.
- Understand what a client is doing and set the expectation that we will help them do that, in the best way, based on our expertise, not necessarily the way they want or expect.
- Leave a mark on what we do.

Ideas

- Community
- Generosity
- Mission
- Impact
- Worth/Value

Summary

- Do things that matter.
- Push to production.
- Don't waste time on vanity projects.
- Push clients to release to the public.
- Fund non-profit and public-good work.
- Solve the problems that matter to you.
- Code quality matters.
- Developer ergonomics matter.
- Tested code is trusted code.
- Building for the end customer is more important than our clients.
- Encouraging clients to consider their end users benefits them and us.

Responsibility

Anecdotes

From one of our interns: When I was hired on, I was surprised to be trusted with so much work that would be communicated externally. At Radial, we try to exclusively hire people who we feel we can trust with all of the responsibilities their job entails. We believe that people will grow more if given the opportunity to make mistakes and learn how to fix them.

From one of our developers: I feel that people like me (whose lives are defined by their work) feel guilty about taking time off or taking care of themselves. I know that the company has to make an allowance for me to take care of myself. Here there is an understanding that people have lives that they have to live. Other work experiences have given me the feeling that rescheduling was an inconvenience for management more than anything else and should be avoided. At Radial, people pitch in and pick up each other's slack. There are no judgments about taking personal time when it's needed.

From one of our founders/developers: When I got annoyed at how much of a hassle turning off the white noise machine was, I was able to put time into solving it to everyone's benefit without needing to wait for authorization or having to do it on my own time. This attitude allows me to give back to the team without overthinking. At Radial, we want our employees to have the ability to improve their own lives at home and at work. We are always improving, and the creativity it takes to make that happen is approved of and even celebrated.

Goals

- Hire people who will care about their work.
- Work with people who are passionate about team success.
- Never worry that solving a problem will get you in trouble.
- Always know that it is the right decision to stand in the gap for the team or the customer.

Ideas

- Authority
- Empowerment
- Ownership

- Give-a-shit
- Trust/trusted
- Agency

Summary

- When you're a dev lead, it's your project, your product, your outcome.
- If a decision needs to be made, make it.
- Give people access to necessary resources.
- Everyone has the ability to make something right for a customer or a report.

Relationality:

Anecdotes

From a developer: As we work on projects alongside our clients, it is crucial for us to have open communication with them and a relationship that allows us to speak freely as friends do. Clint, for example, has been working with us for years now. We have seen Plan To Eat grow, and he has seen us grow. We value his friendship immensely, and it sets us apart from other companies.

From a developer: At a previous job, I asked for a day off because my dad was potentially going to need another surgery after a major accident. They would not allow me to take the day off. … At Radial I know taking a day off like this would never even be a question. They understand that life happens and we need time off to deal with it.

Similarly, there is a policy at Radial that more than two weeks could not be taken off consecutively without permission. I wanted an extra week so that I could return from a mission trip with everyone else. I asked for this months in advance, but was told no. I adjusted my request to be two weeks and two days, but was still told no. With our current leadership and values I know that Radial is flexible, and with enough notice and planning would give everyone as much time off as they asked for, or at least seek a compromise if they can't give everything.

Goals

- Maintain relationships beyond working at Radial.

- Support people's goals, even when it is not in the immediate interest of the company.
- Develop friendships with our clients that transcend our business relationship.
- Value each person's special experiences and contributions.

Ideas

- Safety/acceptance
- Belonging
- Respect
- Inclusive
- Goodwill
- (Good) relationship
- Fidelity/faithfulness
- Team/esprit de corps/welcoming

Summary

- Always put a relationship with the person first: client, peer, report, supervisor.
- Be the bigger person.
- Don't keep score (but do put your hours in on time).
- Focus on other people's spirit, not on their socio-political identity, capability, or capacity.