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**Article**

## GOOGLE: a reflection of culture, leader, and management

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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Open Access



# GOOGLE: a reflection of culture, leader, and management

Sang Kim Tran<sup>1,2</sup>

## Abstract

This paper provides a viewpoint of the culture and subcultures at Google Inc., which is a famous global company, and has a huge engineering staff and many talented leaders. Through its history of development, it has had positive impacts on society; however, there have been management challenges. The Board of Directors (BoDs) developed and implemented a way to measure the abilities of their managers, which helped to identify problems. This paper will analyze the case study of Harvard Business Review, Oxygen Project, and clarify the management problem in Google's organization. It will also compare Google with Zappos, a much smaller organization, and present how the BoDs of Zappos assesses its culture and subcultures. In this paper, we will recommend eight important points to building an organizational culture that is positive for stable growth of a company. We believe that much of what be learned could be useful to other business leaders, regardless of company scale.

**Keywords:** Culture, Subculture, Organizational culture, Management style, Oxygen project, Google

## Introduction

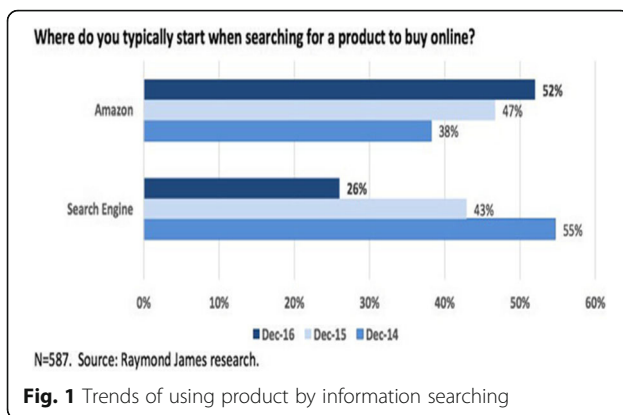
In a large society, each company is considered a miniature society (Mawere 2011). Similar to large societies with large cultures, small societies also need to build their own cultures. A culture is influenced by many factors and determines if it is a great culture. Corporate culture requires both the attention to the efficiency of production and business and to the relationship among people in the organization closely (Bhagat et al. 2012). Regardless if it is a large or a small organization, it must encounter issues of cooperation among individuals and groups. There are many factors leading to the success of business process re-engineering in higher education (BPR), the main four elements are culture, processes, structure, and technology. Culture is listed as number one (Ahmad et al. 2007). Hence, culture becomes the most important factor to the success of the development of a business. Organizational culture is the set of shared beliefs (Steiber and Alänge 2016), values, and norms that influence the way members think, feel, and behave. Culture is created by means of terminal and instrumental values, heroes, rites and rituals, and communication

networks (Barman n.d.). The primary methods of maintaining organizational culture are through the socialization process by which an individual learns the values, expected behaviors, and necessary social knowledge to assume their roles in the organization. In addition, (Gupta and Govindarajan 2000) and Fig. 1 in (Ismail Al-Alawi et al. 2007) illustrates that culture was established by six major factors, such as information systems, people, process, leadership, rewarding system, and organization structure. Therefore, there is a wide variety of combined and sophisticated cultures in the workplace, especially in big corporations like Google, Facebook, Proctor & Gamble, etc. Each organization tends to have a common goal, which is to create a culture that is different from other companies and to promote their teams to be creative in developing a distinctive culture (Stimpson and Farquharson 2014). Clearly, we can see that Google's culture is different than others. What makes this company unique and different from others, as well as the dominant cultures and subcultures existing at this company? How do leadership behaviors impact the organizational culture? By operating a case study of a Harvard Business Review to analyze its organizational culture, subsequently, having compared it with Zappos' culture, this paper will clarify the similarities and differences in managing organizational cultures

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between them and consider whether the solutions for the problems can be applied to other business models, and for tomorrow leaders or not?

### Company overview

This part shows how Google became famous in the world and its culture and subcultures made it a special case for others to take into consideration. Google is one of the few technology companies which continue to have one of the fastest growth rates in the world. It began by creating a search engine that combined PageRank system, developed by Larry Page (ranking the importance of websites based on external links), and Web search engine, created by Sergey Brin (accessing a website and recording its content), two co-founders of the company (Jarvis 2011; Downes 2007). Google's achievements absolutely do not come from any luck. Google has made extra efforts in creating an index of a number of websites, which have been up to 25 billion websites. This also includes 17 million images and one billion messages to Usenet group (Downes 2007). Besides searching for websites, Google users are able to search for PDF files, PostScript, documents, as well as Microsoft, Lotus, PowerPoint and Shockwave files. Google processes nearly 50% of search queries all over the world. Moreover, it is the number one search option for web users and is one of the top five websites on the Internet, which have more than 380 million users and 28 billion visits every month, and more than 50% of access from countries outside the US (Desjardins 2017). Google's technology is rather special: it can analyze millions of different variables of users and businesses who place advertisements. It then connects them with millions of potential advertisements and gives messages of advertisement, which is closest to objects in less than one second. Thus, Google has the higher rate of users clicking advertisements than its opponent Yahoo, from 50 to 100%, and it dominates over

70% market share of paid advertisements (Rosenberg 2016). Google's self-stated mission: "to organize the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful (Alves n.d.)." Nowadays, it is believed that people in the world like "Google" with words "the useful-lively information storage".

### Company culture

Researching Google's culture, we would know Laszlo Bock, Head of People Operations at Google, the equivalence of Human Resources (HR) Director at other companies. "People operation" is a combination of science and human resources where Google looks at everything from a perspective of data (McAfee and Brynjolfsson 2012; Cukier and Mayer-Schoenberger 2013). As a result, Google is always in the top companies throughout the last time.

Operating HR is obviously a field of science at Google. They are constantly experimenting and innovating to find the best way to satisfy employees and to help them work effectively. They do everything based on collecting and processing of collected data, using data to evaluate staff and to help them improve their work efficiency (Davenport et al. 2010). If an organization wants to hire talented people who cannot be recruited in cash, they must focus on building a great working culture. This includes working environment, meaningful work, and employees' freedom (Meek 2015).

Google is really touched by this philosophy, not just planning it out loud. They constantly experiment it, then improve it because it is paramount to the success of the company. For whichever company, all things start with people. A great company needs great people. One way to attract and retain such people is to make their work interesting. Mark Twain said: "Work and play are words used to describe the same thing under differing conditions (Emmerich 2009)."

Before heading to know about the culture, as well as subcultures, it is necessary to understand explicitly what cultures and subcultures are. At page 27 in (Schein 2009), "culture is a pattern of shared tacit assumptions learned or developed by a group as it solves its problems of external adaptation and internal integration that have worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems." How about subcultures? The author, Schein claimed that the bigger an organization is, the more subcultures it contains because it is explained that "when organizations grow and mature, they not only develop their own overall cultures, but they also differentiate themselves in many subcultures based on occupations, product lines, functions, geographies, and echelons in the hierarchy" (Schein 2009). According to (Петрушенко et al. 2006;

Eliot 2010; Zimmermann 2015; Martin 2004; Yergler 2013), needless to say, that Google exists with a special culture and a wide variety of subculture because of its non-stop development. Thanks to the video clips (see at “*Culture inside Google*”; “*Google Culture*”; “*Google’s organizational culture*”), as well as a myriad of websites on the Internet mentioning the culture of Google, it facilitates us to understand more about Google’s culture and learn more lessons about the different ways to manage this company by the establishers.

### Predominant culture at Google

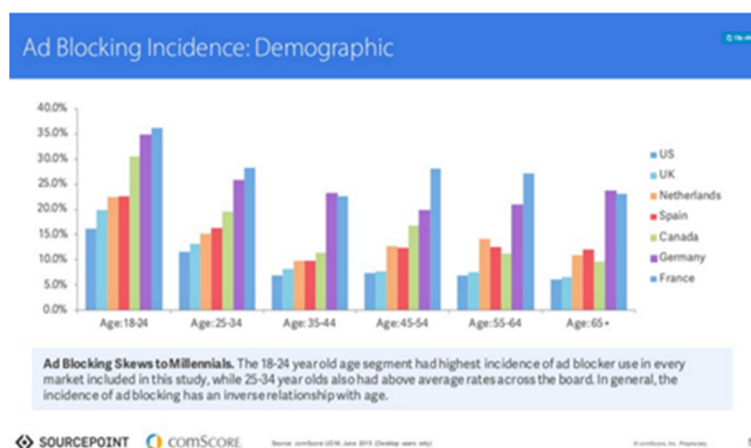
The dominant culture in the organization depends on the environment in which the company operates the organization’s objectives, the belief system of the employees, and the company’s management style. Therefore, there are many organizational cultures (Schein 2017). The Exhibit 3.1 at page 39 in (Schein 2009) provides what culture is about. For example, employee follows a standard procedure with a strict adherence to hierarchy and well-defined individual roles and responsibilities. Those in competitive environments, such as sales may forget strict hierarchies and follow a competitive culture where the focus is on maintaining strong relationships with external parties. In this instance, the strategy is to attain competitive advantages over the competition. The collaborative culture is yet another organizational way of life. This culture presents a decentralized workforce with integrated units working together to find solutions to problems or failure.

Why do many large companies buy its innovation? Because its dominant culture of 99% defect-free operational excellence squashes any attempts at innovation, just like a Sumo wrestler sitting on a small gymnast (Grossman-Kahn and Rosensweig 2012). They cannot accept failures. In fact, failure is a

necessary part of innovation and Google took this change by Oxygen Project to measure the abilities of their multicultural managers. This means that Google itself possesses multiple different cultures (see Google’s clips). Like Zappos, Google had established a common, organizational culture for the whole offices that are distinctive from the others. The predominant culture aimed at Google is an open culture, where everybody and customer can freely contribute their ideas and opinions to create more comfortable and friendly working environment (Hsieh 2010a).

The fig. 2.1 in chapter two of (Schein 2009) and page 17 in part one of (Schein 2017) provide us three levels of culture which are *Artifacts*, *Espoused values* and *Underlying assumptions* helping us to understand the culture at Google. At page 84, in (Schein 2009), the “artifacts” are identified such as dress codes, level of formality in authority relationships, working hours, meeting (how often, how run, timing), how are decisions made, communication, social events, jargon, uniforms, identity symbols, rites and rituals, disagreements and conflicts, balance between work and family. It seems that Google is quite open in these artifacts by showing a respect for uniform and national culture of each staff individually and giving them the right to wear traditional clothes.

Working at Google, employees enjoy free food served throughout the day, a volleyball court, a swimming pool, a car wash, an oil change, a haircut, free health care, and many other benefits. The biggest benefit for the staff is to be picked up on the day of work. As assessed by many traffic experts, the system set up by Google is considered to be a great transport network. Tad Widby, a project manager and a traffic system researcher throughout the United States, said: “I have not seen any larger projects in the Bay Area as well as in urban areas across the country” (Helft 2007). Of course, it is impossible for



**Fig. 2** Ad Blocking Incidence

Google to “cover up the sky”, so Yahoo also started implementing the bus project for employees in 2005. On peak days, Yahoo’s bus also took off. Pick up about 350 employees in San Francisco, as well as Berkeley, Oakland, etc. These buses run on biofuels and have Wi-Fi coverage. Yet, Danielle Bricker, the Yahoo bus coordinator of Yahoo, has also admitted that the program is “indirectly” inspired by Google’s initiative (Helft 2007). Along with that, eBay recently also piloted shuttle bus transfers at five points in San Francisco. Some other corporations are also emerging ideas for treatment of staff is equally unique. Facebook is an example, instead of facilitating employees far from the workplace; it helps people in the immediate neighborhood by offering an additional \$10,000 for an employee to live close to the pillar within 10 miles, nearby the Palo Alto Department (Hall 2015).

When it comes to Google, people often ask what the formula for success is. The answer here is the employees of Google. They create their own unique workplace culture rules to create an effective work environment for their employees. And here are the most valuable things to learn from Google’s corporate culture (Scott 2008) that we should know:

#### ***Tolerate with mistakes and help staff correct***

At Google, paying attention to how employees work and helping them correct mistakes is critical. Instead of pointing out the damage and blaming a person who caused the mistake, the company would be interested in what the cause of the problem was and how to fix it as quickly and efficiently as possible.

Also as its culture, we understand that if we want to make breakthroughs in the workplace, we need to have experimentation, failure and repeat the test. Therefore, mistakes and failures are not terrible there. We have the right to be wrong and have the opportunity to overcome failure in the support of our superiors and colleagues. Good ideas are always encouraged at Google. However, before it is accepted and put into use, there is a clear procedure to confirm whether it is a real new idea and practical or not?

#### ***Exponential thought***

Google developed in the direction of a holding company - a company that does not directly produce products or provide services but simply invest in capital by buying back capital. In the company, the criteria for setting the ten exponential function in lieu of focusing only on the change in the general increase. This approach helps Google improve its technology and deliver great products to consumers continuously.

#### ***The talent***

Of course, every company wants to hire talented people to work for them. However, being talented is an art in which there must be voluntary work and enthusiasm for the work of the devotees. At page 555 in (Saffold 1988) illustrated that distinctive cultures dramatically influencing performance do exist. Likewise, Google, Apple, Netflix, and Dell are 40% more productive than the average company which attracts top-tier employees and high performers (Vozza 2017). Recognizing this impact, Google created a distinctive corporate culture when the company attracted people from prestigious colleges around the world (West 2016; Lazear and Gibbs 2014).

#### ***Build a stimulating work environment***

When it comes to the elements that create creativity and innovation, we can easily recognize that the working environment is one of the most important things. Google has succeeded in building an image of a creative working. Google offices are individually designed, not duplicated in any type of office. In fact, working environment at Google is so comfortable so that employees will not think of it as a working room, with a full area of work, relaxation, exercise, reading, watching movies. Is the orientation of Google’s corporate culture to stimulate creativity and to show interest in the lives of employees so that volunteers contribute freely (Battelle 2011)?

Subculture is also a culture, but for a smaller group or community in a big organization (Crosset and Beal 1997). Google, known as the global company with many more offices, so there are many subcultures created among groups of people who work together, from subcultures among work groups to subcultures among ethnic groups and nations, multi-national groups, as well as multiple occupations, functions, geographies, echelons in the hierarchy and product lines. For example, six years ago, when it bought 100 Huffys for employees to use around the sprawling campus, has since exploded into its own subculture. Google now has a seven-person staff of bicycle mechanics that maintains a fleet of about 1300 brightly-colored Google bikes. The company also encourages employees to cycle to work by providing locker rooms, showers and places to securely park bikes during working hours. And, for those who want to combine meetings with bike-riding, Googlers can use one of several seven-person (Crowley 2013).

#### ***Leadership influences on the culture at Google***

From the definition of leadership and its influence on culture; so what does leader directly influence the culture existed? According to Schein, “culture and leadership are two sides of the same coin and one cannot understand one without the other”, page three in (Schein 2009). If one of us has never read the article “Google



and the Quest to create a better boss” in the New York Times, it is listed in a priority reading. It breaks the notion that managers have no change. The manager really makes a difference (Axinn 1988; Carver 2011). In fact, a leader has a massive impact on the culture of the company, and Google is not an exception. The leaders of Google concerned more about the demands and abilities of each individual, the study of the nature of human being, an appreciation their employees as their customers. At Google, the founders thought they could create a company that people would want to work at when creating a home-like environment. It is real that they focus on the workplace brings the comfort to staff creatively and freely (Lebowitz 2013).

In my opinion, a successful business cannot be attributed solely from a single star; that needs the brightness of all employees. It depends very much on the capacity and ability to attract talented people. It is the way in which the leader manages these talents, is the cornerstone of corporate culture. One thing that no one can deny is that a good leader must be a creator of a corporate culture so that the employees can maximize capabilities themselves (Driscoll and McKee 2007; Kotter 2008).

To brief, through the view of Google’s culture, BoDs tended and designed to encourage loyalty and creativity, based on an unusual organizational culture because culture is not only able to create an environment, but it also adapts to diverse and changes circumstances (Bulygo 2013).

### **Company growth and its impact**

“Rearrange information around the world, make them accessible everywhere and be useful.” This was one of the main purposes set by Larry Page and Sergey Brin when they first launched Google on September 4th, 1998, as a private company (Schmidt and Rosenberg 2014). Since then, Google has expanded its reach, stepped into the mobile operating system, provided mapping services and cloud computing applications, launched its own hardware, and prepared it to enter the wearable device market. However, no matter how varied and rich these products are, they are all about the one thing, the root of Google: online searching.

#### **1998–2001: Focus on search**

In its early years, Google.com was simply one with extreme iconic images: a colorful Google logo, a long text box in the middle of the screen, a button to execute. One button for searching and the other button are “I’m feeling lucky” to lead users to a random Google site. By May 2000, Google added ten additional languages to Google.com, including French, German, Italian, Swedish, Finnish, Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, Norwegian and Danish, etc. This is one of the milestones in Google’s

journey into the world. Google.com is available in over 150 languages (Scott 2008; Lee 2017).

#### **2001–2007: Interface card**

A very important event with Google around this time was the sale of shares to the public (IPO). In October 2003, Microsoft heard news of the IPO, so it quickly approached Google to discuss a buyout or business deal. Nevertheless, that intention was not materialized. In 2004, it was also the time when Google held a market share of 84.7% globally through collaboration with major Internet companies, such as Yahoo, AOL, and CNN. By February 2004, Yahoo stopped working with Google and separately stood out for engine search. This has led Google to lose some market share, but it has shown the importance and distinctness of Google. Nowadays, the term “Google” has been used as a verb just by visiting Google.com and doing an online search (Smith 2010). Not stopping at the homepage search, Google’s interface tag began to be brought to Gmail and Calendar with the links at the top of the page. Google homepage itself continues to use this style.

In 2006, Google also made an important acquisition to buy YouTube for \$1.65 billion (Burgess and Green 2013). However, the company decided to keep YouTube as a separate brand and not to include it in Google Video search. Thanks to the backing of an Internet industry giant, YouTube has grown to become the world’s largest online video sharing service (Cha et al. 2007).

#### **2007–2012: Navigation bar, Google menu, Google now**

Google began to deploy a new navigation bar located at the edge of the screen. It includes links to a place where to look for photos, videos, news, maps, as well as buttons to switch to Gmail, Calendar, and other services developed by the company. In the upper left corner, Google added a box displaying Google+ notifications and user accounts’ image. Google Now not only appeared on Android and it’s also brought to Chrome on a computer as well as iOS. All have the same operating principle, and the interface card still appears as Android it is.

#### **2013–2014: Simplified interface**

Google has moved all of the icons that lead to its other applications and services to an App Drawer button in the upper right hand, at the corner of the screen. In addition, Google.com also supports better voice search through the Chrome browser. Google has experimented with other markets, such as radio and print publications, and in selling advertisements from its advertisers within offline newspapers and magazines. As of November 2014, Google operates over 70 offices over 40 countries (Jarvis 2011; Vise 2007).

### 2014–2017: Chrome development and facing challenges

In 2015, Google would turn HTTPS into the default. The better website is, the more users will trust search engine. In 2016, Google announced Android version 7, introduced a new VR platform called Daydream, and its new virtual assistant, Google Assistant.

Most of Google's revenue comes from advertising (Rosenberg 2016). However, this "golden" business is entering a difficult period with many warning signs of its future. Google Search is the dominant strength of Google and bringing great revenue for the company. Nonetheless, when Amazon surpassed Google to become the world's leading product in the search engine in last December, this advantage began to wobble. This is considered a fatal blow to Google when iOS devices account for 75% of their mobile advertising revenue (Rosenberg 2016).

By 2016, the number of people installing software to block ads on phones has increased 102% from 2015. Figure 1 illustrates that by the year's end, about 16% of smart phone users around the world blocked their ads whilst surfing the web. These were also two groups having the most time on the Internet, high-earners and young people; however, these people have disliked ads (see Fig. 1).

Figure 2 shows the young people have the highest ad blocking rates. It is drawing a gloomy picture for the sustainable development of the online advertising industry in general and Google in particular. Therefore, in early 2017, Google has strategies to build an ad blocking tool, built into the Chrome browser. This tool allows users to access ads that have passed the "Coalition for Better Ads" filter so as to limit the sense of discomfort (see Fig. 2).

For the company impact, the history shows that speedy development of Google creates both economic and social impacts to followers in a new way of people connection (Savitz 2013). In this modern world, it seems that people cannot spend a day without searching any information in Google (Chen et al. 2014; Fast and Campbell 2004), a tool serves human information seeking needs. Even though when addressing this paper, it is also in need the information from Google search and uses it as a supporting tool. Nobody can deny the convenience of Google as a fast and easy way to search (Schalkwyk et al. 2010; Jones 2001; Langville and Meyer 2011).

### Research question and methodology

In order to get the most comprehensive data and information for this case analysis, a number of methods are used, including:

Research data and collect information were mostly from the Harvard Study (Project Oxygen), which has

been selected because it is related to the purpose of our study.

Data collection and analysis has been taken from Google Scholar and various websites related researches. We look at the history of appearance, development, and recognize the impacts of this company, as well as the challenges and the way the Board of Directors measures the abilities of their manager when the problem is found.

Analyzing: It was begun by considering expectations from the Harvard Study. Subsequently, considering the smaller organization (Zappos) in comparison of how its cultures and subcultures are accessed as well. Since then, the paper has clarified the management problem that Google and Zappos confront and deal with it so as to help other businesses apply this theoretical practice and achieve its goal beyond expectations.

In our paper, we mainly use the inductive method approach by compiling and describing the other authors' theories of corporate culture, especially Google and Zappos in merging and comparing, analyzing them and making our own results.

From the aspects of the research, the questions are suggested as below:

1. What is the most instrumental element found from the Harvard study?
2. Is there any difference and similarity between a huge company and a smaller enterprise in perspective of culture and subculture?
3. What makes Google different from others, the dominant cultures as well as subcultures existing? How do leadership behaviors impact on the organizational culture?
4. How organizational culture impacts on business achievements?

### The Harvard study

#### Project oxygen summary

This project began in 2009 known as "the manager project" with the People and Innovation Lab (PiLab) team researching questions, which helped the employee of Google become a better manager. The case study was conducted by Garvin (2013) about a behavior measurement to Google's manager, why managers matter and what the best managers do. In early days of Google, there are not many managers. In a flat structure, most employees are engineers and technical experts. In fact, in 2002 a few hundred engineers reported to only four managers. But over time and out of necessity, the number of managers increased. Then, in 2009, people and team culture at Google noticed a disturbing trend. Exit interview data cited low satisfaction with their manager as a reason for leaving Google. Because Google has

accessed so much online data, Google's statisticians are asked to analyze and identify the top attributes of a good manager mentioned with an unsolved question: "Do managers matter?" It always concerns all stakeholders at Google and requires a data-based survey project called Project Oxygen to clarify employees' concern, to measure key management behaviors and cultivate staff through communication and training (Bryant 2011; Garvin et al. 2013). Research -1 Exit Interviews, ratings, and semiannual reviews. The purpose is to identify high-scoring managers and low-scoring managers resulted in the former, less turnover on their teams, and its connection (manager quality and employee's happiness). As for "what the best managers do", Research-2 is to interview high and low scoring managers and to review their performance. The findings with 8 key behaviors illustrated by the most effective managers.

The Oxygen Project mirrors the managers' decision-making criteria, respects their needs for rigorous analysis, and makes it a priority to measure impact. In the case study, the findings prove that managers really have mattered. Google, initially, must figure out what the best manager is by asking high and low scoring managers such questions about communication, vision, etc. Its project identifies eight behaviors (Bulygo 2013; Garvin et al. 2013) of a good manager that considered as quite simple that the best manager at Google should have. In a case of management problem and solution, as well as discussing four- key theoretical concepts, they will be analyzed, including formal organizational training system, how culture influences behavior, the role of "flow" and building capacity for innovation, and the role of a leader and its difference from the manager.

## Analysis

### ***Formal organizational training system to create a different culture: Ethical culture***

If the organizational culture represents "how we do things around here," the ethical culture represents "how we do things around here in relation to ethics and ethical behavior in the organization" (Key 1999). Alison Taylor (The Five Levels of an Ethical Culture, 2017) reported five levels of an ethical culture, from an individual, interpersonal, group, intergroup to inter-organizational (Taylor 2017). In (Nelson and Treviño 2004), ethical culture should be thought of in terms of a multi-system framework included formal and informal systems, which must be aligned to support ethical judgment and action. Leadership is essential to driving the ethical culture from a formal and informal perspective (Schwartz 2013; Trevino and Nelson 2011). Formally, a leader provides the resources to implement structures and programs that support ethics. More informally, through their own behaviors, leadership is a role model whose actions speak louder than their words,

conveying "how we do things around here." Other formal systems include selection systems, policies and codes, orientation and training programs, performance management systems, authority structures, and formal decision processes. On the informal side are the organization's role models and heroes, the norms of daily behavior, organizational rituals that support or do not support ethical conduct, the stories people tell about the organization and their implications for conduct, and the language people use, etc. Is it okay to talk about ethics? Or is ethical fading the norm?

The formal and informal training is very important. The ethical context in organizations helps the organizational culture have a tendency to the positive or negative viewpoints (Treviño et al. 1998). The leader should focus on providing an understanding of the nature and reasons for the organization's values and rules, on providing an opportunity for question and challenge values for sincerity/practicality, and on teaching ethical decision-making skills related to encountered issues commonly. The more specific and customized training, the more effective it is likely to be. Google seemed to apply this theory when addressed the Oxygen Project.

### ***How culture influences behavior***

Whenever we approach a new organization, there is no doubt that we will try to get more about the culture of that place, the way of thinking, working, as well as behavior. And it is likely that the more diverse culture of a place is, the more difficult for outsiders to assess its culture becomes (Mosakowski 2004).

Realizing culture in (Schein 2009) including artifacts, espoused values and shared underlying assumptions. It is easier for outsiders to see the artifacts (visual objects) that a group uses as the symbol for a group; however, it does not express more about the espoused values, as well as tacit assumptions. In (Schein et al. 2010), the author stated: "For a culture assessment to be valuable, it must get to the assumptions level. If the client system does not get to assumptions, it cannot explain the discrepancies almost always surface between the espoused values and the observed behavioral artifacts" (Schein et al. 2010). Hence, in order to be able to assess other cultures well, it is necessary for us to learn each other's languages, as well as adapt to a common language. Moreover, we also need to look at the context of working, the solution for shared problems because these will facilitate to understand the culture better.

According to the OCP (Organizational Culture Profile) framework (Saremi and Nejad 2013), an organization is with possessing the innovation of culture, flexible and adaptable with fresh ideas, which is figured by flat hierarchy and title. For instance, Gore-Tex is an innovative product of W. L. Gore & Associates Inc., considered as



the company has the most impact on its innovative culture (Boudreau and Lakhani 2009). Looking at the examples of *Fast Company*, Genentech Inc., and Google, they also encourage their employees to take challenges or risks by allowing them to take 20% of their time to comprehend the projects of their own (Saremi and Nejad 2013). In (Aldrich n.d.), it is recorded that 25%–55% of employees are fully encouraged and giving a maximum value.

The famous quote by Peter Drucker, **“Culture eats strategy for Breakfast”** at page 67 has created a lot of interest in (Manning and Bodine 2012; Coffman and Sorensen 2013; Bock 2015). Despite we all know how important culture is, we have successively failed to address it (O'Reilly et al. 1991). The organizational research change process from the view of Schein (2009); it is a fact that whenever an organization has the intention of changing the culture, it really takes time. As we all acknowledge, to build an organizational culture, both leader and subordinate spend most of their time on learning, relearning, experiencing, as well as considering the most appropriate features. Sometimes, some changes are inevitable in terms of economic, political, technological, legal and moral threats, as well as internal discomfort (Kavanagh and Ashkanasy 2006; Schein 1983). As the case in (Schein 2009), when a CEO would like to make an innovation which is proved no effective response, given that he did not get to know well about the tacit implications at the place he has just come. It is illustrated that whatsoever change should need time and a process to happen (Blog 2015; Makhoul and Shevchuk 2008). In conclusion, a new culture can be learned (Schein 1984), but with an appropriate route and the profits for all stakeholders should be concerned by the change manager (Sathe 1983).

It is true that people's behavior managed by their types of culture (Kollmuss and Agyeman 2002). All tacit assumptions of insiders are not easy for outsiders to grasp the meaning completely (Schein 2009). It is not also an exception at any organization. Google is an example of the multicultural organization coming from various regions of the world, and the national or regional cultures making this multicultural organization with an official culture for the whole company.

In this case, the organizational culture of Google has an influence on the behaviors of manager and employee. In addition, as for such a company specializes in information technology, all engineers prefer to work on everything with data-evidence to get them involved in the meaningful survey about manager (Davenport et al. 2010). Eventually, Google discovered 8 good behaviors of manager, which effect to the role of “flow” also (Bulygo 2013; Garvin et al. 2013).

### ***The role of the “flow” and building capacity for innovation***

More and more people are using the term of “patient flow”. This overview describes patient flow and links to theories about flow. Patient flow underpins many improvement tools and techniques. The term “flow” describes the progressive movement of products, information, and people through a sequence of the process. In simple terms, flow is about uninterrupted movement (Nave 2002), like driving steadily along the motorway without interruptions or being stuck in a traffic jam. In healthcare, flow is the movement of patients, information or equipment between departments, office groups or organizations as a part of a patient's care pathway (Bessant and Maher 2009). In fact, flow plays a vital role in getting stakeholders involved in working creatively and innovatively (Adams 2005; Amabile 1997; Forest et al. 2011). An effective ethical leader must create flow in work before transfer it to employees for changing the best of their effort to maintain, keep and develop “flow” in an engineering job, which job be easier to get stress. Definitely, Google gets it done very well.

### ***Role of a leader and its difference from a manager***

In every social interaction, whether we are aware of it or not, we function as a leader. We not only reinforce and act as part of the present cultural dynamics but also influence it when introducing new cultural elements based on our values, beliefs and associated actions and behaviors (Gifford and Peter 2008). Over time, these new elements have the ability to strengthen and enhance culture or eroding and weaken it. A “leader” and a “manager” is separated (Ibrahim and Cordes 1996). A leader is a person gives a clear strategic vision to get a manager does (Bertocci 2009), and a manager is a person supports a leader to plan-do/develop-control-evaluate-improve/adjust tasks given to employee (Jones and Hill 2012) and has formal influence (Les Dlabay 2016). In deeper perspective, there is a difference between these two terms. However, how leader's and employee's behaviors at every level influence on cultures and subcultures that arise, as well as how the total system does function as a whole (Kollmuss and Agyeman 2002). When the responsibility for creating and preserving organizational culture ultimately lies with a senior leadership, it is important to recognize that every employee plays a unique role as culture creator, evolver, manager, and leader (Aldrich n.d.; Schein 1983). At Google, it must be admitted that they, founder, leader and manager all channel to create a comfortable place completely and a dynamic culture for getting the creativity of their engineers; as a result, the employees feel free and really enjoy their works (Scott 2008). There is no longer barrier, concrete hierarchy between employers and employees, managers and engineers (Garvin 2013). The head thing is to flow

in work to produce the best product for the users. This is a leader who can help all followers achieve the comfort and reap benefits for Google.

The proficient technical knowledge cannot help an individual create a good manager: A good engineer with 10-times higher productivity cannot make him the best manager. Having good technical knowledge is very important, but it is also the lowest of eight criteria set by Google.

## Discussion

It cannot be denied the interplay of culture creation, re-enactment, and reinforcement creates interdependency between culture and leadership. Schein (Schein 2009) conveyed that culture exists in a group of a community; it reflects people's belief, lifestyle, as well as norms of that group. It is not easy for outsiders to grasp all assumptions of the culture of a group. It seems that culture is with us in all facets of our life, it controls and determines people's behaviors and it is likely that culture in each individual is accumulated gradually during the course of their lifetime. Cultures, as well as subcultures among different groups, are not identical. Cultures and subcultures are considered as the norms for all members' behavior in that group. Culture resides within each individual, on the other hand, in each organization or community, there seems to be a hidden force to lead and instruct the ways that organization performs, which is called culture.

Culture is created, reenacted, as well as reinforced through time. For example, as a new leader of an organization, he or she is the one to create and build on the norms for his or her group. Although each individual in that group comes from other small subcultures, working together in the new group, they have to follow and adapt to the new principles that are required by the leader. However, there are some situations in which the leader is from another culture and move to manage in a deep-rooted cultural group, he or she is expected to adapt to the new environment, given that it is not easy to change the culture of a group quickly and completely. In a nutshell, in order to be more successful in managing organizational culture, a leader should take the establishment and development of stakeholder's cultures into careful consideration. In chapter one of *Notes towards the Definition of Culture* (Eliot 2010), the author gave three senses of "culture" and its applied difference based on the distance in relation to the individual, the group, and society with its consciousness to develop a culture. It means that culture has different associations in different organizations or subjects (an individual, a group or class, a whole society). Furthermore, Adler and Gundersen (Adler and Gundersen 2007) indicate that: "the more culturally self-aware we are, the more able we

are to predict the effect our behavior will have on others". This means that self-awareness of culture is directly related to individuals, groups and societies behaviors, as well as their cultural background (Mor et al. 2013). Subsequently, that would reflect existing conceptions of the culture shape (Sackmann and Phillips 2004). The knowledge of cultural self-awareness is to understand one's cultural identity, principles, and prejudices. As we develop our self-awareness, not only can we express our own cultural identity, principles, and prejudices, but we can also start moving from enjoying our own perspective about that culture to being comfortable with a new perspective. The consciousness of culture takes us to a further growth step of seeking the similarities to the complexities of the culture based on the differences of other cultures (Quappe and Cantatore 2005). Despite small and medium or large enterprises, human development is a factor of corporate culture. A leader, the most important individual of an organization, is the most responsible for building the corporate culture. They, therefore, must be the example of building a corporate culture. They must make wise decisions in building a culture of values and must be a successful leader in achieving the goals set out to motivate the members of the company. Then, a new culture of a business can explore and discover the potential of all members (Schein 1983). However, each leader brings a different way of behavior, and thinking, which includes working among subordinates. When a leader would like to change the tradition, the norms in working relationships and principles rooted by the previous leader, the employee must adapt a new way of thinking, behaving and working. In some cases, it may be a challenging time for some followers and conflicts may emerge given misunderstandings in the different tactics between the new leader and the follower. Hence, in order to obtain a successful culture change, the change manager should have an obvious plan for his culture change strategy (Kavanagh and Ashkanasy 2006). In "Internationalization of services brands: The role of leadership during the internal brand building process" (Vallaster and De Chernatony 2005), Vallaster and Chernatony argued about a leadership role in building a strategy for an organizations culture, which was based on the capacity to leverage cognitive, effective, and communicative differences among culturally-diverse staff. It means that the culture that a leader creates play an instrumental role in the success of the business.

The existence of subcultures has been discussed in many papers (Howard-Grenville 2006). Subcultures can be shaped in the organization around levels of hierarchy (Riley 1983) or around the uniqueness of the roles and structure of the business, such as departments (Hofstede 1998), function, and occupation (Van Maanen and

Barley 1984). Also, subcultures can be distinguished around private contacts, networks, and individual differences, such as ethnic groups and gender groups (Martin 2001). In contrast, a variety of approaches build the subsequent expectations on the correlation between the corporative agreement of stable development and organizational culture, including various subcultures can exist within an organization and various attitudes of participants of each subculture.

In comparing leaders of Google Inc. with other leaders, we look at Tony Hsieh, an internet entrepreneur, venture capitalist, and founder and CEO of Zappos' Inc., an online shoe, and clothing store (Staley 2013; Zhang 2008; McNeill 2017). Hsieh regularly displayed happiness to create his own company's culture in a different way of "happiness to culture". Hsieh explains living by these core values to create an authentic culture within Zappos.com. These values took over a year to be developed and were revisited annually through the utilization of employee insight and reflection. To build his company's culture he listened to feedback from customers, staff, and even competitors.

Zappos takes the importance of culture fit in their hiring. The candidate is never asked about their knowledge of Zappos' when applying or interviewing for a job. Zappos wants them to apply to become "Zappos Insider" (Hsieh 2010b). This recruiting strategy gets people to be closer to Zappos than others. Therefore, they can study more and talk with the employer about their abilities and interests. It seems that Zappos cares about and want to know the candidate, who may become a part of the team in the future. In stark contrast, Google is different in its hiring and workplace culture by building a network of "culture clubs" and locals. It has allowed them to maintain the company culture in each of over 70 offices around the world with rules which included: "trust the employees; recruit only those are better than you; do not confuse development with managing performance" (Meek 2015).

It is really inspiring to live and work in the Zappos environment where all employees are encouraged to be themselves. It took Tony Hsieh a long time to find out these core values in order to build a successful organizational culture. With his hard work in this area, he really deserves the success. He has succeeded in creating a working place where all employees feel extremely comfortable. In reviewing the three video clips, ten core values,<sup>1</sup> Tony Hsieh, CEO of Zappos,<sup>2</sup> and featured on 20/20,<sup>3</sup> we can enjoy the creative, friendly, free, and above all, inspiring atmosphere at this working place. We can feel that all employees are not coming here to work, but to enjoy the journey to their ultimate creativity and bring back the real and wonderful shoe products for their customers with their distinctive flow. These are things leaders should

consider if they would like to set up a successful and efficient organizational culture.

In his textbooks (Hsieh 2010a; Hsieh 2010b), Hsieh cued some ways of cultural assessment, such as through individual and group interviews, surveys and questionnaires, problem solutions, cultural assumption identifications and subculture concerns. In fact, it is not easy to evaluate a culture due to the fact that culture is deep, stable, and complex. Culture is the underlying assumptions of each individual and group; never can these instruments like questionnaires or surveys determine its identity. However, identifying cultural assumptions at a certain level can facilitate the process of cultural assessment. Moreover, it is believed that understanding the process can also be a preparation for each individual to evolve or change culture even.

Although Google and Zappos do business in different fields, they share the same point of establishing an organizational culture to bring the best for their employees. Tony Hsieh highlighted: "your culture is your brand", so to make employees feel happy and enjoy the working environment (Hsieh 2009). Zappos creates a culture of happiness (Hsieh 2010b) and Google creates a motivating place to work (Crowley 2013; Garvin et al. 2013). Google builds a workforce which reflects and understands the needs of all employees.

The question is raised, **what cultures are you a member of? Which has the greatest influence on you day-to-day?**

From our research, the notion of culture has been improved a lot. It is not as simple as we originally thought. There are many different ways of living, beliefs, and core values, and what we witness cannot fully express the culture of a group or an organization. If we want to understand explicitly what culture is, we must get to know the backgrounds and histories of the insiders from that cultures, as well as subcultures.

From what we know so far, every group or community has their own group culture. Schein said "Culture is a property of a group. Whenever a group has enough common experience, a culture begins to form. One finds cultures at the level of small teams, families, and work groups" (Schein 2009). Moreover, the culture is sometimes considered to be similar, but there is always a particular distinctive discrepancy that differentiates the culture of this group from others and one is believed to belong to more than one kind of cultures during the course of their life. Therefore, we could be working under multi-positions, as well as some other kinds of societies such as class, professional club etc. We are a member of some kinds of subcultures and enjoy the culture of our country.

Organizational cultures have a big influence on our day-to-day practices. For example, for those working as a representative of the government, as a bridge between authority and people, among customers, partners, staff, leaders, and managers, understanding your partners' cultures brings positive outcomes. These cultures require us to try hard to improve our interpersonal communication, as well as boost our own identity in society. Although the norms from the subcultures may have impacts on our behavior to a certain extent, we find that they all accumulate to supplement for our diversity and we can compare them to choose the best practices to serve our followers.

### Conclusion

Those considering a new job, their roles and responsibilities at the place they work and its organizational culture will be at the top of the list of employees' consideration (Schmidt and Rosenberg 2014). The results of Project Oxygen explore the performance of Google's best technical managers, the most instrumental element found was "making that connection" between manager and employee. The connection between them is vital, but it is only a part of the study. This paper first recognizes that employees who give their best efforts and align their behaviors with organizational goals, frequently use the word "connection" to describe why they are so devoted; culture and subculture would play a crucial role in business achievement, for a smooth operation.

In the case study, it is obvious that the feeling of connection among management, employees, and customers accommodate a competitive advantage. Whenever we approach a new organization, there is no doubt that we will try to know more about the culture of that place, the way of thinking, working, as well as behavior. And it is likely that the more diverse culture of a place is; the more difficult for outsiders to assess the culture of that place becomes. The achievements of Google and Zappos proved that they clarify ways they apply to assess an organizational culture successfully. They create a good connection among their stockholders, partners, followers, customers, and newcomers. So, what is the fantastic connection? Chapter one in (Stallard 2009), the connection is what transforms a dog-eat-dog environment into a sled dog team that pulls together. It is implied that leaders should encourage to organizing open events for employees as often as possible to give them opportunities to interact, as well as get to know each other's culture. In addition, a leader must not create a barrier between him and employees. Instead, a leader should be the opener and more harmonious in their relationship so that subordinate can feel at ease when they would like to comment or share their opinions. We

totally agree with this point because of the fact that if a leader does not set the tone first, no employees dare to express their issues. It will make it difficult for a new organizational culture to become common and cultural boundaries will be difficult to solve. All in all, a leader is a key feature in fostering the organizational culture or connection culture. The core factors of a connection culture that fit these human needs are **vision, value, and voice**.

This paper also interested in the point is something called "cultural intelligence". In this modern world, with the development of science and technology, multinational companies, multicultural unit, each person experiences more than one culture during the course of their life, it is vital for each of us to be trained to become a culture expert in some extent. The most common set of diverse culture is at the workplace, we must communicate with different people from different culture, diverse ways of thinking, behaving, working as well as feeling, people should be wiser to realize that diverse cultures and deal well with them to avoid cultural shock. Google and Zappos are the places of connection culture. Multinational people come and work together, so culture intelligence is a necessary quality for a more successful future leader. He or she not only learn it for himself or herself but also for his or her followers. It is his or her responsibility to coach and chooses which culture is the most suitable for his or her organization. This is really useful and noteworthy for other businesses, tomorrow leaders, and all of us in an attempt to help us to survive be harmonious in this world.

From what we know so far, every group or community has their own group culture. Schein said "Culture is a property of a group. Whenever a group has enough common experience, a culture begins to form. One finds cultures at the level of small teams, families, and work groups" (Schein 2009). Moreover, the culture is maybe sometimes considered to be similar, but there is always a particular distinctive discrepancy that differentiates the culture of this group from others and one is believed to belong to more than one kind of cultures during the course of their life. We, therefore, could be working under multi-positions, as well as some other kinds of societies, such as class, professional club, etc. We are a member of several of subcultures and enjoy the culture of our country.

Reflecting on the personal and working experiences and on the research we have read, we discovered eight important points that Google reflects:

1. A good company is a company run by a distinctive culture and subculture.
2. Organizational culture is a key factor in every company's success and everlasting. Why is culture



management a vital issue for a business? Companies, especially, big ones, nowadays attract many labors from various areas with a variety of education, specialty, consciousness, social relation, etc., which create a diversified and complicated environment, along with keen competition of market economy and globalization trends, they must research and find out reasonable changes to develop and exist. What do companies do to be viable? We think every company builds and maintains its own different culture to make their employees performs well their duties and focus on company's development.

3. A good leader must create a corporate culture that boosts employee with value shared.
4. A good manager is a good coach.
5. "Connection" culture varies enormously across organizations based upon local culture and leadership.
6. Culture is not fixed, it's up to the situation, environment, historical circumstances, relationships etc., the culture will be gradually adapted.
7. The better culture is, the much more working environment is creative, innovative and competitive for a common company's development and employee's career development.
8. The comfortable working environment encourages and gives people opportunities to interact as well as get to know about each other's culture.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Foundation: Tony Hsieh on Building a Great Company Culture

<sup>2</sup>Core Values of Culture – Tony Hsieh (Zappos)

<sup>3</sup>Tony Hsieh, CEO of Zappos, featured on 20/20

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## Authors' contributions

The completed paper is solely written by the corresponding author.

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I obviously inform that there is not any competing interest to this paper.

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