

## ***Googles Employee and Technology Focus***



Do you Google? So many people use the ubiquitous search engine that its name has become part of our Internet language. In fact, Google's 10,000 servers process more than 200 million search queries in 90 languages every day, over half of them from users outside the United States. Google's success is even more amazing because this profitable company of 1,000 employees began just a few years ago (1998) in the dorm rooms of Stanford University graduate students Larry Page and Sergey Brin (shown in photo).

Google is a living laboratory where continuous experimentation and customer feedback are part of the knowledge creation process. Google engineers are expected to devote a quarter of their time to new ideas. Ten full-time staff scan the constant flow of user e-mails and redirect this vital feedback throughout the company. When Google scientist Krishna Bharat created a prototype of a dynamic news service, a beta version was publicly released just a few months later. With extensive public feedback and further development, Google News has become a runaway hit with several versions around the planet. "A public trial helps you go fast," explains Marissa Mayer, an engineer who worked on the Google News project. "If it works, it builds internal passion and fervor. It gets people thinking about the problem."

Google's focus on employees is almost as intense as its focus on technology. The Googleplex (Google's headquarters) is a unique oasis, complete with Lava Lamps, rubber exercise balls, and free gourmet meals. The company boasts work-life balance, generous health benefits, and a team-based environment where employees work in "high density clusters remarkably reflective of our server setup, with three or four staffers sharing spaces with couches and dogs." Every Friday, employees gather to hear about the company's performance during the previous week. "We want everyone to know exactly how the company's doing, exactly where we stand in relation to our goals," says Craig Silverstein, Google's director of technology and first employee hired after Page and Brin.

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Google carefully selects new recruits. "We are definitely growing slower than we would otherwise because of our stringent hiring standards," Silverstein admits. The result is a geeky culture that reflects the beliefs of its founders. "These are people who think they are creating something that's the best in the world," says Peter Norvig, a Google engineering director. "And that product is changing people's lives."

Companies can learn from this example. Google has become a powerful force on the Internet, but its real power comes from the company's effective application of organizational behavior theories and concepts. Google employees are driven by a strong corporate culture derived from company founders Larry Page and Sergey Brin. The company encourages creativity and knowledge sharing. It motivates employees through perks and exciting work opportunities, and it engages in careful person-job matching.

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