CHECKLIST: MISSION

Your Mission equals your Why and embodies in your Culture.

START ON DAY 1

Mission is not something you can just decide, you have to build it. You do not need to have a mission on day 1, it works like a virtuous circle: success brings confidence, confidence brings a more ambitious mission, that brings success… Mission grows in ambition with time but culture should be clear and strong on day 1: be crystal clear about who you are and how you want to work. You can pivot, iterate, change your name, your processes, etc: your What and your How can change, but your Why cannot change.

DO NOT RECRUIT ON SKILLS

Be with people that look like you. At the beginning, diversity in terms of age, family situation, etc never really works. It is not about age in itself, it is about mindset. Hire only stars: stars are not the persons with the best CVs, they are the persons who feel that your company is where they truly belong. Remember that the awesomeness of a company is proportional to the number of employees who work there for the Why more than for their salary.

ALIGN YOUR WORDS AND ACTIONS

Culture is not what you say or what you write: it reflects in who you hire, who you promote, how you pay your employees. Your culture is strong when there is a perfect alignment between what you think, what you say and what you do.

DO NOT TRY TO LOOK GOOD

Culture does not necessarily look good. A good culture rejects as much as it adopts. Every culture relies on a set of values. Beware of bullshit values: these are values that no one can be against such as being innovative or honest. Real values are easily recognizable because their opposites are also acceptable values such as Facebook's openness vs Snapchat's secrecy.

DO NOT TRY TO IMITATE OR TO COMPARE

Culture is about expressing something very intimate. If you try to copy the culture of others without sharing their goals, you'll hurt your company badly. Besides, there is not a culture that is better than the others. Culture is a choice that is not good nor bad, what is bad is when you do not make a choice.

DO NOT CONFUSE BUILDING CULTURE WITH ESTABLISHING PERKS AND STICKING CUTE POSTERS

Do not confuse symbols with real management actions. Bermudas, babyfoots, cats etc are only nice-to-haves, they are the consequences of your culture, not its foundations. Posters are nice, they convey what you want to say, but writing things is not enough.

DEFINE YOUR ENEMY

Every good culture has an enemy. Who is yours? Knowing what you fight for will create a sacred unity. It is a very old political trick: create a war to focus people on it instead of internal politics. Same applies to startups. The enemy is outside.

DO NOT IMPLEMENT PROCESSES TOO EARLY

Every time a process is implemented, your employees' behaviour is impacted. It is called mechanism design: it is how people act when incentivised to do something. Mechanism design is the architecture of culture. For instance, Facebook implemented the "one mile rule": FB employees earn 2 000$ less on their salary if they live farer than one mile from the office. Beware: rules take over people's brains, every process has a side effect. Budget allocations for instance, with new budget being increased only if the previous one were totally spent, can kill a company.

FOLLOW THE THREEFOLD CODE OF CULTURE: COHERENT, VISIBLE AND SHARED

Having a strong culture will allow you to attract the best talents, because at equal salaries, people look for a meaning in their job, to manage your downs, because at the very moment when everything seems wrong, deeply believing in your mission is the only way to survive, and to take quick decisions, because if your mission is crystal clear, your strategy will be obvious.