



The Culture Advantage

Turning an Innovative Culture into a Growth Engine



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My journey





Vision



“Culture eats strategy for breakfast”

— Peter Drucker

- Culture is a catalyst for innovation; transformation begins with a leader's clear vision.
- Innovation cannot be delegated. It starts at the top, and requires buy in from everyone in the company.
- A distinct culture provides a strategic advantage!



When Jeff Bezos created Amazon's long term strategy, lower costs were key. So a cultural attentiveness to frugality made sense.



Apple's strategy depended on beautifully designed products, so frugality would have been counterproductive.



If you want to be the fastest innovating company in the world, Facebook's motto of “move fast and break things” makes perfect sense. If you are Airbus, making airplanes, maybe that isn't such a good idea.



Speed



“I could either watch it happen or be a part of it”

— Elon Musk

Speed up

- Reduce friction!
- Slow decision making stifles innovation.

“If you can’t make decisions, can’t approve initiatives quickly, or have voids where leadership should be it doesn’t matter how many great people you hire or how much work you do defining your culture”

— Ben Horowitz

Be willing to change

- AI and automation are reshaping every industry.
- Complacency kills.

“Success breeds complacency. Complacency breeds failure. Only the paranoid survive.”

— Andy Grove

Develop the habit

- Culture is built through consistent, repeated behaviors.
- Real change requires rituals and accountability (e.g. celebrate technology wins, reward innovative ideas, promote risk takers).



DELL

"Five years from now, we will have a new competitor.

*And that new competitor is going to be in every business that we are in, except they're going to be faster, more efficient and more capable. And **they're going to put us out of business.***

*And the only way that we're going to prevent that is if we become that company. **It is gut wrenching stuff to reinvent and reimagine your business.***

But if you don't do it, you'll go out of business."



People

“Culture is what people do when no one is looking”[⚡]

— Herb Kelleher

- Who you hire determines your culture more than anything else!
- Pay attention to who you are hiring. Are you screening for values in your interviews?
- Design your culture by examining the precise virtues you are looking for, and then hiring those qualities.
- Be intentional about who you are celebrating and promoting.
- The most important element of any culture is that people care. They care about the product, they care about the customers, they care about being good citizens, they care about the company winning.



“Honestly, most of what ultimately defined us happened in the hiring of the first twenty people. So the question of what do you want the culture to be and why do you want to hire are in some ways the same question.”

— Patrick Collison, CEO & Co-founder of Stripe



Q&A With Wonjun



Bold CEOs put out public manifestos

The memo:

Using AI effectively is now a fundamental expectation of everyone at Shopify. It's a tool of all trades today, and will only grow in importance. Frankly, I don't think it's feasible to opt out of learning the skill of applying AI in your craft; you are welcome to try, but I want to be honest I cannot see this working out today, and definitely not tomorrow. Stagnation is almost certain, and stagnation is slow-motion failure. If you're not climbing, you're sliding.

—Tobi Lütke, CEO and co-founder of Shopify



"Generative AI is going to reinvent virtually every customer experience we know, and enable altogether new ones about which we've only fantasized."

Amazon CEO Andy Jassy,
2024 Letter to Shareholders



// Using AI effectively is now a fundamental expectation of everyone at Shopify.



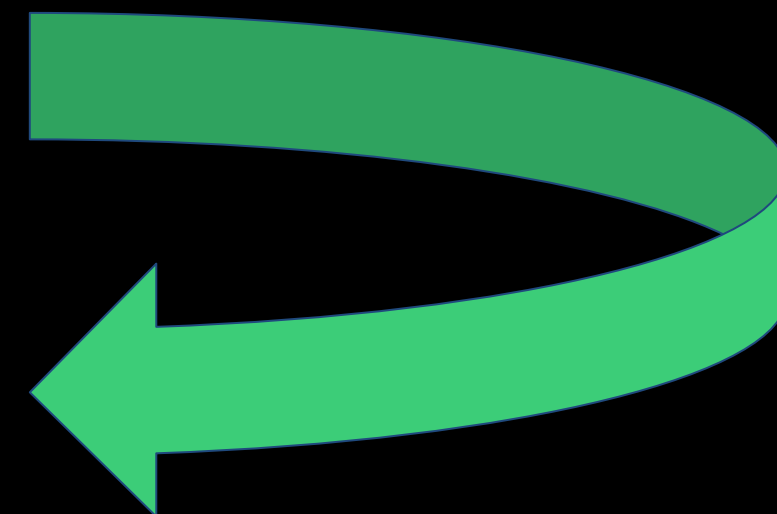
Sunk costs v. future readiness



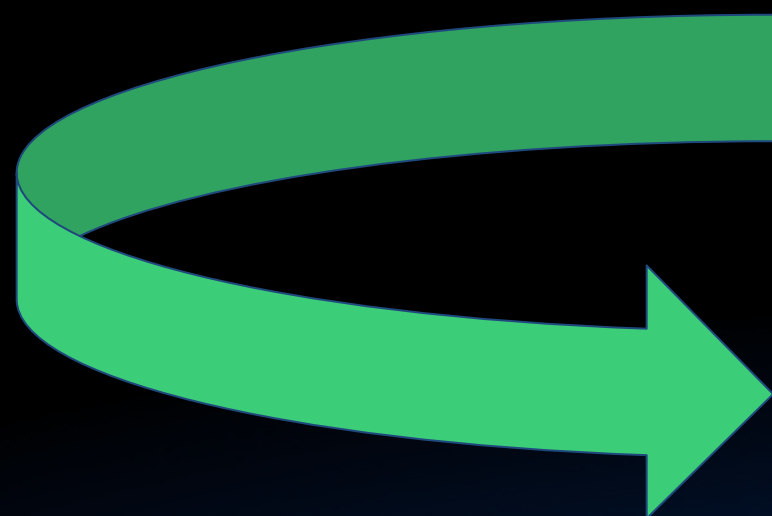


Cultural
PRESERVATION

VS



Cultural
PROGRESS





Becoming your own competitor



// Five years from now, we will have a new competitor... and they're going to put us out of business.



Legacy and generational businesses





Reducing friction in complex orgs

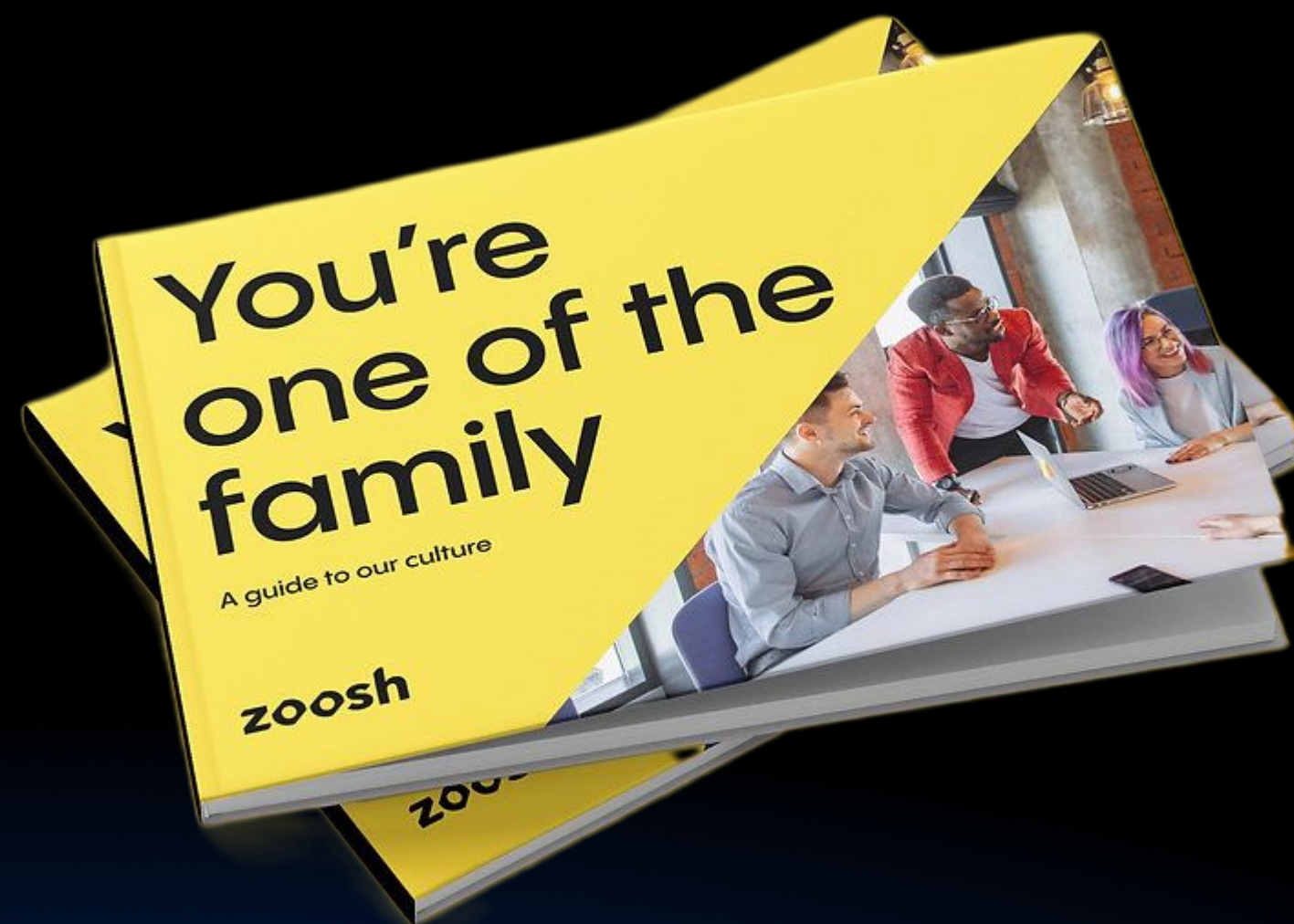
**MOVE
FAST AND
BREAK
THINGS**



// If you can't make decisions fast, it doesn't matter how good your culture is.



Rewriting Culture





Thank You