

Organizational Culture: Amazon

Amazon organizational culture has been described as “breakneck-paced, and notoriously cost-conscious, as befits a company that has run only a small profit, or a loss, under generally accepted accounting principles for most of its life as a public company. Amazon organizational culture was fiercely criticized in 2015 in The New York Times article titled “*Inside Amazon: Wrestling Big Ideas in a Bruising Workplace*”.

Specific flaws mentioned in the article include unrealistic performance standards, the work culture based on fear and the lack of recognition of employee contribution. The article caused debates in the media and even prompted a response from Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos. Furthermore, work culture at Amazon has been described as a “purposeful Darwinism” approach for employee management.

Generally, pushy, combative and ‘bruising’ organizational culture is perceived as outdated. Nowadays, the popular belief is that workplaces need to be nurturing and encouraging, and managers need to be nice and friendly and treat their employees like family in order for a company to succeed. The largest internet retailer in the world by revenue proves this belief wrong.

Amazon has a very intensive corporate culture with an extensive emotional and even physical pressure on some employees. Nevertheless, the tech giant has replaced Google as the best place to work in the US, according to LinkedIn. This can be explained in a way that Amazon has a unique organizational culture that is not for everyone. Only employees who can thrive under immense pressure and a fast-paced environment can survive in this company.

Generally, Amazon organizational culture integrates the following key elements:

1. Constant reinvention and optimization of organizational culture. Amazon founder and CEO Jeff Bezos “emphasizes the importance of constantly assessing and adjusting Amazon’s culture so it never loses the agility, nimbleness, and hunger for experimentation”. Accordingly, Bezos constantly opposes the “one-size-fits-all” culture of decision making. Moreover, Bezos uses the “two pizza rule” for meetings, where the numbers of participants in a meeting are limited to a group that can be all fed with two pizzas.

2. Customer-centricity. Amazon positions itself as one of the most customer-centric companies in the world. Amazon's vision statement is “*to be Earth’s most customer-centric company, where customers can find and discover anything they might want to buy online.*”

High level of customer-centricity is one of the cornerstones of Amazon corporate culture with direct implications to a wide range of organizational processes and procedures.

3. Diversity among workforce. Valuing diversity among the workforce is placed at the core of Amazon organizational culture. The company has GLAmazon, an official employee affinity group for gay and lesbian employees, as well as, Black Employees Network and Women in Technology groups.