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before saying yes to the job, make sure you know the company culture.

Summary: Company culture reflects how businesses operate and what they stand for, but in order to make an informed decision about accepting a job offer, you should first make sure you know whether you'll fit into it.

What exactly does company culture mean to you?

Whatever your opinion on company culture, it's something that organizations are paying more attention to than ever before. According to a Columbia University study, the likelihood of job turnover at an organization with a great company culture is just 13.9 percent, while companies with a less engaging culture see an average turnover of a staggering 48.4 percent.

What is company culture?

[Company culture is essentially the personality of a business.](#) It incorporates elements like an organization's values, future plans, work environment and employee expectations. It can dictate things like dress code, degree of formality and even the tone of voice employees use when speaking with each other.

If you work for a more traditional firm - many law and accounting companies, for example - then you'll likely be expected to dress in smarter attire, remain professional and address your supervisors and managers with respect. The company culture here is going to be more formal than that of some other businesses.

In contrast, if you're employed in a newer industry - for instance, tech or

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marketing -
the environment tends to be more casual. You might be able to think of your boss as more of a colleague or even a friend. These organizations tend to have a more relaxed company culture, where perks like dressing down, games in the office and a lack of official working hours are more common.

How it affects you

Some companies see culture as an essential marketing tool. After all, what better way to convince people to work for their organization than to share snaps of their Friday afternoon drinks or their lunchtime book club, big smiles on employees' faces?

This all comes down to [employer branding](#). If a company has established a certain image of itself, then it's easier for you to work out if you think you'd fit in there. If you're more interested in a workplace where you can get the job done without distractions and then leave on the dot at five, you're probably not suited to the kind of company that shares content about its poker games that stretch into the early hours.

Company ethics are also something to consider. Have they shared their company values and what they stand for? If these aren't compatible with your own, this could be a red flag. After all, you probably won't be comfortable working for a company that manages the PR for a meat producer when you're a committed vegan.

Knowledge is power

Knowing what you're letting yourself in for can help you ensure you're only applying to the right kind of companies. You can use your own research - combing through companies' social media profiles and websites - as well as

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interviews to establish what kind of culture there is.

You can also use interviews to work out whether it's the sort of company culture you think you'll be able to fit right into. Make sure you notice what the office is like. Are people talking and laughing with each other or is it very quiet? What are people wearing? Do the managers have their own separate offices or does everyone work together open plan? These are just some of the things you should look at if you want to know whether it's a culture you'll align with.

Just remember though, that [cultural fit works both ways](#). According to HR tech company Jobvite - cultural fit is the most important aspect of hiring for 60 percent of recruiters. So if you're seen as a good match to the organization, then you stand a better chance of being considered for the job.

Is company culture actually important?

The importance of company cultures can't be overstated. In its Global Human Capital Trends report, Deloitte University Press explained: "When a company's culture is clearly aligned with business strategy, it attracts people who feel comfortable in it, which in turn should produce a high level of engagement."

It added that few factors determine a company's success like culture. According to the report, company culture's "close connection to performance is not lost on HR and business executives," with 87 percent of those surveyed by the Press saying that culture is important, and 54 percent considering it very important.

Some companies, however, take a different view. Buffer, the social media tech firm, has explained that it doesn't consider cultural fit as important as

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what it calls 'cultural contribution'. What an employee adds is a more significant metric than whether they fit into a culture, the company has said. It focuses more on whether a new hire can bring a new perspective to the job. It has also said it's more interested in whether a candidate is "aligned with specific values".

So whatever a company culture is, you should be sure that it's one you can be happy to belong to and see yourself thriving in before you accept a job offer.

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