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VALUES SHOUTOUTS AT COMPANY X AND THEIR EFFECT ON
CORPORATE CULTURE

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Values Shoutouts at Company X and Their Effect on Corporate Culture

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Abstract

This study is closely related to corporate management. More specifically, it is aimed at studying the impact of gratitude expression at work on the development of organizational culture.

Company X and its Values Shoutouts are on the spotlight. Values Shoutouts is an online form that staff members of Company X use when they wish to acknowledge each other's contributions at work. In order to showcase this phenomenon, Company X's employees were asked to participate in several events targeted at discovering their attitudes towards the Values Shoutouts feature. Methodology of the study was represented by participant observation, 6 semi-structured interviews and a questionnaire.

According to the outcomes of the research, Values Shoutouts feature influences company's culture in a beneficial way. Majority of the employees of Company X finds this tool useful and is eager to use it. Taking theoretical findings into consideration, study concluded that Values Shoutouts feature increases employee satisfaction, motivation and productivity what, in return, enables company to grow faster and perform better.

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1 INTRODUCTION

This thesis work is aimed at studying the nature of Values Shoutouts phenomenon at Company X.

Company X is an online store selling refurbished iPhones at a reduced price. The business has launched its operations in Finland back in 2016. Currently, Company X operates in 3 markets: Finland, Sweden and Italy. They position themselves as sustainable business that allows their customers to buy fully functioning used iPhones inspected and repaired by professionals. Over the past year company has tripled the number of its employees crossing 200 mark in autumn 2019.

In order to define the direction of corporate culture development, Company X's management organized Values workshop for its employees. This session was held at the off-site gathering in May 2018. Employees had a chance to discuss and propose values that seemed the most appropriate and essential when being at work.

Shortly after the workshop, Company X's Values Vote took place. The response rate was 100%, having a total of 56 answers. As a result, following 5 values received the most votes: Team Spirit, Responsibility (Ownership), Learning/Innovation, Customer Centricity and Open Communication (Appendix 1). Thereafter, Values Shoutouts feature was introduced to the employees of Company X. It enabled provision of short values-based feedback that one worker could give to another anonymously. Values Shoutouts example question can be seen in Appendix 2.

Studying this subject will help to understand employees' attitude towards the feature, their assessment of its strong and weak points and will try to suggest possible directions for the further development of the tool.

This research is held to answer following questions:

- What are Values Shoutouts?
- What effect Values Shoutouts have on corporate culture of Company X?

The study utilizes multiple research techniques in order to reach higher coverage of the topic in question. Theoretical framework presented in chapter 2 will discuss relevant concepts of Corporate Management and will explain, how theory is linked to the real-world situation. Participant observation, Individual Employee Interviews and a questionnaire are used as tools for primary data collection.

Participant observation was mostly utilised for forming a preliminary hypothesis. It was assumed that Values Shoutouts feature is beneficial for the Company X and has positive effect on corporate culture and overall performance of the company. Interviews focus reader's attention on concrete opinions of employees of Company X about the phenomenon of Values Shoutouts and experiences they had with it. On the contrary, a questionnaire is mostly used to define trends in attitudes of the employees. More specific information on the methodology is presented in the chapter named accordingly.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter the core concepts covered in this study are explained. Theoretical knowledge base is gathered from various sources such as business-related books, articles, studies run by independent research agencies and conference performances.

2.1 Corporate culture and values

Corporate culture is the ideology employees base their working life decisions on. It is what makes them part of the organization. "Corporate culture is a collection of uniform and enduring beliefs, customs, traditions and practices shared and continued by employees of a corporation" (Hai D.M., 1986, 162).

Corporate culture acts as a validated method of overcoming obstacles that a group faces on both internal and external levels. Moreover, it serves as a guide for newcomers when they join an organisation. It defines what is norm and what is expected from them.

As John P. Kotter, The Konosuke Matsushita Professor of Leadership, Emeritus at the Harvard Business School and a graduate of MIT and Harvard, claims, corporate culture can be seen at two levels. First level of organisational culture is illustrated by values. This level is deeper and harder to define at a first sight. Values are sets of concepts and targets that employees see as important ones when being part of the company. Values are usually long-lasting and are difficult to change even when staff circulation is high. On the other hand, behavioural models that newcomers learn when joining the organisation, are more detectable and are a subject to change as time goes. (Kotter J.P., Heskett J.L., 1992).

Drivers for corporate culture development may arise from both individual base-level workers and senior management representatives. Nevertheless, businesses with strong organisational culture tend to have it developed by the founder of the enterprise (Figure 1).

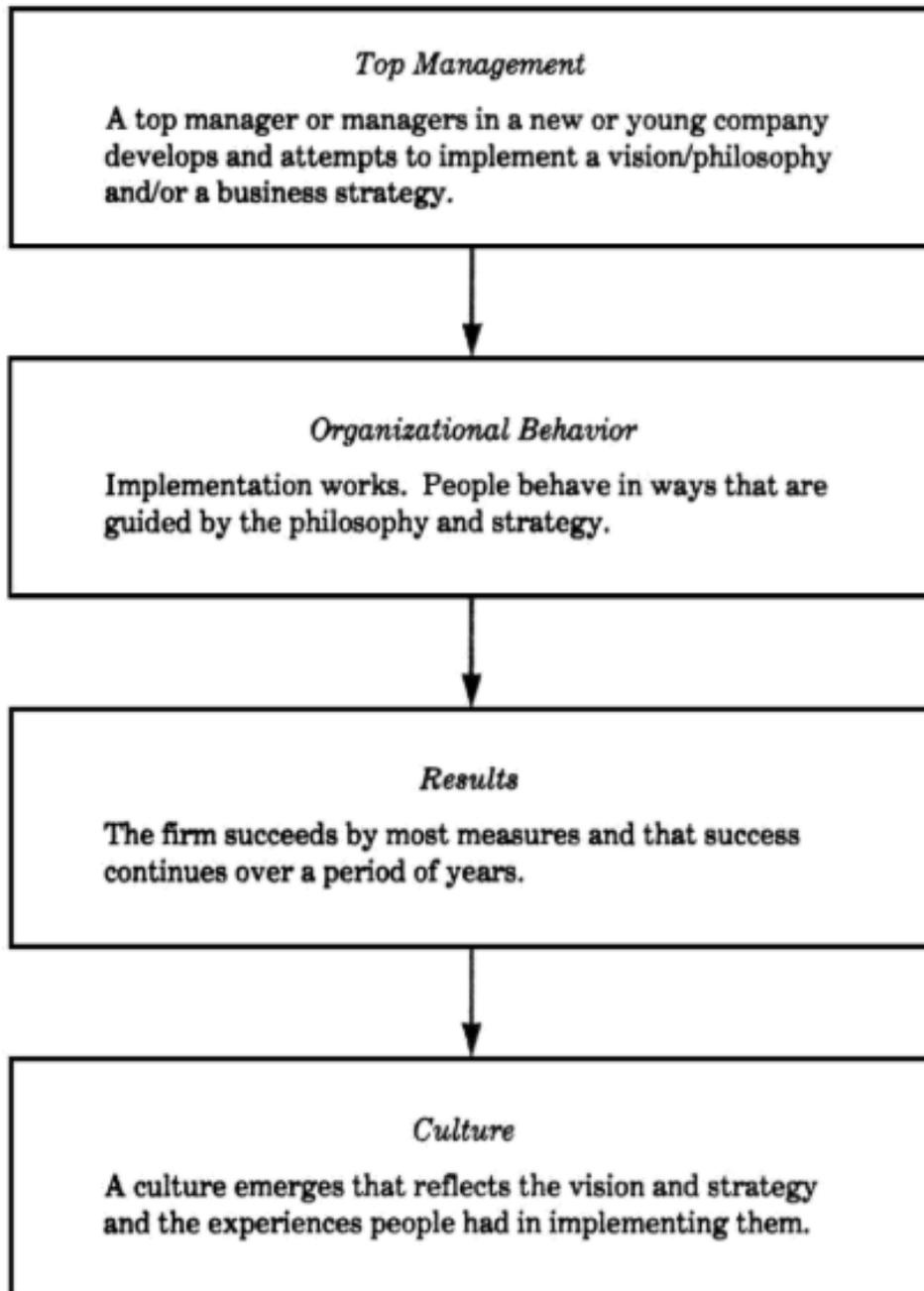


Figure 1. One common pattern in the emergence of corporate cultures (Kotter J.P., Heskett J.L., 1992. *Corporate culture and performance*, 8)

Sharing company's corporate culture aspects and organisational values is important, when setting high performance targets. Here is what Patty McCord (2019), a highly experienced human resources consultant and executive, says in one of the episodes of video series "TED: The Way we work":

Everyone in your company should understand the business...The best thing that we can do is constantly teach each other what we do, what matters to us, what we measure, what goodness looks like, so that we can all drive towards achieving the same thing.

In addition to the significance of values, McCord also highlights the importance of constant learning of the company culture, its values and visions as it changes overtime.

2.2 Employee satisfaction

Employee satisfaction, or job satisfaction, is defined in Cambridge Business English Dictionary as "the happiness that workers feel when they are satisfied with their job and work conditions, used as one way of measuring a company's success". The definition is quite straightforward and simple. Nevertheless, it gives the reader a hint that levels of employee satisfaction may have an effect on the performance of the business entity.

A study held by Adam Edmans concludes that companies where employees are more satisfied with their jobs score higher value in stock returns in a long run. (Edmans A., 2012). Employee engagement also improves productivity. In the US, businesses where personnel are highly engaged face productivity levels rise of 17% (Gallup, 2017).

Employee satisfaction depends on many factors. Among others, reward and recognition have noticeable impact of employee satisfaction and engagement. As a result, when a person lacks appreciation among other intrinsic rewards, it can cause negative consequences on employees' attitude towards the job and even result in a burnout. (Margaretha, M., Widiastuti, R., 2018).

2.3 Motivation, feedback and gratitude

Motivation can be understood as “psychological forces that determine the direction of a person’s behaviour in an organization, a person’s level of effort, and a person’s level of persistence in the face of obstacles”. (Jones, G.R., George, J., M., 2016). Motivation is the individual’s driver when acting in order to tackle challenges and achieve good results.

In fact, there are two different types of motivation that can be observed in people’s behaviours separately or combined. Intrinsic motivation initiates behavioural patterns that are performed for its own sake. The benefit for the performer is mostly expressed in a feeling of accomplishment, satisfaction from performing the activity and happiness from reaching the target. Alternatively, extrinsic motivation is aimed at gaining benefits, both tangible and intangible. In corporate world, such benefit can come in a form of financial compensation, peer recognition, promotions, etc. (Jones, G.R., George, J., M., 2016).

As can be seen, gaining peer recognition can be seen as a motive of an employee for working towards the achievement of a set goal. Moreover, public or private recognition, acknowledgement, and other forms of social appreciation are seen as memorable highlights of the employees’ career paths. When a staff member is being praised, it also affects the whole group. It sets a new higher standard of performance. Overall, recognition can be used as an instrument for incentivizing company’s employees, and at the same time, can strengthen the company’s image, corporate culture and its values in minds of other workers. (Mann, A., Dvorak., N, 2016).

3 PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

The research is held in order to observe and describe the nature and effect of Values Shoutouts feature at Company X. This chapter is divided into three sections. First two sections look at the matter from individual perspective of the users. Third section of this chapter sets a goal of studying the effects of Values Shoutouts on company's development.

3.1 Employees' attitudes towards Values Shoutouts

In order to present Values Shoutouts to the reader at a full-scale, it is essential to discover genuine attitudes of the users. Collection of individual opinions will unleash veritable reasons of this feature's existence.

Views of Company X's personnel will also help to create an image of Values Shoutouts and its relevancy to other businesses.

3.2 Drivers for gratitude expression

In addition to the aim set in the first section, it is also vital to discover and understand what drives Values Shoutouts users when providing anonymous peer employee feedback through this feature.

Finding out inner motives that lead people when filling out Values Shoutouts form will complement our knowledge about it and will help to analyse whether people are using it in a good faith.

3.3 Effects of Values Shoutouts

In order to draw a comprehensive conclusion of this research, effects of Values Shoutouts need to be studied. It is important to observe and describe what effect does this feature have on the company's corporate culture, its growth speed and overall success.

Moreover, analysis of Values Shoutouts influence may result in forecasting further development directions and improvements.

4 METHODOLOGY

In this chapter research methods used in this thesis work are described. Due to the complexity of the subject, it was decided to utilise a combination of multiple research techniques. Methodological triangulation enabled the researcher to reach higher accuracy and minimisation of researcher bias. (Kennedy, P. 2009).

Participant observation, questionnaire and individual interviews were chosen as tools for primary data collection. This research design enables the reader to gain in-depth expertise in this matter, as it takes into account both general trends and more personalised opinions of the experienced users.

4.1 Participant observation

Participant observation is the cause of this research existence. Decision making process on the topic of this thesis work was affected by the current occupation of the researcher.

In other words, personal experiences of the researcher led to the formation of this thesis's initial hypothesis. Being present at the workplace helped the researcher to understand the matter more thoroughly.

As employees of Company X were available for a short unofficial conversation during the working hours, preliminary conclusions were reached easily.

4.2 Values Shoutouts Survey

Quantitative part of the study was represented by Values Shoutouts Survey (Appendix 3). This survey was sent to all the employees of Company X. It was available for four days and received on aggregate 57 responses.

Survey consisted of 6 questions. First three questions were devoted to respondent's sex, age and occupation. Rationale behind it for starting with these general questions was finding out, whether there is a correlation between the demographic group that respondents belong to and their attitude towards the Values Shoutouts feature.

The image shows a screenshot of three survey questions. The first question is a multiple-choice question with four options. The second question is a yes/no question with a text input field for the answer. The third question is an open-ended question with a text input field for the answer.

I see shoutouts feature as something ... *

- essential/very useful
- nice to have, but not very important
- I do not care much about
- completely irrelevant

Have you had a chance to give/receive positive feedback through shoutouts? *

If your answer is YES, share your thoughts and feelings about it. If your answer is NO, specify why.

Your answer _____

If you have any other thoughts concerning this matter, you are welcome to share it here:

Your answer _____

Figure 2. Values Shoutouts Survey Questions 4,5 and 6.

In the Figure 2, one can see three last questions of the Values Shoutouts Survey that were specifically related to main topic of the research. These alternatives were formulated in informal manner intentionally. Justification for this is the fact that these particular expressions appeared in casual discussions about Shoutouts and feedback during the preliminary participant observation sessions.

When designing this survey, a lot of time was spent to keep it informal and easy-going. It was done on purpose in order to create options that subjects may relate to.

Fourth question was designed as a multiple-choice question and was related to the assessment of relevancy of Values Shoutouts feature to the employees of Company X. Question number five allowed respondents to share their experiences of using the feedback form and their perception of it. Participants were encouraged to share their thoughts and feelings towards this issue. The very last question was non-compulsory and was meant for various comments, suggestions for improvement and further discussion of the matter.

Overall, the design of this survey was plain and straightforward. Moderate level of complexity here is seen as an advantage, since employees of the Company X are more eager to respond to simple and short pools (This trend was noticed since the time the researcher has joined Company X as a full-time employee).

4.3 Individual Interviews

Qualitative share of the study was implemented in a form of individual interviews. Each interview session was a short 7-12 minutes dialogue. Conversations were audio taped in order to prove correct interpretation of responders' statements and conclusions.

Respondents for the interview were selected in a specific way in order to diversify the data collected. During the decision-making process, person's level of responsibility and work tasks were taken into account. Staff members holding the following posts were chosen: Production Specialist, Operations Team Lead, HR Manager, Customer Service Specialist, RMA Specialist and CEO & co-founder.

Interview questions were divided in two categories. First list of questions was used exclusively for CEO & co-founder of Company X. Second set of questions was considered as a general one and was used when interviewing the rest of the respondents.

5 RESEARCH RESULTS

5.1 Interviews

Individual interviews were one of the main research instruments of this study. It helped to understand attitudes and feelings of Company X personnel towards Values Shoutouts feature in a detailed way. (Full interviews can be found in Appendices 4-8)

When interviewees were asked to describe their perception of the phenomenon and define their personal attitude towards it, the majority has highlighted significance of the feature. It was said that shoutouts help people communicate more clearly, they boost team spirit and celebrate the great job that was done. Shoutouts show appreciation, recognition and acknowledgement for hard work and exceptional efforts. Words such as “useful”, “fun”, “essential”, “positive” were utilized when describing this matter. Although, alternative opinion was also represented. One respondent stated: “There is no damage from this feature for the relationships among colleagues, but also, I don’t think there is any positive effect”. HR manager, as well as CEO and co-founder of the Company X, who have launched and initiated Values Shoutouts, pointed out the importance of values of Company X that shoutouts are based on. They see shoutouts as a good tool that helps every worker in the company to learn the Company X’s corporate values by going through shoutouts on a weekly basis.

Next, respondents were asked to share their own experiences of public provision of gratitude through Value Shoutouts and motivation behind it. Most of the participants have had previous experience of filling out the form, one admitted never using it before. Many emphasized that they are more used to giving personal instant feedbacks but understand the importance of sharing their gratitude with

the whole company. “I’ve used it many times and I think it’s very important to bring up the good work that someone’s done even though I would already say it to them. It’s great to show it to the whole company. It motivates the people who receive it as well.”, shares one of the participants. As for motives, gratitude for help, team spirit, trainings, outstanding performance and social skills were named as the main ones.

Another question included in the interview was devoted to possible reasons and explanations of the fact that not everyone is using the Values Shoutouts feature. Here is the cumulative summary of reasons that were named:

- People can be lazy from time to time
- This feature is not for everybody
- People are not used to doing it
- Business with other things
- Lack of time
- Lack of Memory
- The link for shoutouts is difficult to find
- Slack is not used by everyone in the company
- Slack is easier to check via laptop, but not everyone is using a laptop during the working hours, especially in Operations department
- Preference of personal feedback over shoutouts that are public
- Fear of making another person feeling uncomfortable

In the final part of the interview several participants shared their views on future of Values Shoutouts. Company X’s corporate values were at the core of the discussion. One of the respondents stated that current values are “a bit general”. HR manager said: “Evolving the values is something I am working on towards the end of the year”. Also, it was mentioned that values may transform into something more concrete, better-formulated and closer to daily life at the office. Similarly, CEO and co-founder of Company X referred to Shoutouts as a great platform for further test-driving and improvement of the values. “Once that goes forward, we can make better hiring decisions”.

5.2 Values Shoutouts Survey

Values Shoutouts Survey was designed in a manner allowing the researcher to spot the general trends and consider individual opinions at the same time. Every question's existence is justified and findings on these questions are explained and discussed in the sections below.

5.2.1 Demographics of the Population

Demographic questions included in this survey were devoted to age, sex and occupation of the respondents. Observations collected through the participation in a normal working life of Company X's employee led to the conclusion that many employees hired by Company X are male and young.

How old are you?

57 responses

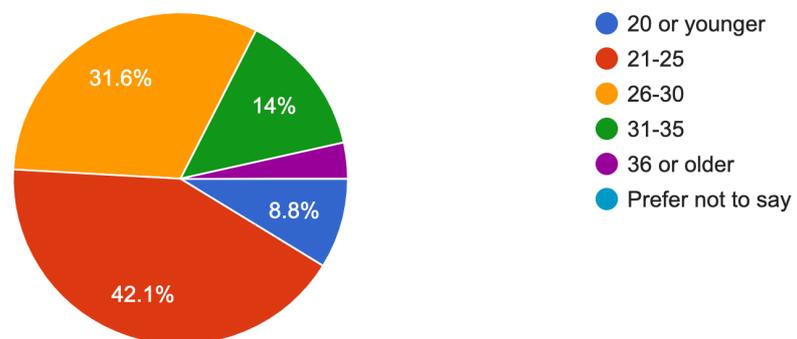


Figure 3. Age of the Population

Figure 3 shows, that over 50 percent of the survey participants fall into the age group of 18-25 years. This number is followed by 31.6% that represents the age group of 26-30. This pie chart, not being an absolutely accurate representation of current personnel age situation at Company X, shows that responders of this survey belong to young adults' cluster.

I am
57 responses

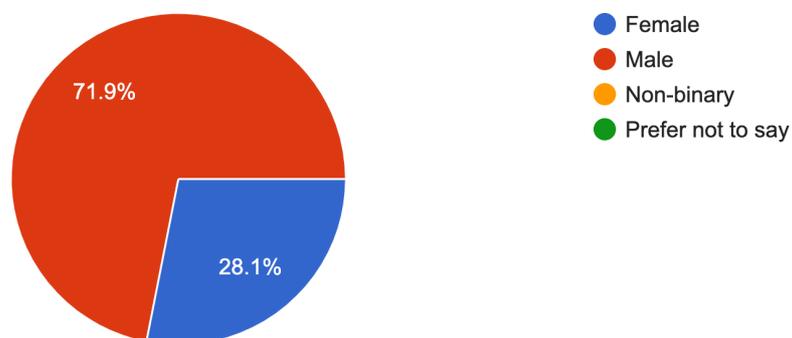


Figure 4 Gender of the Population

Figure 4 illustrates that 41 (71.9%) out of 57 responders identify themselves as males, while 16 (28.1%) have picked “Female” option.

I am part of:
57 responses

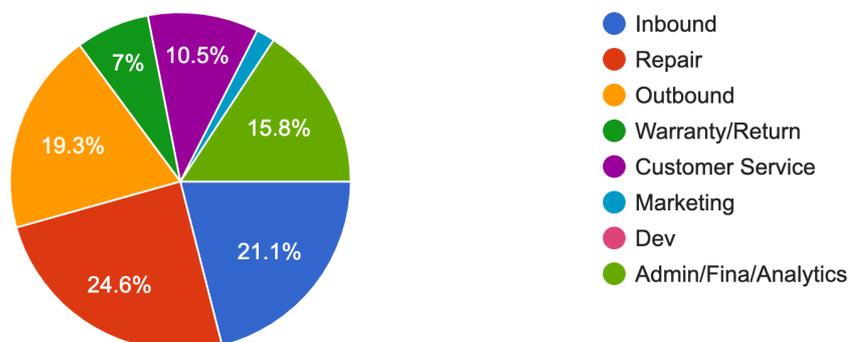


Figure 5. Occupational division of the population

From the pie chart above (Figure 5), one can conclude that occupation of the respondents is quite diverse. Nevertheless, reader should pay special attention to the fact that Inbound, Repair and Outbound, in fact, are parts of a bigger Department called Operations. Thus, we conclude, that 65% of the respondents work at the Operations Departments.

5.2.2 Attitude towards Values Shoutouts

When answering question 4, participants were offered 4 alternatives to choose from. Every option was formulated as short informal point of view that employees can easily refer to.

I see shoutouts feature as something ...
57 responses

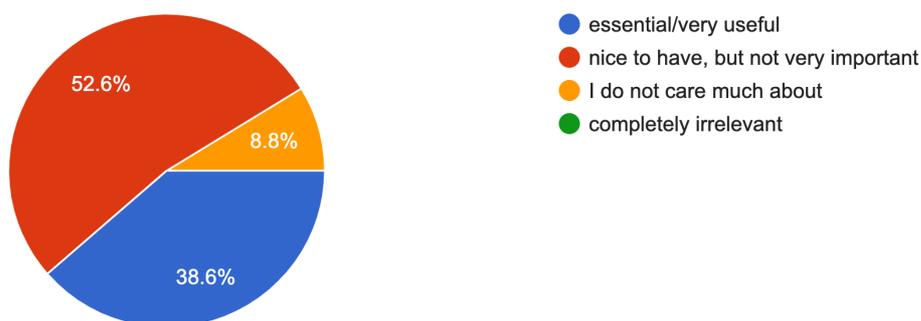


Figure 6 Attitude towards the feature

Overall, 91.2% of all the participants see Values Shoutouts as a positive thing. 22 people have highlighted importance/utility of the feature by picking “essential/very useful” as their preferred answer. Alternative “nice to have, but not very important” was chosen by 30 respondents. About one tenth of the population has shown neutral attitude towards the Values Shoutouts Feature.

5.2.3 Personal experiences with and opinions Values Shoutouts

Out of 57 responders, 42 have had an experience of giving or receiving a shoutout at least once. About 98% of those who took part in Values Shoutouts describe it as a positive experience and associate it with pleasant and useful activity. Here is what some of the responses look like:

- *“YES. It's a great way to give credit to someone for the great work they have done :)”*
- *“Yes! I think it is a really nice way to acknowledge other people's hard work and showcase that to the whole company.”*
- *“YES! I feel good letting the ones who helped me know that their help is appreciated”*

- *“YES. Good mood lifter and motivator”*
- *“Yes. Nice way to give praise for people who deserve it, without shoutouts it would be much harder.”*
- *“Yes. In general, shout-outs provide a shared platform for us to call each other out when we see someone paying it forward or otherwise doing something we consider positive. I think this is a very important part of building a company culture, a positive/encouraging work environment, and even the Company X’s brand.”*
- *“Yes, it is a fun way to increase team unity.”*

There are 15 negative answers to this question. Some of the responders from this group refer to low importance of the feature, others state that it requires too much effort to write a shoutout, many say they simply forget about its existence. Three employees refer to their newness to the Company X as a reason of not being involved into this process.

- *“None really. I don't really see the big benefit of the shoutouts, I like to give people feedback all the time when they do well, so I think it doesn't serve a purpose.”*
- *“No. I've started at Company X only a few weeks ago so that's probably the reason :) I intend to give feedback in the future though!”*
- *“No, because the process is too much of a hassle.”*
- *“No. I always forget about its existence.”*
- *“No, I have no idea how it works.”*

In addition to the data represented above, respondents took an initiative of suggesting ways of how Values Shoutouts may evolve over time:

- *“I'd like to have (a) different way to quickly and conveniently input my shoutouts. Or a star system for the one who deserves for his/her good works.”*
- *“It would be interesting to see if we can take the idea of shoutouts down to the smaller team levels and make them more verbal perhaps.”*
- *“Peer reviews could work (kind of like BCG etc.). That would be super interesting to try.”*
- *“Physical realization might be fun and catches more attention and appreciation!”*

6 RESEARCH RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Alignment with initial aims

The purpose of the study was to unleash attitudes of Company X's employees towards Values Shoutouts feature and showcase how public expression of gratitude affects employee satisfaction, motivation and company's performance in general.

This research combined theoretical base studies and primary data collection. Literature review consisted of studying available material from educational books, articles, educational video series, magazines, dictionaries and independent research units.

6.2 Research results

Theoretical concepts, to the extent they are covered in this research, are fairly straightforward. Nevertheless, it provides all the necessary knowledge to the reader to be able to understand the nature and outcomes of this study. Corporate culture, organisational values, job satisfaction and employee motivation are seen as core theoretical aspects. Literature review showed that organisational values represent deeper, invisible at first, level of corporate culture. Organisational values interact strongly with behavioural patterns of employees of a company. Often, one is developed and formed by another. In order to gain and retain talented human resources, a business should invest in the development of corporate culture (values) and employee's happiness. In case of successful investment, returns will appear in a form of increased engagement, productivity and motivation of a company's personnel.

Primary data collection methods used in this study are interviews with selected employees of Company X and a questionnaire. Participant observation mentioned in Methodology chapter is also considered as one of the research instruments. Nonetheless, it was mostly used for preliminary hypothesis creation and observations, preceding the actual beginning of this research. Combination of

several data collection methods enabled more comprehensive analysis of information collected.

Result combined from both research tools illustrate employees' positive attitude towards the Values Shoutouts. 92% of the Values Shoutouts Survey participants state that this feature is something they like having at work. They see it as a tool for gratitude expression, acknowledgement of hard work and recognition of work efforts that align with the company's values. Yet, some employees find this tool irrelevant, as they prefer to provide feedback instantly and on a more personal level.

It is certain that having Values Shoutouts brings a lot of benefits to the employees of Company X and business as a whole.

It is too early to claim that in this particular case there is a very strong correlation between well-developed values of Company X and its financial performance, since current version of Values and Value Shoutouts were introduced during the summer 2019. Nevertheless, it is safe to say that corporate culture of Company X may have an effect on growth of the revenues. According to public data available online, Company X's turnover reached EUR 1,1 million mark in 2017 and hit EUR 8,1 million mark in 2018 (Talouselama, 2019).

6.3 Reliability of research methods

In order to ensure validity and reliability of the gathered information several actions were undertaken. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed immediately after. Questions did not include any adjectives that express assessment or grading of matters discussed. It initiated honest and unaffected expression of thoughts and feelings of the guest. Prior to the questionnaire being sent out, researcher has discussed anonymity and safety aspects publicly and highlighted the significance of honest and unbiased answers with the survey participants.

6.4 Limitations

During the course of this research, several limitations have been faced. Most of the limitations are considered as moderate and do not undermine the validity of the paper.

First of all, the response rate for the Values Shoutouts Survey is not equal to the total number of employees at Company X. This event can be explained by lack of interest, time resource, accessibility of a laptop or another device suitable for filling out the survey. Nevertheless, the response rate is estimated as sufficient and satisfactory that meets the research needs.

Another limitation is language skills of the respondents. As Company X is an international company that employs individuals coming from various backgrounds, the main working language of the company, English, is not identified as the first language of the vast majority of the staff members. This put the research at risk of higher rates of misunderstanding, misinterpretation due to different English language levels of the participants of this research. This said, the study faced minor difficulties interpreting some of the research results what did not affect the final outcomes in a major way.

In addition, Company X's policies restrict access of certain types of business-related data. This limitation has an effect on the linkage of research outcomes related to the employee motivation and company's rapid financial development. However, limited data available online supports the image of Company X being financially successful.

6.5 Application of research findings

This study's outcomes are meant to serve several needs. Stakeholders of this research are Company X, other researchers in this field, entrepreneurs, start-up ecosystem, and the author of the research herself.

In general, this research can be used as a case studies by other researchers who are interested in learning more about gratitude at work, its connection to corporate values and effect on overall company's success.

The commissioner of this study benefits from the study in multiple ways. During the implementation of this thesis work, Values Shoutouts were mentioned more often during the weekly meetings of the company what worked as an extra reminder about Company's X corporate values and Values Shoutouts based on it. Moreover, as HR manager and CEO of the Company X mentioned during the Employee Interviews, values are subject to development and improvement.

"Evolving the values is something I am working on towards the end of the year. Based on the data we've gotten from the shoutouts, how values are showing (sic) our day-to-day lives and how they can transform into something more concrete."

HR manager of Company X
(Source: Employee Interviews, Appendix 4)

Thus, this research will help the company to understand what employees of Company X appreciate about its values and corporate culture. Moreover, suggestions made by the participants of the research will serve as additional material, when designing the updated versions of values and peer feedback form. This is a comment from HR manager about the relevancy of this research: *"I think it's really good that you're doing this survey right now since we'll get more opinions about it, if people actually see the point of this..."*

As from the researcher's side, this study helps to build up and develop and expertise in corporate management. Also, due to the specific characteristics of the research design, the author gains extended understanding of social settings at Company X and learns behavioural patterns of its employees. This may result in higher chance of successful performance of the researcher as an employee of Company X.

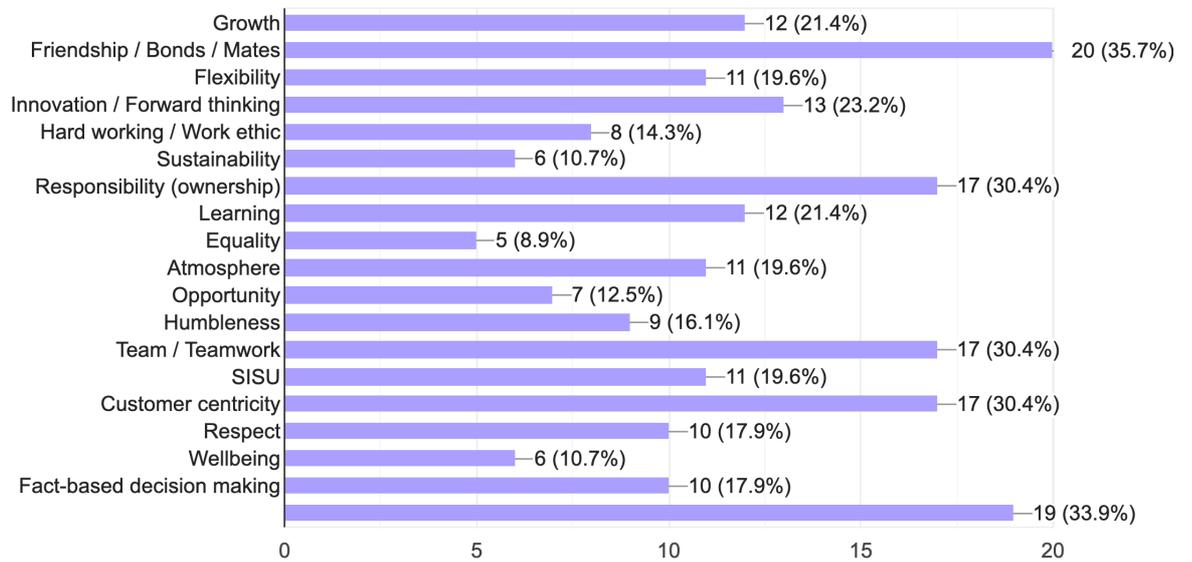
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Values Shoutouts example question

Vote for max four values

56 responses



Values Shoutouts example question

Where did you see it? What was the act? Who was behind it?

Please give a concrete example of something someone or someones did this week that resonates with the values :) Small or big stuff, everything counts!

Your answer

Values Shoutouts Survey Form

Values Shoutouts Survey

This short survey is a part of BBA thesis work that focuses on corporate culture and, more specifically, impact of positive feedback on employee motivation at Company X.

Please, be sincere and share your thoughts on this matter. Every contribution is very valuable and is essential to draw an accurate image of current situation at Company X. Thank you for your time and effort!

How old are you?

- 20 or younger
- 21-25
- 26-30
- 31-35
- 36 or older
- Prefer not to say

I am:

- Female
- Male
- Non-binary
- Prefer not to say

I am part of:

- Inbound
- Repair
- Outbound
- Warranty/Return
- Customer Service
- Marketing
- Dev
- Admin/Fina/Analytics

I see shoutouts feature as something

- essential/very useful
- nice to have, but not very important
- I do not care much about
- completely irrelevant

Values Shoutouts Survey Form

Have you had a chance to give/receive positive feedback through shoutouts?

If your answer is YES, share your thoughts and feelings about it. If your answer is NO, specify why.

If you have any other thoughts concerning this matter, you are welcome to share them here:

Values Shoutouts Employee Interview 1

Interviewee: RMA specialist

So, my name is Z and I am working in our company for three months now. My role in the company is working in RMA team which is dealing with the phones is that we will send back to our suppliers.

1. How would you describe your attitude towards the fact that Values Shoutouts feature is available for Company X's employees?

At first, during the first 1-2 months I was like: "it's really nice to have these value shoutouts, so people can give compliments of the people that they want to", but then, after some time I feel like it's a bit not necessary. I don't think that many people give attention to that.

2. Have you ever used this feature yourself to express gratitude? What motivated you to do so, even though you knew that it is anonymous?

Yeah, I have used it for two times, if I remember right. I voluntarily wanted to do that, because I wanted people that helped me feel good, feel that they make some impact in the company.

3. Have you ever been given a shoutout? If yes, how did you feel about being thanked publicly?

I haven't ever been given a shoutout, but if I have, I think, I would feel very awesome.

4. If you think of the reasons why employees are not giving shoutouts, what would you name?

The first reason is that they don't care enough to give that to the person who helped them. Maybe they're lazy, maybe is just not that meaningful to them.

5. Do you have any other comments or thoughts concerning this matter?

I would say, there need to be some emphasis. Like more emphasis on what is good to be shouted out, not just people give shoutouts anonymously, because it will just go with the flow. It will not appear in people's minds for a long time. It's meaningful to the person who's being praised, not for everyone in the company to notice.

There should be some other ways to emphasize what was good, what was done well. The actual values must be emphasized, not like sentences and

Values Shoutouts Employee Interview 1

sentences of compliments. The values we have at our company are a bit general.

This feature can be there, but it can be modified so it makes more impact that people give more attention to the point that the shoutouts give.

There is no damage from this feature for the relationships among colleagues, but also, I don't think there is any positive effect.

Values Shoutouts Employee Interview 2**Interviewee: HR manager****1. How would you describe your attitude towards the fact that Values Shoutouts feature is available for Company X's employees?**

Well, I don't know, I might be biased in a sense, because I've been the one who's been enforcing this thing. Basically, it was so that first we had... we were just kind of like... the thing that how we gave recognition to people was that we chose an employee of the week and people just got to vote to whom they want to give the recognition this week and who performed well. At that time, it started feeling a bit unnatural, came this sort of a bad pattern when you're nominated the person who wasn't still nominated or given the Employee of the Week thing. So, then we figured "Ok, what if there was some other method of doing things". For me it was always something that was really important. The fact that the recognition was given on something you've actually done, an achievement, that was something more concrete. So, we had that thing first, but then when we started thinking a bit more the fact that we have to review values at some point and there is a sort of a process to support it. We had a workshop around the values last spring and then the next step was to test-drive this in real life and see how values actually play out in our daily lives. And that's when we came up with combining the values with the shoutouts and that's how they came about. I think, people were excited to give them, and the feedback was good. Then, we just kept it going so it's been a good thing and also something for the values, something to have people to remember them or to remind them of on a weekly basis.

Well, I think it's really important to give recognition to people, give the shoutouts and be like "Hey, you did a good job and this is important" so people can celebrate that together and also the person can get a good feeling about it like "Hey, I was recognized for this, I did a good job". And also, linking that to the values, it's important to align the company with the values, so combining these two is important in that sense.

2. Have you ever used this feature yourself to express gratitude? What motivated you to do so, even though you knew that it is anonymous?

Values Shoutouts Employee Interview 2

I have. It's always nice to give it out and the anonymity is something else. There was something we asked like "What's your name?", but people left it blank, so I figured that maybe they wanted to stay anonymous. But for me it's always, since I've been the one reading them, I've always given my shoutouts pretty personally and added my own shoutouts on the spot. But, yeah, I have done that and what motivated me was purely the fact that I wanted to give people the recognition, the recognition they deserved. And I also wanted to let other people know like "Hey, this thing happened. Did you even realize that this person behind it? He or she did a really good job and you should recognize that as well."

3. Have you ever been given a shoutout? If yes, how did you feel about being thanked publicly?

Yeah, I have, a couple of times. Of course, it feels good, it feels nice. It's not something like "Oh, I need that". Since I am the one reading those, it's not so obvious.

I see it as a positive thing.

4. If you think of the reasons why employees are not giving shoutouts, what would you name?

I'd say that, of course, it's not for everybody. People have different opinions about it. They just forget or being lazy or just are not used to doing it. There might be some other barriers as well. Also, if they think that the person, they would give the shoutout to, would feel uncomfortable about the situation and maybe they would not do it and rather give it personally.

5. Do you have any other comments or thoughts concerning this matter?

I have a bunch of thoughts on that. But, yeah, especially the fact that how it's going to evolve and how to move this forward, are there some other ways of doing this, or how to ask the questions or how to present them or whatnot. I think, it's really good that you're doing this survey right now since we'll get more opinions about it, if people actually see point of this or is it just something else.

Evolving the values is something I am working on towards the end of the year. Based on the data we've gotten from the shoutouts, how values are showing

Values Shoutouts Employee Interview 2

our day-to-day lives and how they can transform into something more concrete. Better sentences that would then describe the values that we have at our Company X to outsiders as well.

Values Shoutouts Employee Interview 3**Interviewee: Team Lead (Operations side)****1. How would you describe your attitude towards the fact that Values Shoutouts feature is available for Company X's employees?**

Well, I think that's something that's essential, especially from a leadership role as well. I think, feedback in any form is something that's required, whether being negative or positive. Mostly, when we do the shoutouts, it's always... the public setting we have there, so you can see basically for everybody you make openly someone's good work that done. It's always something that is good there and person gets recognized for hard work. I think it's essential. Every workplace should have it.

2. Have you ever used this feature yourself to express gratitude? What motivated you to do so, even though you knew that it is anonymous?

Well, maybe recently I've been quite lazy with it, I'll be honest. But when I first started, I used to use it quite often. Almost every week. Because I was starting, coming through Company X and everything like that, so I used to see a lot of small things when I was working, sitting in the chair, like always in the table seeing many different people doing some good things. I probably should use it more, especially in my role too.

About anonymity: I don't know, maybe that's what makes it nice as well, because it's coming from an anonymous source. It's like someone is showing without getting the recognition that they've done it for you.

3. Have you ever been given a shoutout? If yes, how did you feel about being thanked publicly?

Yeah, I have, I've got a few there. It's a kind of way to see for someone "Ok, it's my name there. You kind of feel like... you like that feedback and if you think you've done some good stuff or whatever. I think it's nice. You get that feedback. I've been given a few and every time I always feel very very nice for getting recognized for the hard work you've done. Normally, you don't get shoutouts for free. Normally, it's because you've done something that's out of the ordinary, exceptional

Values Shoutouts Employee Interview 3**4. If you think of the reasons why employees are not giving shoutouts, what would you name?**

I don't know, maybe I can think from my perspective. I'm pretty busy with other things. When the post comes up "Hey, give your shoutouts", when I see it, I am like "Yes, I should do it", but then time gets by and next minute it's the OPS has started. At least, that's my excuse, it's not something I'm proud of, but it's something I should be more active in. Maybe, the fact that people are just lazy, or busy, don't put the time into it, making an effort there. Because, I know, I get feedback from many different people during the day, but it never comes up in the shoutouts. It's always in a personal level, but they never take it as far to put it into the actual public shoutouts itself.

5. Do you have any other comments or thoughts concerning this matter?

It's 100 percent positive thing, there's no doubt about that. It's really good for people who get that feedback as well. If they're doing everyday work that's normal life, that's expected, but when they're doing something that's exceptional, they should always receive that feedback. In a public format as well. It shows that appreciation there. I think it's super positive. I think we should be more active in it actually.

Values Shoutouts Employee Interview 4**Interviewee: Customer Service Specialist****1. How would you describe your attitude towards the fact that Values Shoutouts feature is available for Company X's employees?**

Well I think it's very useful. It allows people to communicate more clearly, to give shoutouts to give props to other people. It is something that not everyone does face-to-face. This is another tool. They can do it anonymously and I've seen people kind of like that. They're more willing to do that when in a shoutout.

2. Have you ever used this feature yourself to express gratitude? What motivated you to do so, even though you knew that it is anonymous?

I've used it many times and I think it's very important to bring up the good work that someone's done even though I would already say it to them. I think, it's great to show it to the whole company. I think it motivates the people who receive it as well. I like the tool.

3. Have you ever been given a shoutout? If yes, how did you feel about being thanked publicly?

Yes, I've received a few shoutouts and, well, it was great! There was some stuff it some of the shoutouts that I've heard personally, so it was great to see that still the work I did was appreciated in some way.

4. If you think of the reasons why employees are not giving shoutouts, what would you name?

I think, one of the most common causes is that you forget, because shoutouts are announced on Slack but then not everyone checks in there and maybe just being a bit lazy. You don't feel like doing it every time, so it might be that you don't have anything to give shoutouts for. Or it's like "Ok, I've got something, but I didn't check on Slack and I forgot" or like "Yes, I'd like to do it, but I can do it later". I think, these are the most common reasons.

5. Do you have any other comments or thoughts concerning this matter?

As I said in the survey, I think It's very important. It gives an extra tool to people to express their gratitude or whatever they're happy about. So far, it's been very

Values Shoutouts Employee Interview 4

good. The only “problem” (Emphasizes) might be that there are so many that not all of them are read out publicly and the rest of them are being published, but once again, on Slack, so someone might miss it, but hopefully not. There is some space for improvement, but it’s pretty good already.

Values Shoutouts Employee Interview 5**Interviewee: Production Specialist****1. How would you describe your attitude towards the fact that Values Shoutouts feature is available for Company X's employees?**

It's quite fun. I don't think it has actually big impact on our operations technically, but it may give a nice team spirit boost. Especially for... if there's some person that has been doing extra much work or something, then it actually let's say acknowledges the extra work.

2. Have you ever used this feature yourself to express gratitude? What motivated you to do so, even though you knew that it is anonymous?

I actually haven't done it yet. I have been thinking about giving a shoutout. It's usually that I either forget to put, or then it's just a link that I haven't really found yet. Actually, I think, it should be quite easy to find. The thing is that I haven't taken the effort actually to look for it. And also, I've always forgotten. The week has passed and each Monday I remember "Oh, we're having our Weekly" and then that's the moment I remember that I should have given a shoutout to someone.

Additional Question: Okay, but if we imagine that you would do it, like if you would have done that, what would be your motive behind that. Why would you'd like to do that? (If you actually have this intention).

Answer: It's just that I want to acknowledge someone's work. I may say: "Hey, thank you for your effort", but in a way I want to take it a bit further. I would actually say: hey, everyone! This person has done extra good work, or this person has been helping me out" And especially, if I see that the person is an extra effort, for example training or something, it's very nice to give that extra acknowledgement for a certain person.

3. Have you ever been given a shoutout? If yes, how did you feel about being thanked publicly?

Yes, actually, a couple of times. And especially, I think it was during training. So, it's...yeah... It's nice to get a shoutout and also, it's... a bit funny. It's not really embarrassing, but there's a certain aspect of getting flustered, because when you receive "Thanks" from someone in a big group, it feels nice and also

Values Shoutouts Employee Interview 5

in the same time you answer like, “Oh, not that big deal. I was just doing my work” and also it feels very nice.

4. If you think of the reasons why employees are not giving shoutouts, what would you name?

Besides the once I said, which is a certain threshold or making the link hidden or difficult to find, I think it could be (this is just a speculation) that people do not want to overly express themselves. For example, if someone has been helping out, you want to just express your gratitude one-on-one, just saying it person-to-person instead of like... They might think that it's making a fuss out of some more regular workday. That's just speculation.

Well, I don't think there're really other big reasons why people wouldn't give shoutouts. We're in a really nice working environment and everyone has a good team spirit.

5. Do you have any other comments or thoughts concerning this matter?

In my previous job we had this similar routine. We'd have weekly meetings in a big group for the whole office and they're a bit shorter. About 15 to 10 minutes. And there also was like a quick shoutout to different teams or specific person in a team doing some extra work, or staying late to get a certain thing published, making sure everything works just fine. I would say It might be a common practice these days to have weeklies and shoutouts.

Additional question: Do you see that those shoutouts in another company where in some way different from ones we have here?

Answer: Yeah, they were a bit more casual. We'd just say, “thank you” for this person, “You did a great job here and there”. We would say: this person was helping out with moving stuff around in the evening, or this person was checking that the client gets this site done in time and the person was doing a 10-hour shift staying late. They'd like to say what they did and who it was, but I think everyone else was just like... There wasn't clapping or anything like that. It was just like...a small acknowledgment from the CEO that “this guy has done some extra work”. It's a bit more toned-down.

Values Shoutouts Employee Interview 6**Interviewee: CEO and co-founder of Company X****1. How has it all started with Values Shoutouts? (If you could briefly mention Values Workshop Company X's employees had in May 2018 and what happened after that)**

It was in May 2018, so we've sent a Survey we made with HR manager back in the days to all our employees about the company's values. "What are the core values". That's when we first started workshoping the values based on that. We were in quite a rush that summer since our company grew from what 17 to 45 people from summer until the end of 2018. Based on survey we had an extended management sit-down with the whole company. I think that was only a few days that we took for it. Just a few hours all in all that we used for workshop in the first version of values everyone thought about that beforehand, everyone had a chance to write something on the memos and be heard. That's how we started. Now, we have been iterating those this year. We've decided to bring Value Shoutouts to test our values (How are they seen in action?) and to see if there are any other values that we should add, something that comes up often. Is there something that's clearly missing? What are our company's core values that we absolutely cannot live without? And you can see it from the way people are phrasing their words, the way things are seen here. The whole Idea behind that was to bring people up based on the values, right kind of things that we're doing here (Teamwork, ownership, all the other values as well). Kind of like that second-ground of values that we use in the workshop right now, those that came based on another iteration this year and now we are test-driving them. We want to do the process "by the book". We still have a lot to do in defining those. Teamwork and ownership values seem to stand out so far.

I think, we will be ready with this iteration in Q1 2020. Then we can lock those and see on later stages if then we'll need to iterate something to run the process properly.

2. How does anonymous and at the same time public expression of gratitude affect Company X's working environment and corporate culture?

Values Shoutouts Employee Interview 6

Public expression of gratitude...To the receiver it feels nice. That's the feedback I've heard of the values Shoutouts. When you're giving those anonymously, it's much easier to do it. You could also say who gave the feedback, but then for some people it can make kind of like a barrier to the reviews. Low work, that's what we were thinking. There is no scientific proof behind this. We were just thinking that it could make a barrier to give shoutouts. If you can leave it anonymously, especially in that case you don't need to think so carefully what you write, you can just freely express yourself because it's anonymous.

Additional question: True, but since it's anonymous, what do you think is the motive of people saying thank you to other people and getting no credit from that?

Answer: They just want other people to feel nice and I think, that's how it affects the working environment. It creates this positive lube around the teams as well. I can see it in some teams really strongly. For example, in customer service they are giving shoutouts all the time, every weekend giving recognition to each other.

3. Have you ever received a Shoutout? If yes, how did you feel about being thanked publicly?

Yes, I have. It felt really good. Although, I have to say, I am not used to being recognized publicly. So, I am quite a humble guy, so I don't really need that. I'd rather give it to someone else. I did not see that coming. It was unexpected in that way. And, frankly, I didn't believe, or, I didn't even think that people would give those to me. I thought, that would be more meant like for the teammates and stuff. But then, it was something related to building culture, helping out in building teams or recruiting, or something related to that.

4. If you think of the reasons why employees are not giving shoutouts, what would you name?

One reason that I can see that is likely a big reason here is that not a lot of people are using Slack. Especially, in OPS. And it could be that (we were analyzing this one of the days few weeks back) and I get feedback from time to time every now and then that if you're working in OPS, not everyone is working with a laptop and not everyone has Slack app installed don their phones. Another

Values Shoutouts Employee Interview 6

reason could be that it takes time. I would think that those are the two biggest ones. People just forget.

5. Have you ever used this feature yourself to express gratitude? What motivated you to do so, even though you knew that it is anonymous?

Yeah, I did that several times. What motivated me to do so... Well, I want people to feel good about themselves. I think, it's a really important part of building the culture. If we want to highlight something that somebody did, somebody, for example stayed late to help another team, even though it wasn't their responsibility. I think, it deserves a shoutout. That's a super important part of the job here and important part of the culture. You're taking hit for the team so to speak. For example, just one example of teamwork and taking ownership even if it's not your field. You could be from Finance, but then you just go and help Marketing because they're under a lot of pressure or other things like that. I just think, that helps people keep going and feel appreciated. You never hear too much of that. And especially, I think, for us, Finns, It can sometimes be kind of hard to give positive feedback as well.

6. Do you have any other comments or thoughts concerning this matter?

I think, they (Shoutouts) will continue be based on the Values. I think, that's a good way of kind of praise the values as well. To test-drive them as well as to reflect what's important for us as a company. Once that goes forward, we can make better hiring decisions once that's finalized and then we can reflect on that, based on what we see important at the Company and keep developing the culture.