



CULTURE CODE

Creating a company we love.

WHAT'S CULTURE?

A set of shared beliefs,
values and practices.

WHY WORK ON
CULTURE?

**Culture is to recruiting as
product is to marketing.**

Families are more easily attracted
with a **great product or experience.**

Amazing people are more easily attracted
with a **great culture.**

THE INTEREST RATE ON CULTURE DEBT IS HIGH.

Much higher than financial debt
or technology debt.

Often, crushingly high.

CULTURE HAPPENS.

Whether we plan it or not,
culture will happen.

Why not create a culture we love?



Lets make the company we always dreamed of. Lets create a company that will be a great place to be *from*.

**REED HASTINGS & PATTY MCCORD
NETFLIX.**

Now, an
observation...



PEOPLE HAVE
DRAMATICALLY
CHANGED HOW THEY
LIVE AND WORK.

	THEN	NOW.
FOCUS	Pension	Purpose
NEED	Good Boss	Great Colleagues
HOURS	9-5	Whenever
WORKPLACE	Office	Wherever
TENURE	Whole Career	Whatever

**AND ALTHOUGH
PEOPLE HAVE
DRAMATICALLY
CHANGED...**

Many
organizations
operate as if
they're **frozen**
in time.

**They operate as if money
is what matters most...**

**...as if the Internet hadn't
been invented...**

**... and as if amazing
people are just happy to
have a job.**



039471 00000505
RANDY

Dear Brandi + Gretchen,
I just wanted to sincerely thank you both for making such a sad time a whole lot easier. I couldn't have been strong for my sister if you girls hadn't helped with all the little things and big things as well. I feel so very fortunate to have had you both on our "team" and all your care, concern, extra details and love you put in your work.

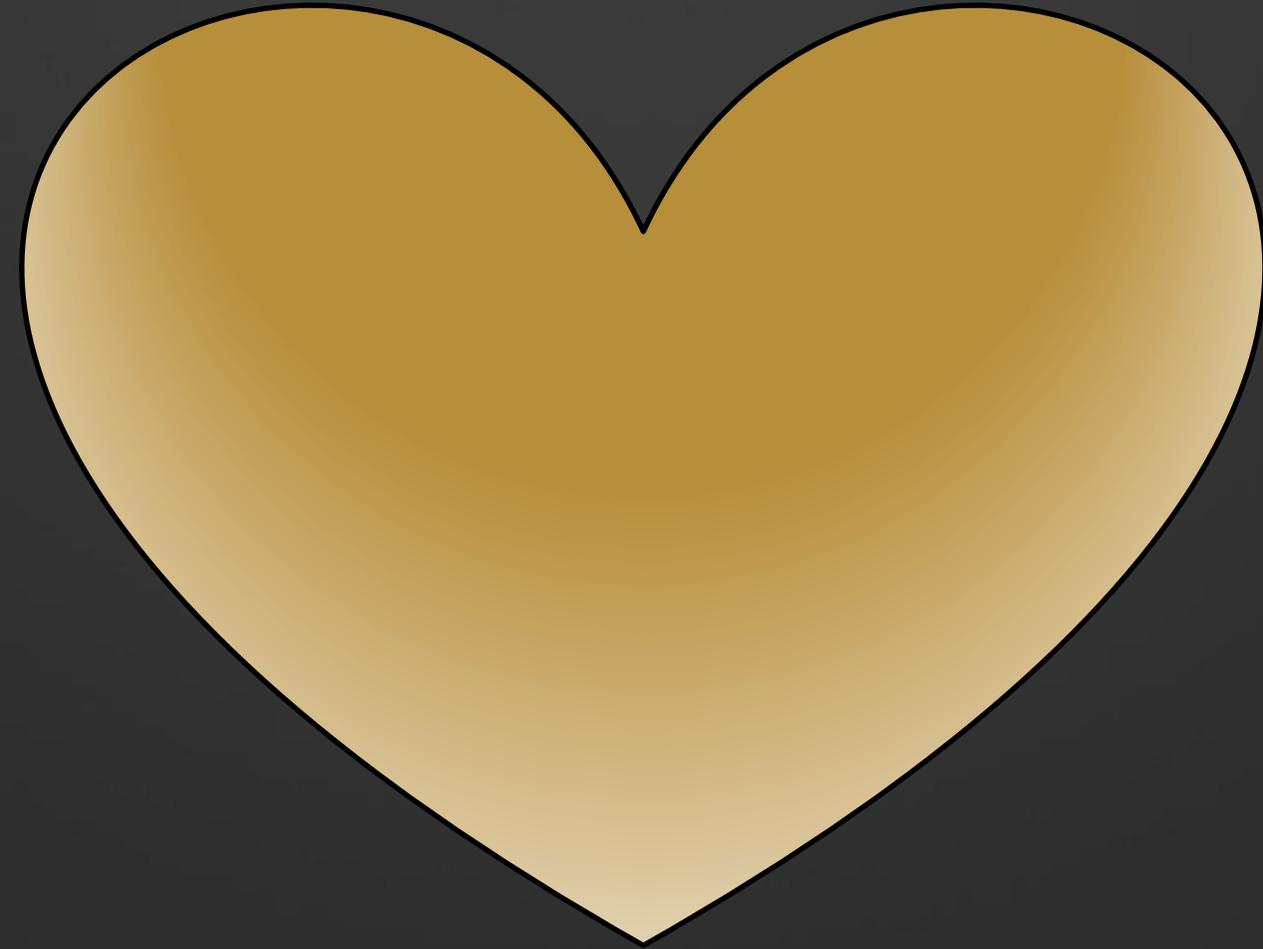
Thank-you from the bottom of our hearts!!
Shannon + Darryl Terry
Tracy + Sean Morgan



We're different.



We are **MORRIS**
FAMILY.



We're creating
a company we
love.

This document is
part manifesto,
part employee handbook,
and part diary of dreams.



When something is
aspirational (not yet true)
we try to call it out.

THE MORRIS FAMILY CULTURE CODE.

1. We are as maniacal about our **metrics** as our **mission**.
2. We obsess over **families**, not competitors.
3. We are radically and uncomfortably **transparent**.
4. We give ourselves the **autonomy** to be awesome.
5. We are unreasonably **selective** about our peers.
6. We invest in individual **mastery** and market value.
7. We defy conventional “wisdom” as it’s often unwise.
8. We speak the **truth** and face the facts.
9. We believe in **work+life**, not work vs. life.
10. We are a perpetual **work in progress**.



We are as
maniacal about
our metrics as
our mission.



“Pursue something so important that even if you fail, the world is better off with you having tried.”

TIM O'REILLY.

OUR MISSION is to
SERVE.

We want to transform how
funeral homes do funerals.



Service
is about empathy.

It's about creating
an experience
people **love**.

**WE BELIEVE OURS
IS A NOBLE CAUSE.**

We help families celebrate and remember.

We are passionate about our mission.

It has earned us the love of thousands.

We're also maniacal about metrics and reaching our goals.

It has earned us the resources to further our mission.

Balancing this dual personality
of mission & metrics is challenging.

But it's also what makes us

DIFFERENT.

And sometimes
dysfunctional.



A tall, white, conical lighthouse stands on a dark, silhouetted shore. The lighthouse's lantern room is illuminated from within, casting a warm, yellow glow. The sky is a deep, dark blue, with a large, bright, orange sun positioned in the upper left quadrant. The horizon line is visible in the distance, showing a dark silhouette of land and water.

One way we balance
these things is to have a
guiding goal that
serves the mission.



Our guiding goal is delighting families.



We obsess over
families, not
competitors.



Have the courage to start with the customer. My biggest regrets are the moments that I let a lack of data override my intuition on what's best for our customers.

ANDREW MASON.

FORMER CEO OF GROUPON
IN HIS DEPARTURE EMAIL

**FOR EVERY DECISION
WE SHOULD ASK
OURSELVES:**

“Selves, what’s in it for the families?
Will this delight them?”

In other words...

SFTF.

We sometimes often have
to remind ourselves of this.

Solve for the family

Not just their happiness,
but their **experience.**

WAIT. Does “Solve For The Family” mean just giving more away for free? Wouldn’t that delight families?

NO. To delight families in the long-term, we have to survive in the short-term.

Because...

Bankrupt
companies
don't delight
their customers.

All other goals
should support
our guiding goal.

We have a professional care team.

Does hitting our sales goals support
our guiding goal?

YES.

Having delighted families requires having families. (funny how that works)

We're on the path towards our Guiding Goal as long as we sell to families that we **expect to delight.**



This is the key. We shouldn't sell families we're not justifiably confident we can delight.

WE LOVE TO EDUCATE.

We are enthusiastic teachers.

We believe success comes through educating families, not exploiting them.

3

We are
radically and
uncomfortably
transparent.

THEN • (back in the 1900s)

Power came from hoarding knowledge.

Decisions were made behind closed doors.

NOW ...

Power is gained by
sharing knowledge,
not hoarding it.



**“Sunlight is the
best disinfectant.”**

-LOUIS BRANDEIS

WE SHARE (ALMOST) EVERYTHING.

We make information available to
everyone in the company.

We're **radically** and **uncomfortably**
transparent.

We protect information only when:

It is legally required.

Example: Information covered under a
Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA)

It is not completely ours to share.

Example: Individual compensation data

Examples of things we share and discuss:

- Financials (cash balance, burn-rate, P&L, etc.)

- Management meeting deck

- “Strategic” topics

- Personal achievements and challenges



We have open access to anyone in the company. No permission needed.

Nobody has an office.
We have shared workspace

**The intent behind all this
transparency is to support
smarter behavior and better
decisions.**

So...

4

We give
ourselves the
autonomy to
be incredible.

THEN.

Organizations tried to prevent mistakes with policies and procedures.

NOW...

**WE TRUST
OURSELVES.**

Just because someone made a mistake years ago doesn't mean we need a policy.

**WE DON'T PENALIZE THE MANY
FOR THE MISTAKES OF THE FEW.**

We only protect against *really* big stuff.



We don't have
pages of policies
and procedures.

Instead we have a 3-word policy on
just about everything:

**USE
GOOD
JUDGMENT.**

Social media policy.

Travel policy.

Sick day policy.

Buy a round of drinks at an event policy.

Work from home during a blizzard policy.

Our policy on all of these (and most other things):

USE GOOD JUDGMENT.

WHAT'S GOOD JUDGMENT?

Team > Self

Favor your team's interest over your own.

Company > Team

Favor the company's interest over your team.

Family > Company

Favor the family's interest over the company.

We're pretty good at the first and second – but the third is tricky sometimes.

Remember, acting in our families' interest *is in our long-term interest too.*

Now, lets talk about where
and when we work.

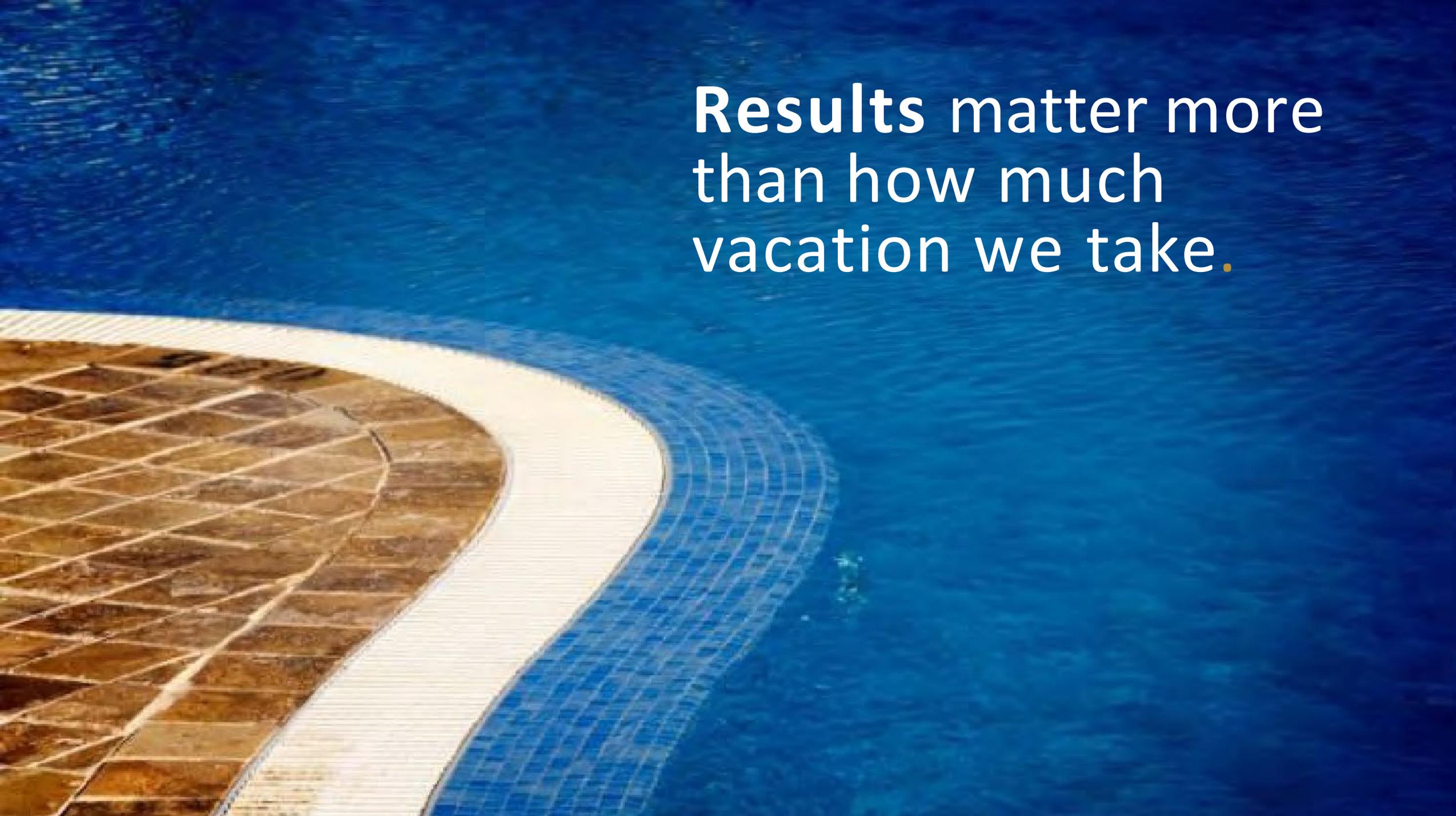
Generally...

Results matter more than
the hours we work.



**Results matter
more than where
we produce them.**





Results matter more
than how much
vacation we take.

We believe in the freedom to
work and create healing
experiences how we want.

Remarkable results are
what matter.

This is what we believe.

But we also recognize
that...



The biggest driver of performance in complex industries like software is serendipitous interaction.

BEN WABER.

VISITING SCIENTIST, MIT MEDIA LAB
AUTHOR, "PEOPLE ANALYTICS"

So, we trust our leaders to
use good judgment when
guiding their teams.

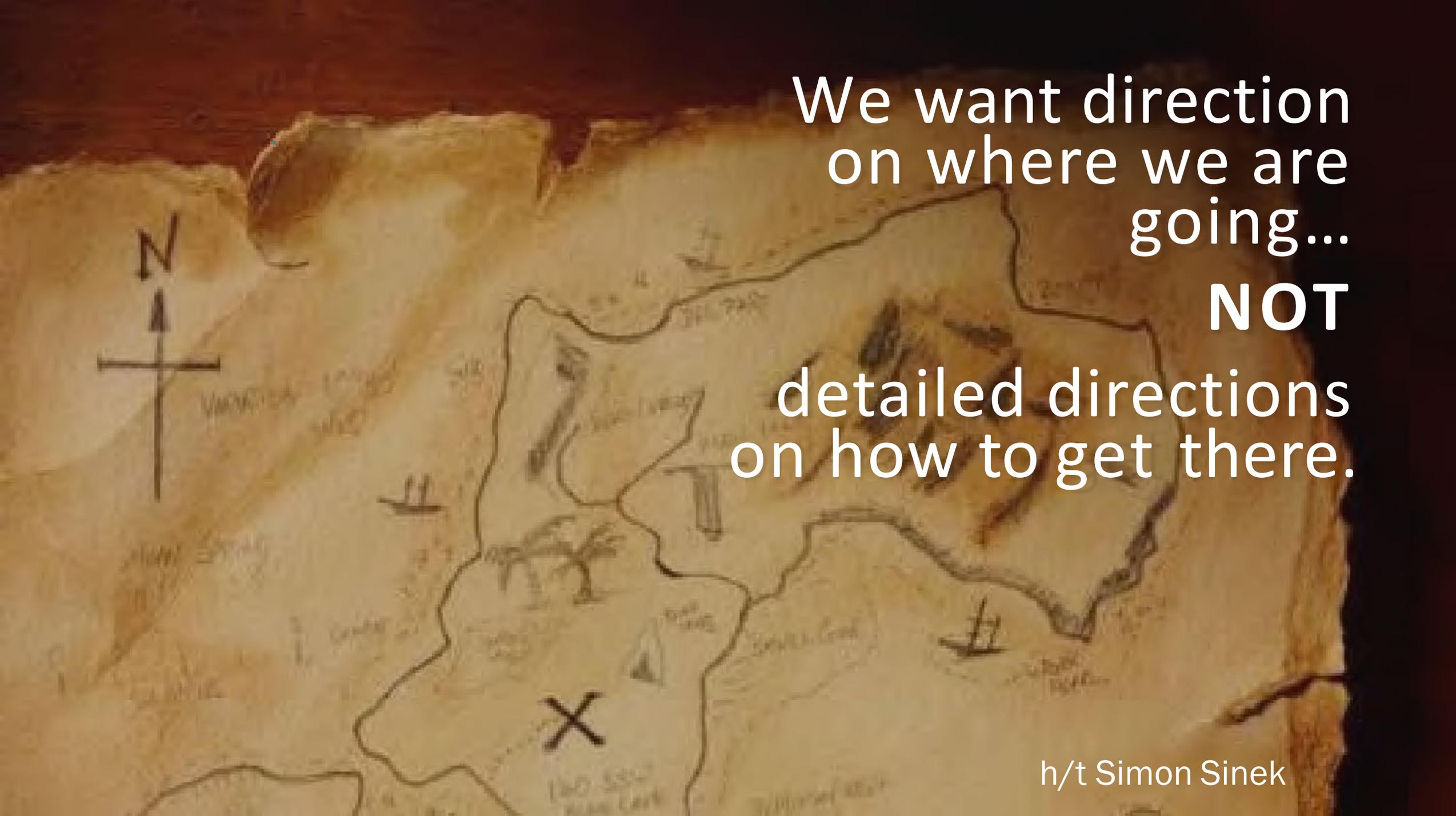
And we try to create a
work environment where
we want to come in.

THEN.

Influence based on hierarchy
Command & Control

NOW...

INFLUENCE IS
INDEPENDENT OF
HIERARCHY.



We want direction
on where we are
going...

NOT

detailed directions
on how to get there.

We don't want just "managers"

We want inspiring leaders.

Passionate coaches.

Tireless supporters.

Leaders exist to help
individual stars **make
magic.**

**CEO, CTO, VP of This,
Manager of That.
Doesn't matter what
your title is.**

**EVERYBODY
DOES REAL
WORK AND
GETS THEIR
HANDS DIRTY.**



Oh, and speaking of job
titles...

WE HAVE TRADITIONAL JOB TITLES AT MORRIS FAMILY.

It is a topic of intense debate.

Options:

- 1) No titles for anyone
- 2) Make up our own creative titles
- 3) Use traditional titles**



We ended up with the last option. Bummer. But, it does align with our desire to increase individual market value.

Back to having autonomy...

**Awesome is
as awesome does.**



HAVING AUTONOMY DOESN'T MEAN CRAP IF
YOU DON'T ACT.
DON'T OVER-THINK IT.

JEDI.

(Just Enjoy Doing It)

(Just Effing Do it)



Which ever comes first...



With this kind of
transparency and trust
we can't take chances when hiring.
So...

5

We are
unreasonably
picky about our
peers.

**You become the
average of the 5
people you hang
out with.**

**Drew Houston
CEO, Dropbox**



What makes someone a
great fit for Morris Family?

What makes them awesome *for us*?

What does it mean to be

PART OF THE

FAMILY?

There are **5 attributes**
that we value in people.



HUMBLE.

Modest, despite being awesome.

Self-aware and respectful.

Wait. Doesn't being humble mean lacking confidence?

No.

The very best people are self-aware and self-critical – not arrogant.

Examples: Bezos. Buffet. Berners-Lee.
(and that's just some of the Bs)



Humility is not thinking
less of yourself; it is
thinking of yourself
less.

C.S. LEWIS.

When things go well, humble
people tend to
share the credit.

When things go poorly,
they tend to
shoulder the responsibility.



EFFECTIVE.

Gets sh*t done.

Measurably moves the needle.

Immeasurably adds value.

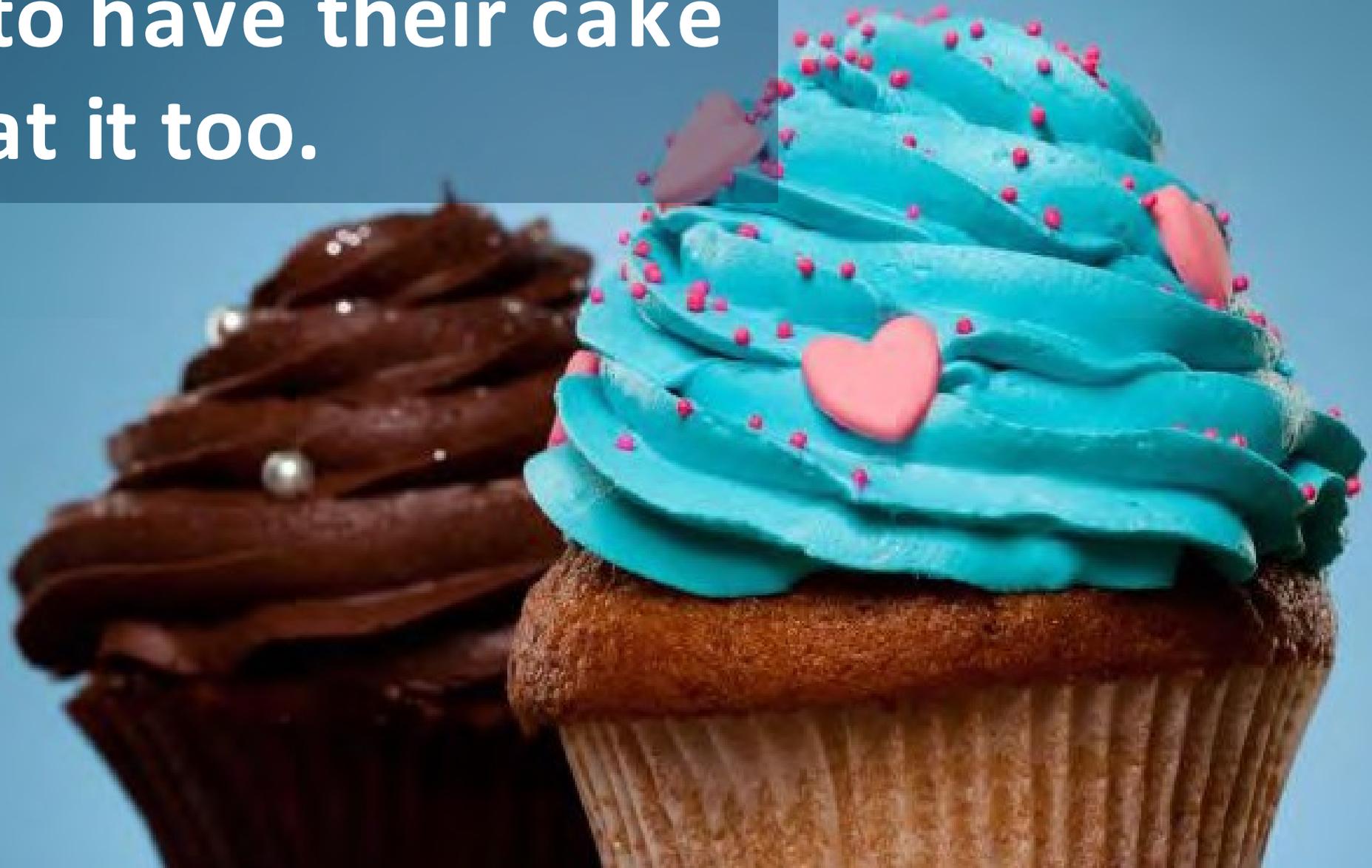
EFFECTIVE PEOPLE ARE:

Predisposed to action. They just start doing.

They have a sense of ownership.

They're resourceful and always looking for leverage.

Effective people find ways to have their cake and eat it too.





ADAPTABLE.

Constantly changing.

Life-long learner.

WAIT. What about good people that just want stability and predictability?

They may do good work, but they likely won't be happy here.

Change is constant at Morris Family.



REMARK·ABLE.

worthy of being remarked upon*

Has a super-power that makes them stand out in some way.

Remarkably smart.

Remarkably creative.

Remarkably resourceful.

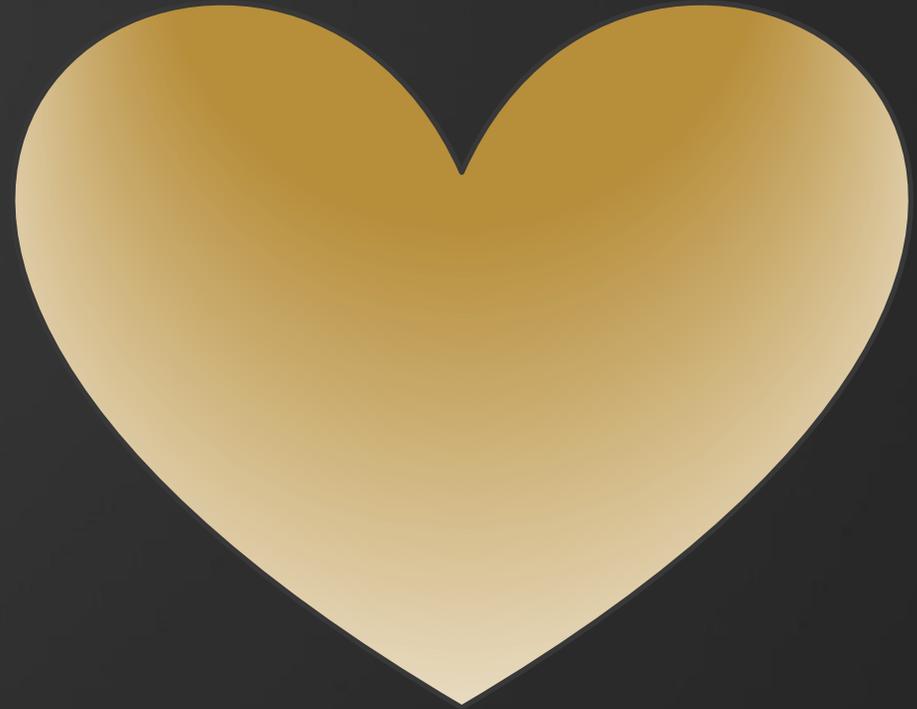
*h/tto Seth Godin



TRANSPARENT.

Open and honest with others
and with themselves.

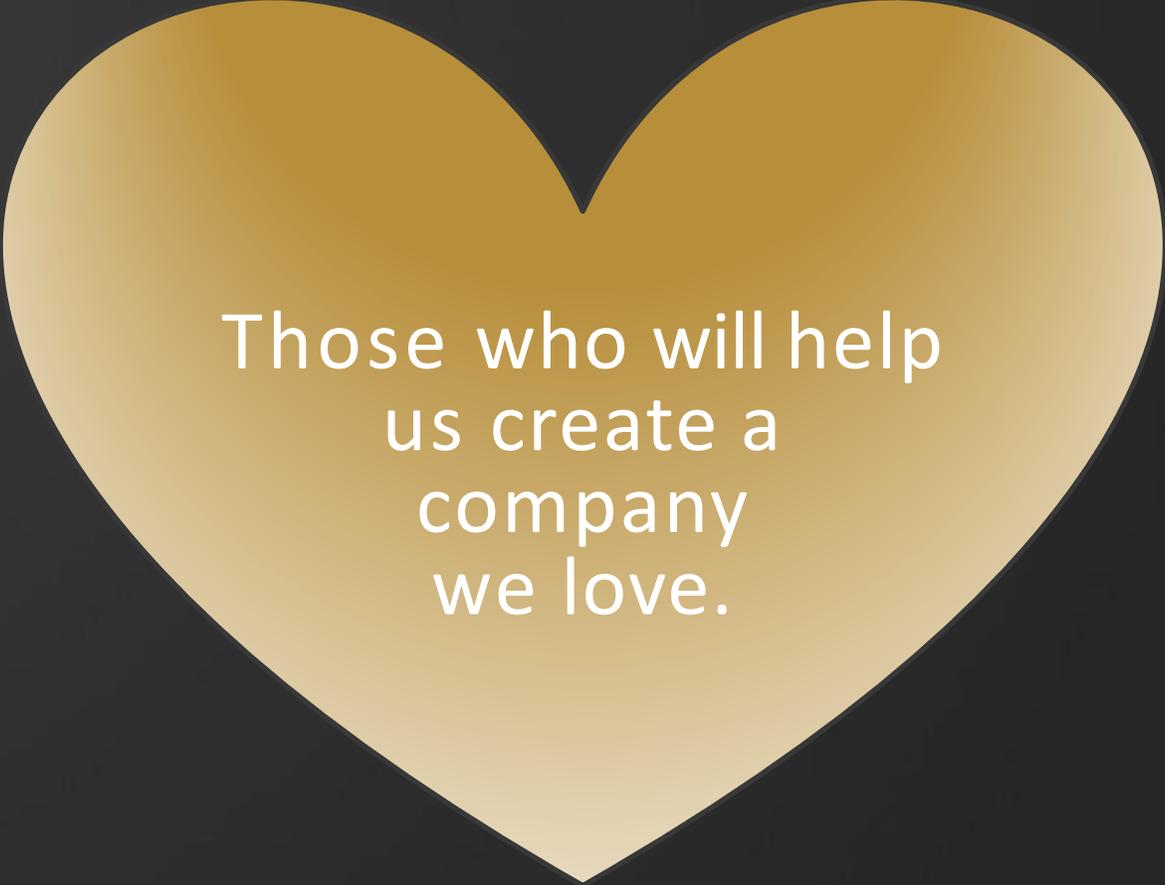
**HUMBLE
EFFECTIVE
ADAPTABLE
REMARKABLE
TRANSPARENT**



We want people
with **heart.**

HUMBLE
EFFECTIVE
ADAPTABLE
REMARKABLE
TRANSPARENT

Yes, “heart” is a bit cheesy.
We’re a bit cheesy sometimes.



Those who will help
us create a
company
we love.

**WE DON'T JUST
BELIEVE IN HEART,
WE BET ON IT.**

We hire, reward, and release people
based on the five attributes.

EXAMPLE 1:

If you're closed, arrogant and stuck in your ways, it doesn't matter how effective you are. It's not going to work out.

EXAMPLE 2:

You can be remarkably smart, humble and open. But, if you're not effectively moving us forward, it's not going to work out.

Does this mean we only accept those that fit match the 5 attributes perfectly?

No. Confucius has good advice here...

“Better a diamond with
a flaw than a pebble
without.”

CONFUCIUS.



Don't just hire to delegate.

It's tempting to bring people in that you can push off work you don't have time for.

Hire to elevate.

Bring people in that are better than you at something and you can learn from.

WITH GREAT PEOPLE COMES GREAT RESPONSIBILITY.

Success is when a group of people
achieve their collective potential.

So...

6

We invest in
individual
mastery and
market value.

We want to be as proud
of the **people** we build
as we are
of the **company** we build.

We believe in investing to
increase the **individual
market value** of every
team member.

We're doing a few things
already...

We want you to thirst for knowledge and thrive.

**If you have a book you
want to read, tell us.**

We will find the book and purchase it for you.

Rewards Programs.

S³

5-Star Service Program.

Pop-up Contests.

Creative Compensation Plans.

Phone Shopper Reward.

THAT'S JUST THE BEGINNING.

We believe in compensating fairly,
but we want to **invest generously**
in our learning and growth.

We're always looking for new ideas.

We compensate based on
fair market value.

Reality: It's hard to know what market
value is. We think of it as VORP
(Value Over Replacement Player)

THERE ARE TWO WAYS TO PROGRESS AT MORRIS FAMILY.

1. Gain mastery as an individual contributor and make magic.
2. Provide spectacular support to those who are doing #1.

Reality: This is mostly true, but we need a quant-based approach to measuring how true it is.



**The smarter and
harder we work,
the luckier we get...**

John Horan.

Horan & McConaty



We defy
conventional
“wisdom”
because it’s
often unwise.

We'd rather be
failing frequently
than never trying
new things.



**Why do we care so much
about being daring?**



If we regress to the mean, we fail.
It's that simple.

We start out being exceptional.

As we grow, there is a dark, powerful force that pulls us towards the average.

Remarkable outcomes
rarely result
from modest risk.

Simplicity is a competitive
advantage.

Things start simple...



An iceberg with a sharp, jagged peak is shown floating in a blue ocean. The top part of the iceberg is above the water, while a much larger, dark blue portion is submerged below the surface. The sky is a clear, light blue with some wispy clouds.

**THEN COMPLEXITY
QUIETLY CREEPS IN.**

**ITS TOLL LIES BELOW
THE SURFACE.**

WHY DOES COMPLEXITY CREEP IN?

It is often the easy, seductive answer to short-term issues.

Fighting for simplicity takes courage and commitment to the long game.

WHY DOES COMPLEXITY ALWAYS INCREASE?

Because everyone *adds* complexity and nobody takes it away.

Ironically, adding complexity is easy and maintaining simplicity is hard.

COMPLEXITY AND THE TRAGEDY OF THE COMMONS.

Example: “I need to hit my goals this month, so I’m going to push for this exception to our standard contract.”

Result: You may make your goal *now*, but we all pay the price of the complexity *forever*.

Focus on the long game. Team over self.

Like software,

Organizations should be
**frequently
refactored.**



Refactoring means to improve internal structure without changing external behavior.

REFACTOR.

- Pull out unused features.
- Remove unnecessary rules.
- Stop generating useless reports.
- Cancel unproductive meetings.
- Prune extraneous process.

8

We speak the truth
and face the facts.

NO SILENT DISAGREEMENT.

If we disagree with a decision or direction, we have the responsibility to speak up.

We trust our candor will not be used against us.

We have the right to clear, candid and constructive feedback. We can ask for this at anytime.

Don't wait for the traditional annual preview. Favoring more frequent feedback.

WE LOVE DATA.

We like to think our decisions are not **data driven** but **data powered**.



We like to think it, but it's not true.
We are obsessed with data.

DEBATES ARE WON WITH DATA.

Job titles don't win debates.

We disfavor pulling rank.

**BUT WE ALSO
DISLIKE
INDECISION**



Data is collected. Debates are had.

THEN SOMEONE JUST HAS TO DECIDE.

An imperfect decision
is better than no decision.

A controversial decision
is better than no decision.

9

WE BELIEVE IN
WORK+LIFE,
NOT WORK VS.
LIFE.

Work-life
“balance” is
misguided.



We don't think it's possible to be unhappy at work and then happy in life.

We believe in enjoying life.

We also believe in enjoying work.

We believe in work+life fit.

10

WE ARE A
PERPETUAL
WORK IN
PROGRESS.

We believe it takes more
than talent to succeed.

**GREATNESS REQUIRES
INTENSE COMMITMENT.**

WE WORK IMMENSELY HARD.

It's not for everyone, but it's part of who we are.

We are on a mission to transform the funeral service experience.

That's not easy to do.

WE ARE NEVER DONE.

Never done **iterating**.

Never done **learning**.

Never done **rethinking**.

THE MORRIS FAMILY CULTURE CODE.

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9. We believe in **work+life**, not work vs. life.
10. We are a perpetual **work in progress**.

WE WERE INSPIRED BY

- The Hubspot Culture Code (Dharmesh Shah)
- The Netflix Culture Deck (McCord & Hastings)
- “Drive” (Daniel Pink)
- The Valve Employee Handbook
- “Rework” (Fried and Hansson)
- Google’s People Ops Team
- ...and countless others on the web.

PROPS TO OUR INTERNAL BETA USERS.

They helped out despite having better things to do.

-JON ROBERTSON

-K(c)RISTINE JONES

THANK YOU.

Congrats for making it this far.

We would love feedback and discussion:

[Dr. Jonathan Carroll](#)



Yes, we're hiring.
Click the logo.