

The Culture Code

Our High-Performance Handbook



I am hugely passionate about all things high performance.

I am most proud of our company when I see a Brainlabber achieve something they didn't think was ever possible. I've seen Brainlabbers pitch to some of the world's most sought-after brands, speak on our industry's biggest stages, and lead teams of hundreds of people. I believe we can accelerate the career of every Brainlabber if we have a culture that empowers everyone to perform at their highest. You could call it a culture of high performance.



Culture describes the way we interact with each other, the values that we hold, and the decisions that we make. It can encompass a variety of elements, including leadership style, company mission, office environment, values, ethics, expectations, and goals. In some companies, culture is just words written on a wall, other times it might be defined as the worst behavior a company is willing to tolerate. I believe that intentionally creating a high-performance culture starts with describing how we behave when we're performing at our best.

If you keep on reading, you'll find what today we like to call the Culture Code. These twelve codes describe the behaviors that we believe enable high performance. No matter job title or location, every Brainlabber should strive to live by them, even in the most challenging situations. When I started Brainlabs in 2012, I wrote the first incarnation of this Culture Code. Many parts of that handbook still stand today, old timers will remember the likes of "feedback is a gift" and "assume positive intent".

The beauty of a high-performance culture is that it can't be achieved alone, it requires everyone to play their part – celebrating when we see others embodying the Code and holding ourselves accountable if we could be doing more. That said, there is no such thing as perfection, you may even find yourself at times prioritizing one code over another in order to find the path to high performance.

The Code is deliberately long and it's not intended to be memorized by heart. The point is not to make it simple or marketable but to reflect the complexity of company culture far beyond words written on a wall. I see the Brainlabs Culture Code as our guiding light, it's our shared commitment to turn up every day and try our best in order to create a company we can all be proud of.

Daniel Gilbert
Global CEO

The Culture Code



01 We are One Global Team



02 Be a Coach



03 Bias for Action



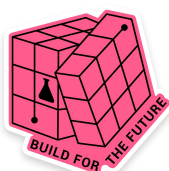
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05 Feedback is a Gift



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07 Build for the Future



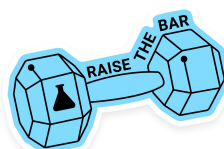
08 Focus is Power



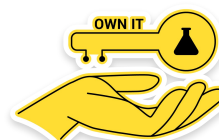
09 Test and Learn



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01

We are One Global Team



Collaborative • Team-player • Dedicated • Humble • Inclusive • Reliable

👍 It's **very Brainlabs** when someone...

Puts the team first, always. Identifies the role they can play to help the team win. Assembles superteams by bringing together different skill sets. Sweeps the shed. Delivers what they promised and doesn't let the team down. Values their teammates' perspectives and differences.

👎 It's **not very Brainlabs** when someone...

Prioritizes individual success over team success. Creates silos, factions or hierarchies.

Everyday action

Celebrating a team effort, not just an individual effort.

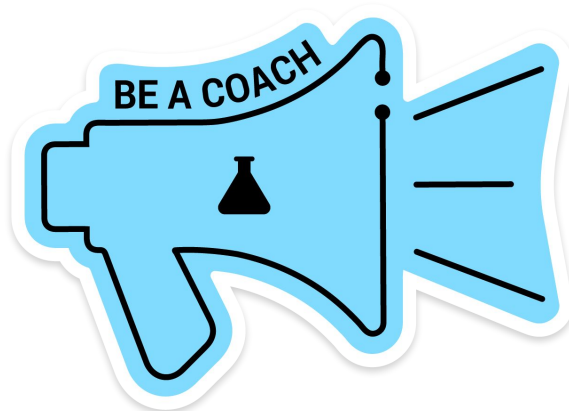
Learning material:

Margaret Heffernan's Ted Talk, [Forget the pecking order at work](#)



02

Be a Coach



Multiplier • Sponsor • Empowering • Champion • Mentor

👍 It's **very Brainlabs** when someone...

Coaches those around them to be the very best they can be. Finds, champions and multiplies their teammates' superpowers. Sees the potential in others and gives them opportunities to shine. Takes the time to help another Brainlabber accelerate their career.

Everyday action

Mentoring a Brainlabber

Learning material

[Multipliers](#) by Liz Wiseman and Greg McKeown

👎 It's **not very Brainlabs** when someone...

Is only interested in accelerating their own career.



03

Bias for Action



Fast-Paced • Decisive • Action-Orientated • Solution-Orientated • Tenacious

It's **very Brainlabs** when someone...

Executes at pace. Moves forwards or moves on. Believes there is always a way. Identifies and breaks down 'paper barriers'. Brings solutions to problems, even when there is limited information. Knows how to make things happen.

Speed is a competitive advantage. A snail can finish a marathon given enough years. Winning for Brainlabs means doing it faster. We are not smarter or bigger than the holdcos – just more nimble.

Everyday action

Sharing a list of follow-up actions straight after a meeting.

Learning material

Barack Obama's one piece of advice: ["Just learn how to get stuff done"](#)

It's **not very Brainlabs** when someone...

Dilly dallies! Sets up unnecessary meetings. Deliberates and perfects to the point of not executing. Uses "we are a big company now" to excuse slow delivery timelines. Says "it can't be done"!



04

Train like a Champion



Committed • Self-starter • Growth-minded • Resilience

👍 It's **very Brainlabs** when someone...

Shows up every day looking to learn and improve.
Works hard and smart. Makes time for rest.
Exhibits a growth mindset. Proactively seeks new challenges in order to improve. Understands their strengths and weaknesses.

Everyday action

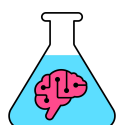
Teaching yourself a new skill.

Learning material

[Mindset](#) by Carol Dweck

👎 It's **not very Brainlabs** when someone...

Expects results without doing the reps.



05

Feedback is a Gift



Honest • Respectful • Kind • Candid • Authentic • Trustworthy

👍 It's **very Brainlabs** when someone...

Gives and accepts feedback as fuel for development. Facilitates open debriefing sessions. Shares constructive feedback empathetically. Defaults to transparency (while respecting confidentiality). Builds trust by communicating the truth of the matter – “it's better to disappoint with the truth than appease with a lie”.



👎 It's **not very Brainlabs** when someone...

Doesn't share feedback. Doesn't respond openly to constructive feedback.

Everyday action

Sharing constructive feedback even when 99% of things went well.

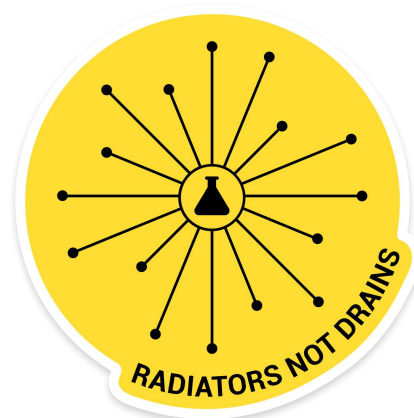
Learning material

[Black Box Thinking](#) by Matthew Syed



06

Radiators Not Drains



Positive • Radiant • Awesome • Kind • Joyful • Grateful • Generous

👍 It's very Brainlabs when someone...

Radiates positive energy. Brings a sense of joy to work. Cultivates a positivity bias and inspires others to do the same. Assumes positive intent. Has an 'attitude of gratitude'. Finds reasons to praise and thank others. Sees the opportunity for growth in any situation, even the hardest ones.

👎 It's not very Brainlabs when someone...

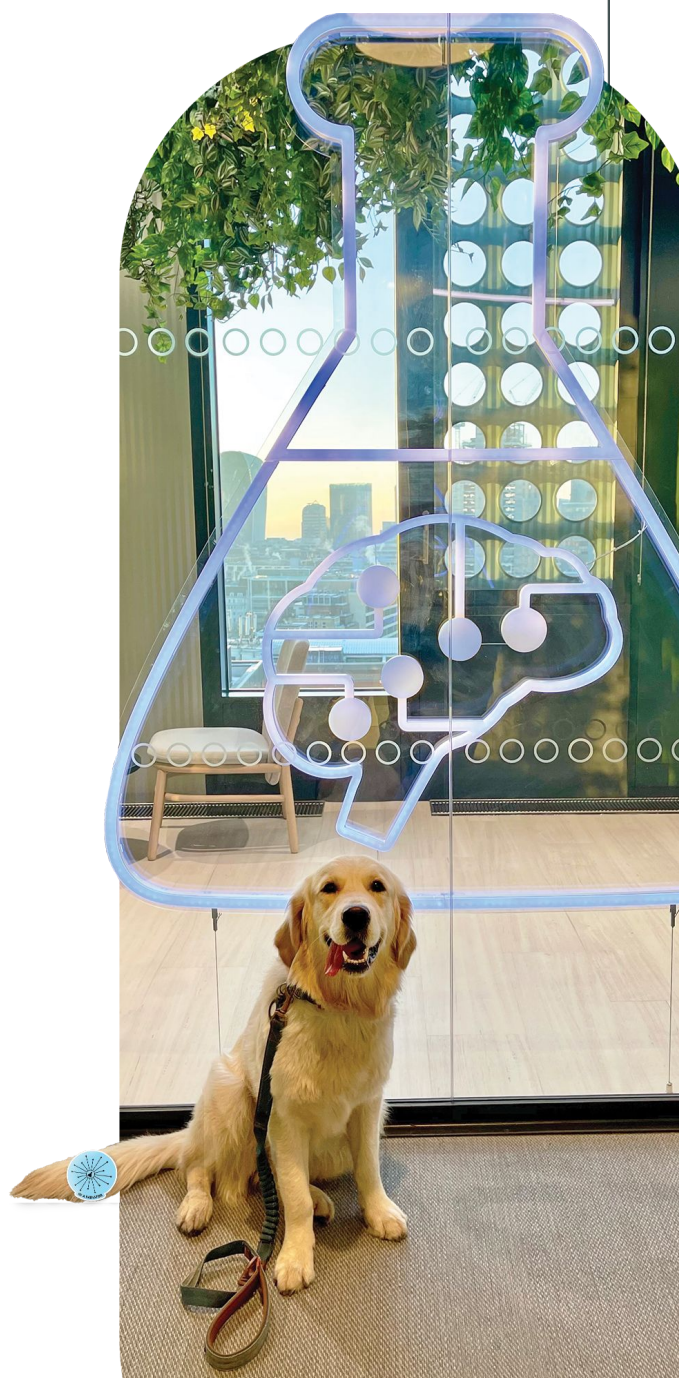
Drains positive energy. Forgets that we work in marketing – it's meant to be fun!

Everyday action

Taking the time to celebrate a successful pitch or client meeting with your teammates.

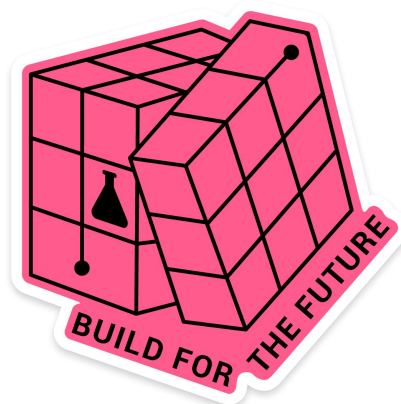
Learning material

Shawn Achor's Ted Talk,
[The Happiness Advantage](#)



07

Build for the Future



Inquisitive • Systematic • Process-Driven • Long-Term

👍 It's **very Brainlabs** when someone...

Asks why and asks why again. Gets to the root cause. Understands how processes can be deployed to build for the long-term. Uses processes to create rather than destroy autonomy. Applies same logic to client solutions, helping them build for long term impact.

👎 It's **not very Brainlabs** when someone...

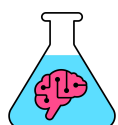
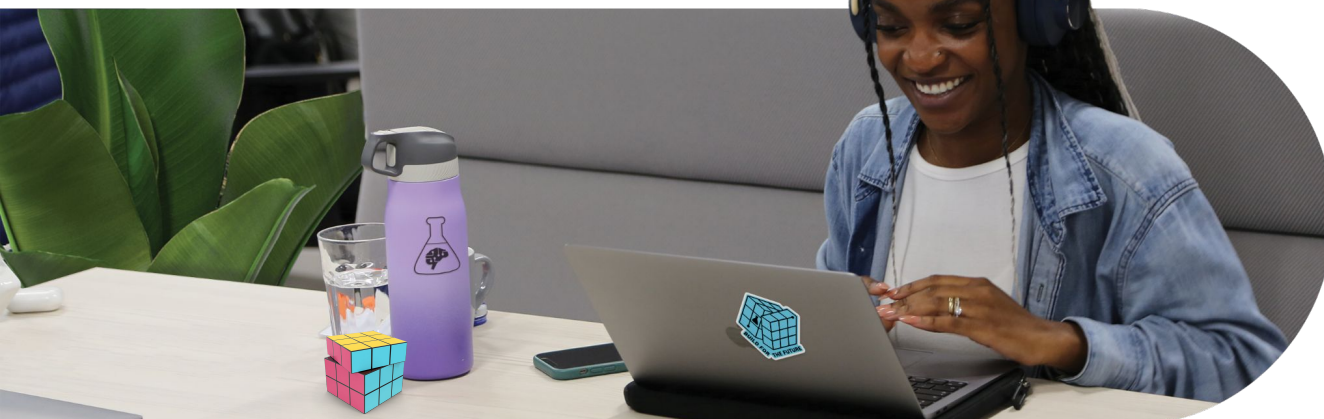
Deals with surface issues. Firefights without finding long-term solutions. Looks to blame. Designs processes that just create more approval loops.

Everyday action

Updating a process on The Hub and sharing with those who would benefit.

Learning materials

[Come Up for Air](#) by Nick Sonnenberg



08

Focus is Power



Focused • Deliberate • Resourceful

👍 It's **very Brainlabs** when someone...

Focuses on what will have the biggest impact. Asks themselves "what's the one thing we could do today that will make everything else seem irrelevant?" Cuts out the noise and simplifies the complex in order to distill what's important. Keeps discussions on track. Uses resources deliberately – constraint breeds resourcefulness. Believes busy is a trap.

Everyday action

Ask yourself a question that will direct your attention – "What did I do well today?"

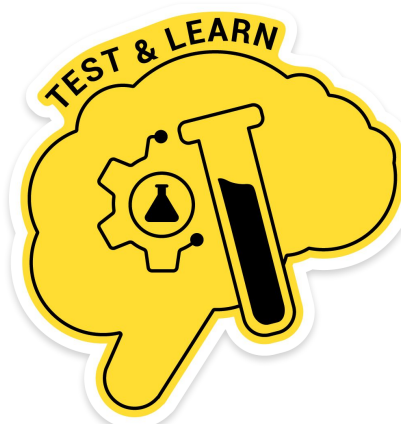
👎 It's **not very Brainlabs** when someone...

Wastes energy on low impact or overly complicated activity. Throws time and money at side projects or unnecessary hires.



09

Test and Learn



Data-Driven • Detail-Oriented • Meticulous • Curious • Scientific

👍 It's **very Brainlabs** when someone...

Starts with small scale pilots, collects data and learns from the results before scaling quickly. Implements an agile way of working. Demonstrates curiosity and creativity when it comes to trying new approaches.

👎 It's **not very Brainlabs** when someone...

Labours over plans for lengthy rollouts. Tries to calculate every eventuality. Rolls out expensive and large scale changes without testing.

Everyday action

Taking part in a pilot for an new platform or process.

Learning material

Tim Harford's Ted Talk, [Trial, error and the God complex](#)



10

We Win with Our Clients



Strategic • Results-Oriented • Commercial

👍 It's **very Brainlabs** when someone...

Understands that our clients are our business and our business wins when we win with our clients. Puts themselves in their client shoes. Distills what true success means to their client and makes the client the hero of their organization. Becomes a trusted business partner. Knows that our clients' business and new business is everyone's business.

Everyday action

Winning more business for a client!

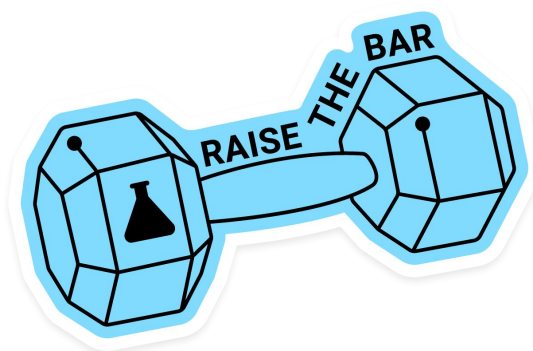
👎 It's **not very Brainlabs** when someone...

Thinks our primary purpose is to win awards or obsess about what our competitors are doing.



11

Raise the Bar



Brave • Bold • Innovative • Creative

👍 It's **very Brainlabs** when someone...

Sets a high standard for themselves and everyone around them. Strives for first place – second place is never good enough. Doesn't take the easy way out. Finds the marginal gains and asks "how can we be 1% better?" Celebrates a success and then questions how can we raise the bar next time. Sets the pace for Brainlabs and our industry.

👎 It's **not very Brainlabs** when someone...

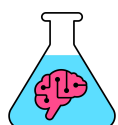
Accepts mediocrity.

Everyday action

Follow up a pitch with a team debrief and come up with a plan to raise the bar next time.

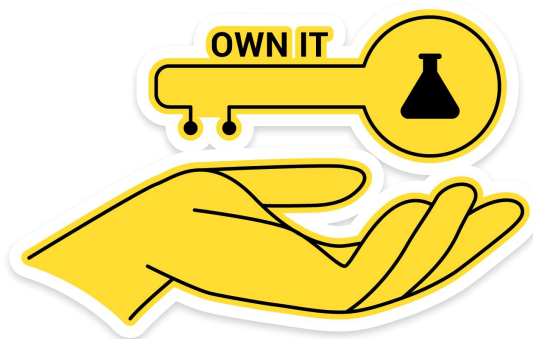
Learning material

[Work Rules!](#) by Laszlo Bock



12

Own It



Accountable • Responsible • Passionate • Driven • Proactive

👍 It's **very Brainlabs** when someone...

Proactively takes ownership and accountability. Politely expects the same for anyone they work with or for. Isn't afraid to get their hands dirty. Takes pride in their work and the collective output of the company. Is willing to disagree and commit.

👎 It's **not very Brainlabs** when someone...

Says "that's not my job". Waits for someone else to own or fix things (passenger attitude).

Everyday action

Making sure every task has one owner assigned!



Bringing to Life High-Performance



We've just taken you through a detailed run-down of the twelve individual codes that make up our culture but if we want the Code to really mean something, we have to bring it to life.

Every Brainlabber is responsible for studying the Culture Code, that doesn't mean remembering every line off by heart or revising for an exam, but taking the time to understand the principles behind each code so they can live by them. We know we are truly living by the Culture Code when we're able to put the principles into practice when we're stretched or finding things challenging.

— Our commitment to you

We describe this handbook as a shared commitment between Brainlabs and everyone that works here. Through the twelve culture codes, we have laid out our expectations for how Brainlabbers should approach our culture and their work.

But how about our commitment to you? As a company, our focus is on High Performance, which means committing to fostering an environment in which you can show the very best version of yourself. To do that, we are totally committed to creating a workplace in which you can grow and develop more here than anywhere else.

Our commitment is three-fold:

01 • We do people not politics

We don't do tokenistic gestures or industry pledges. We are not a newsdesk with a rota of statements for global events. We are not political or divisive. We focus our energy on living the culture code which includes supporting you when you actually need it.



How?

- The company and our leaders will not make statements relating to world events or politics; we'll leave the job of news broadcasting to the experts. We want our communication channels to feel like a safe place for everyone, without distraction or triggers from the outside world.
- We will, however, provide and signpost support where something outside of work impacts a your ability for you to deliver your best work. We have, and will, do what is needed to support, provide resources and give the time and space needed for people who are impacted by events outside of work, be those personal or geopolitical.

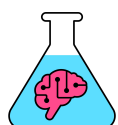


02 • We build superteams

Building superteams is about hiring people with a diverse range of skills and putting them in a role and team formation that plays to their strengths. Like any great football team, different people perform better in different positions and need an environment where they can thrive. It's our responsibility to create a culture where High Performance is recognized and rewarded and low performance or counter culture behavior is not OK. In our experience, high performers want to work with high performers.

How?

- We have rigorous and data-led recruitment and promotion processes, where we make decisions primarily based on skills and potential over experience. This means we can focus our efforts on optimizing the potential we see in people who share in our vision and culture code.
- When creating and growing teams, we ensure that we are bringing together groups of people with different / complementary skill sets. This means casting our net as wide as we can when looking to hire, and thinking outside of the box when it comes to developing people internally too. By investing in our entry level program in particular, we'll continue to focus on bringing new talent into the industry while building a truly global community.



03 • We invest in your growth

Finally, we commit to creating a space for you to completely fulfil your potential. We provide you with career defining opportunities and then support you in the continued acquisition of skills and knowledge applicable to your current and future roles. Throughout your time at Brainlabs, you will have transparency and ownership of your own career path and clarity about what you need to achieve to move through it.

How?

- Everyone has access to the learning and resources they need to reach their potential. From online learning programs, to mentors and coaches at pivotal moments in your career, guiding you through important decisions and helping you to navigate your path. Our accreditation programs set a world-class consistent standard of knowledge required in each role, all for the benefit of our clients.
- Through our Career Development platform, we provide every Brainlabber with a visualization of their entire career path, as well as tailored recommended learning and development opportunities to help them to accelerate along it. From there, our promotions process is clearly documented and transparent, so that all Brainlabbers have clarity on what they need to do to develop.

