**Attracting and Selecting New Googlers[[1]](#endnote-1)[[2]](#endnote-2)**

Larry Page and Sergey Brim established the Google corporation in 1998, built around the Google internet search engine that they had developed during their studies. Google soon became the world’s leading search engine and the company went through a rapid growth face, gradually also becoming involved in a variety of other business areas. In August 2015, Google announced plans to reorganize its various interests as a conglomerate called [Alphabet Inc.](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alphabet_Inc.) Google is today Alphabet's leading subsidiary and continues to be the umbrella company for Alphabet's Internet interests. The company has significantly expanded its international operations, in July 2019 having operations in 154 locations around the world of which 85 were outside North America.

From the outset, Page and Brim set out to develop a company reflecting their own values and beliefs, including minimal management, an emphasis on creativity, empowerment of employees to pursue their own projects, and creating products for the common good. “You can make money without being evil” was one of the mottos of the company, with the leadership emphasizing transparency and open debate. The perks offered by the company included free food and generous parental leaves. Such features were among the reasons why Google developed an excellent employer brand, a place “to do cool things that matter”. During 2012-17 Google featured in the top spot of Fortune’s list of the 100 best companies to work for in the US and the company also manage to become a favorite employer in other countries.[[3]](#endnote-3)

Considerable efforts have been spent in Google on analyzing what good management is within their corporation. *Project Oxygen* was launched in 2008 to determine what great managers do in their organization. The project resulted in a list of eight management behaviors, like ‘is a good coach’, ‘empowers team and does not micromanage’ and ‘is a good communicator – listens and shares information.’ These behavioral traits were included in feedback surveys to managers and in management development programs, and have been widely publicized both within and outside the company.

The company realized early that hiring the right talent was crucial for the future of the organization. Google has developed a structured approach to selecting future employees that is used across its locations. As described on its website[[4]](#endnote-4) and in numerous descriptions of company practices,[[5]](#endnote-5) Google believes in applying a systematic, research-based approach to hiring. The company has a well-defined profile of the ‘Googleyness’ they look for in job candidates in addition to the specific qualifications needed. Candidates are interviewed by multiple persons, the interviewers having been trained in how to carry out fully standardized structured interviews, with the candidates being graded by interviewees using the same scale.

While Google had expanded the number of full-time employees to more than 110,000 by 2020, the corporation has an even higher number of contract and temporary workers whose employee benefits typically are worse than those of the Google employees.[[6]](#endnote-6) Although the contract workers often are physically working at Google offices, do similar jobs and use Google email accounts, they do not have the same rights as the regular employees. Some of the temporary workers may eventually be hired by Google, but a temporary position is not meant to be a pathway to full-time employment.

Google has continued to be viewed as benchmark examples of how to hire new employees but the company has faced increasing criticism of late. The company’s claims for openness and alleged opportunity for employees to freely express their views on any issue have been questioned and the company’s reputation hit by several highly publicized cases of firing individuals critical towards the firm.[[7]](#endnote-7) The differential treatment of full-time and contract workers has also led to public debates with several US senators demanding that Google offer contract workers full-time status. And some observers have claimed that the company has not done enough to enhance diversity and inclusion among its workforce.[[8]](#endnote-8) In 2019 Google had dropped entirely out of Fortune’s top 100 places to work in the US and it was facing the challenge of trying to regain its reputation among the external talent that also in the future will be crucial for the company’s success around the world.

1. Draft, please do not cite or quote. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. The caselet builds on publicly available material, including the following recent teaching cases: Hsieh, Kloppenberg, and Mehta, 2020; Hubbard and Wilkinson, 2020; Kerr and Kreitzberg, 2019. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. For instance, in Switzerland Google was ranked first in a survey by Randstad in 2016. <https://www.randstad.com/workforce-insights/employer-branding/case-study-employer-branding-google/>, accessed November 21, 2020. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. <https://careers.google.com/how-we-hire/> [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. See e.g. Bock, 2015. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/johanmoreno/2019/05/31/google-follows-a-growing-workplace-trend-hiring-more-contractors-than-employees/>, accessed November 21, 2020 [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. The firing of AI expert Timnit Gebru in December 2020 was much publicized. As reported by the Guardian on December 9, 2020: “The dispute leading up to her departure concerned Google’s efforts to disassociate itself from a research paper that Gebru had co-authored, which examined the societal dangers of an AI technology used by Google. The paper contended that technology companies could do more to ensure AI systems aimed at mimicking human writing and speech did not exacerbate historical gender biases and use of offensive language.” https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2020/dec/09/timnit-gebru-google-firing-resignation-sundar-pichai [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Kerr and Kreitzberg, 2019; Hsieh, Kloppenberg, and Mehta, 2020. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)