



# CREATING CULTURE

A roundup of books, websites, videos and other resources from and for the C-suite.



**Joy, Inc.: How We Built a Workplace People Love** by Richard Sheridan. The Penguin Group, 2013.

This is a book about falling in love. Richard Sheridan, CEO of software design firm Menlo Innovations, fell in love with software as “the ultimate sculpting material” at age 13, and the love affair continued throughout his computer science and engineering classes at the University of Michigan. But after moving up the ranks in the workforce, his passion for software became strained.

The way things were done in the workplace was so soul-destroying that he decided he either had to change it or divorce his one true love. “The software industry, after all, defined the term ‘death march’ in a business context: programmers pulling all-nighters, bringing sleeping bags to work, jettisoning time with loved ones, canceling vacations,” Mr. Sheridan recalls in his book. “These death marches often lead to the saddest story of all: projects cancelled before they ever see the light of day.”

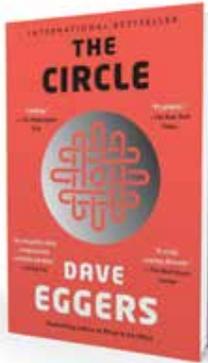
That is when Mr. Sheridan decided to start his personal and professional “journey to joy.” At Menlo Innovations, he has built an organizational culture that creates trust, accountability and results through key tactics like removing “manufactured fear” from the workplace and implementing structure without bureaucracy.

“[T]hese get you to joy,” he writes. The love affair can live on.



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The book proves that culture is not about perks, but about how people think and act.

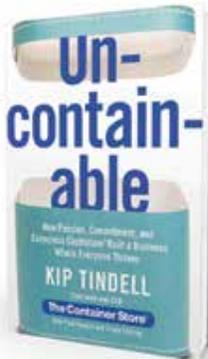


**The Circle** by Dave Eggers. Knopf, 2013.

The fictional company in Dave Eggers' novel would make a perfect profile in a business magazine about building an outstanding corporate culture. If you work for the Circle—a tech company that has subsumed Facebook, Twitter and all the other big tech companies around today, according to Mr. Eggers—you get fantastic benefits and perks far beyond a fully funded 401(k) and a parking spot. There is free education, creativity on steroids and the chance to be one of the

coolest of cool kids. Best of all, as far as the company is concerned, the employees work all the time. Literally, all the time.

The Circle's goal is to know everything, and its corporate culture allows it to creep insidiously into every aspect of its employees' and customers' lives. The book proves that culture is not about perks, but about how people think and act. This company is creating the future and we are helping them do it. You OK with that?



**Uncontainable: How Passion, Commitment, and Conscious Capitalism Built a Business Where Everyone Thrives** by Kip Tindell. Grand Central Publishing, 2014.

If you have ever shopped at U.S.-based retailer The Container Store, you may have asked yourself: Why is everyone who works here so darned happy to be selling organization materials and empty boxes? Kip Tindell, the retailer's CEO, explains that the store's contagiously positive culture starts with hiring.

He believes that when it comes to employee acquisition, 1=3: One great person equals the productivity of three good ones at a minimum. So, if the company can find those great people, it can afford to pay them 50 to 100 times the industry average.

The approach seems to be working: The Container Store has made *Fortune's* list of top 100 companies to work for during the past 16 years, including 2015.

Mr. Tindell helps ensure the positive culture feeds into customer service by training employees on three principles—and you do not have to be in sales to use them:

1. I believe this customer needs and wants my help.
2. I know I am capable of helping them.
3. I want to do everything I can to help them today.

## HOW TO RUN A COMPANY WITH (ALMOST) NO RULES

In this TED talk, Ricardo Semler, CEO of Brazil-based Semco Partners, describes how his organization's culture is based on complete transparency, autonomy and a democratic structure. The goal is to organize for what he calls "an age of wisdom." It is a structure that encourages employees to cut their workweek short if they meet their goals early in the week, does not track where or when they are working and allows the cleaning crew to vote on the board.

Mr. Semler's approach to culture does not end with where he works, however. He also discusses how he extends these ideas to his personal life and even to some of the schools in Brazil.



Ricardo Semler, CEO, Semco Partners