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Section 1: Your Culture Audit Submission

What is the Culture Audit?

The Culture Audit Questionnaire gives our evaluators an inside peek at your company, from your meetings and celebrations to how things work on your teams. This is not a checklist of benefits you offer – even horrible workplaces need to offer benefits! This is the story of the behaviors and practices that you consistently and persistently exhibit at your company to build a great workplace.

The Culture Audit has 2 components:

- **Data about your workplace.** This section should be filled out by an HR Manager or someone who knows the details of your workforce demographics and your benefits. We’ll ask you for information about your health care coverage, retirement plans, employee stock options, vacation time, training hours and educational reimbursements, family leave benefits and more.

- **Open-ended questions.** We’ll ask you about what you do to speak, listen, celebrate, take an active role in your community and more. This is where you get to illustrate how you put your unique spin on the practices of your company.

How long does it take to complete the Culture Audit?

On average, companies spend around 160 hours assembling their Culture Audit.

First time participants should anticipate spending a bit more. Note that if you’ve completed a Culture Audit in the past, we’ll be able to import your past responses and hopefully save you some time.

What do you look for in the Culture Audit?

We’re evaluating the quality of interactions between management and employees in organizations.

When we evaluate a workplace culture, we look at whether these behaviors and practices are “gift-like” or simply transactional. For example, most companies have employee development programs. A transactional workplace would simply equip employees with the skills required to do their current job. But a gift-like workplace would help employees grow professionally and personally.

Many companies recognize outstanding performance on the job – but the most gift-like workplaces show regular and personalized attention, providing meaningful recognition to the employee and the company’s culture.

Another thing our evaluators love hearing about is new programs! Make sure to clearly label any new programs that were included since last year’s application, or have been recently implemented.
What distinguishes a good Culture Audit response from a great response?

Good answers include a list of programs and practices. Practices are clearly described, along with an example of the action in practice. Good answers focus on telling us “what” the program or practice is all about, but don’t tell us how they impact employees.

Great answers include the same list of programs and practices, but include details about how, for example, your community service program uniquely fits your company’s culture. Great answers provide details that bring the practice or program to life, and show the impact they have on employees.

What if the same practice applies to more than one Culture Audit question?

Describe programs only once. If you feel a program applies to more than one question, feel free to reference this program in other sections of the Culture Audit. The same evaluator reads your entire Culture Audit, so there’s no need to repeat yourself.

Can I see an example of a well-written Culture Audit?

Culture Audits are confidential, so unfortunately we can’t show you an example. But if you follow the guidelines in this document you should be fine!

You can also check-out our article, 6 Tips for Writing a Great Culture Audit.

How long should my Culture Audit be?

The maximum page length of a Culture Audit is now 225 pages (approximately 15 single-spaced pages per Culture Audit open-ended question). But some of the best we’ve seen range between 50-100 pages.

The biggest piece of feedback we get from evaluators is that too much information doesn’t serve you. The best Culture Audits are usually concise and focused on substance over fluff, but still convey warmth.

There’s no minimum length for a Culture Audit, but we do recommend you provide enough information so that we clearly understand what it’s like to work at your company and why your practices are unique. Talk about the impact of your programs – i.e. how many employees utilized your perk/program, is it available to everyone or just some employees, how have particular employees’ lives been impacted. This helps us understand who’s benefiting from all of the things your company technically offers.
What if my responses change after I submit the Culture Audit?

If any information in the Culture Audit changes after you submit, or if your company goes through a merger, acquisition or layoff, please email or call a member of the Certification Team at certify@greatplacetowork.com or 415-844-2500 ext.390.

How should a global company respond to the Culture Audit?

Your responses should relate only to your company’s US-based business and employees. If your headquarters is outside of the US, the Culture Audit should describe how US employees are made to feel a part of the team.

What should we include in our supplemental materials?

**Note that we no longer accept physical supplemental materials.** Instead, you can upload 100MB total of supplemental materials. You can also provide links to additional materials, such as photos, videos or websites.

In general, we’re looking for materials that illustrate what makes your workplace special. Many companies choose to submit photos, videos, and samples of materials that show-off their company culture. Some additional examples include:

- Annual reports, proxy reports, news articles, press releases
- Employee communications: newsletters, videos, executive emails or phone messages, intranet pages, etc.
- Recruiting & orientation materials
- Values/mission statements, corporate slogans, corporate philosophy
- Layoff and severance communications and materials
- Company history, profiles of founders and/or influential leaders, executive speeches
- Photos and/or videos of employees at work or participating in company activities
- Samples of training materials
- Letters related to your company’s recognition programs
- Anything else that you feel will help us to gain a clear picture of your unique workplace culture!

Is there anything we should avoid sending as supplemental materials?

Please don’t send us hundreds of photos to sort through or hours of video to watch. Just include supplemental materials when most relevant.
How do we submit supplemental materials?

Companies can upload supplemental materials directly in the Culture Audit online tool. All common file types are supported and the maximum size for all of the files uploaded is 100MB.

Some companies choose to create password protected websites to house supplemental materials – which is fine.

However, please let us know if there is an expiration date those materials will no longer be accessible and provide us with a PDF of the information that we can keep for our records.

**Note:** websites and PDFs should only supplement your application. Your Culture Audit responses should be contained within your text application.

Can we include video as a supplemental material?

Yes! If you’d like to include a video, please upload it to a file sharing site (YouTube, Vimeo, Box, Your own website etc.) and then include the link.

How are supplemental materials scored?

Supplemental materials are optional and are not evaluated as a stand-alone component.

All programs and practices you wish to see scored should be included in your responses to the Culture Audit. Your supplemental materials are reviewed in combination with your submission and are most useful when they help illustrate your responses.
Section 2: Submitting your Culture Audit in the Certification Center

How do I import my Culture Audit responses from last year?

If you’ve participated in the list process within the past two years, we’ll automatically import your basic company information from last year. Last year’s responses can be deleted or edited before you confirm and submit the Culture Audit.

*Note: Not all Culture Audit data will be imported as there are several questions that require an updated response each year.*

What if I want to import my Culture Audit open-ended responses from last year as well?

To access your previous responses to the Culture Audit open-ended questions, navigate to the Archive in the top navigation bar of the Culture Audit. While you can’t import your old Culture Audit open-ended responses, you will be able to save and print them.

How do I indicate that a response should be kept confidential?

To indicate that a response should remain confidential, please check the “Confidential” lock symbol next to the question.

*Note: Not all questions have the option to indicate whether it should remain confidential.*

How can I elaborate further on a response to a Culture Audit data point?

If you would like to provide more context for your response to any data point in the Culture Audit, feel free to add a comment in the “Clarifying Comment” box, located below each question.

How do I use the WYSIWYG editor for my Culture Audit open-ended responses?

The WYSIWYG (What You See is What You Get) editor allows you to include basic formatting in your Culture Audit open-ended responses, such as bolding, highlighting, adding headers, creating tables and more. You can either format responses in Word and paste them into the editor or work directly in the editor itself.

You can always save your work and edit the response at a later date. We won’t see your responses until you complete the entire Culture Audit and click “Confirm & Submit.”
What if I do not want to use the WYSIWIG editor?

All Culture Audit responses must be submitted through the WYSIWYG editor.

Can I submit the same Culture Audit open-ended responses as last year?

While you cannot import your Culture Audit open-ended responses from last year, you are still welcome to use them.

When re-using a previous year’s submission, please call-out your new or updated policies, practices, or programs by inserting “NEW” or “UPDATED” in front of each paragraphed description. (e.g., “NEW: Employee awards ceremony at annual holiday party” or “UPDATED: We now offer 90% health coverage compared to last year’s 89%”.)

We pay close attention to which programs and practices are new or updated. It helps us better understand how your culture is evolving.
Section 3: The Evaluation and Editorial Process

How does Great Place to Work® evaluate the Culture Audit?

Great Place to Work has crafted a specific methodology to score your open-ended responses.

We call it VOAHI:

- **Variety:** Breadth of programs, policies, and methods for implementation
- **Originality:** Programs, policies, and practices that are unique and creative, while “bearing the mark of the company”
- **All-inclusiveness:** Programs, policies, and practices are for everyone
- **Human Touch:** A sense of appreciation, generosity, and warmth in programs and policies
- **Integration:** Programs and policies linked by a central theme, an overarching framework in which the programs are delivered

We score each Culture Audit response on each of these five areas.

Who evaluates the Culture Audits?

Great Place to Work trains outside workplace experts to evaluate Culture Audit submissions. Occasionally, Great Place to Work employees also evaluate Culture Audits.

Whether an internal or external evaluator, Culture Audits are never reviewed by someone with a conflict of interest (e.g. worked for the company being evaluated, financial ties to the company, or acting as the consultant or the Client Relationship Manager for the company).

Many of our evaluators have been with us for years. Many have Master’s degrees in Organizational Development or Industrial Psychology. Others have MBAs, are journalists, or have worked in human resources at large organizations.

Regardless of their background, each evaluator is rigorously trained on how to apply our methodology and signs a strict confidentiality agreement.

How do I know that my Culture Audit will be evaluated fairly?

We evaluate each Culture Audit several times to ensure that no personal biases impact your score. We also calibrate scores across all list applicants. Every Culture Audit is reviewed by one evaluator who has at least ten years’ experience working on our Best Companies to Work For® lists.
What else do you do with my Culture Audit?

We'll use information within your Culture Audit in a few different ways:

- For final list content published in Fortune magazine and on Fortune.com
- In statistical charts, sidebars and editorial "blurbs" or articles about your company
- For your Great Place to Work Review
- For comparative data reports after the list is announced. (Only companies that are selected for the final lists are included in these articles and charts.)
- As a best practice reference throughout our blogs, white papers, presentations, and articles

What types of communications can I expect once I’ve submitted my Culture Audit?

Great Place to Work may reach out to you during the evaluation process to ask for additional information or a clarification on something that was mentioned in your submission. If we reach out to you for clarifying information, please reply as soon as possible.

Can Great Place to Work consider things about my company that are not mentioned in my Culture Audit?

Absolutely. If we read something about your company—layoffs, leadership transitions, product recalls, government investigations, mergers and acquisitions, and more—we may reach out to you for more information. We'll want to ensure these events haven't drastically affected the work environment and employee attitude since you submitted your Culture Audit.

Any activities occurring prior to the list publication that could affect your eligibility will be investigated. While it's rare that we need to disqualify a company, or ask to resurvey, this has happened in the past and is done to ensure the integrity and accuracy of the list.