

Dedicated to the families of all CloudCherry employees.

Thank you for helping us make such an incredible workplace.





Like most subjects, the startup journey has also been described and written to death. Let me draw all the clichés for you so we can all save time:

- The long hours
- The sacrifices
- The stress
- Giving up a cushy job for the roller coaster called startup life
- Painful investors if you are lucky. Else you are broke!
- Incredible highs, followed by abysmal lows. Rinse, Repeat.

Piecing together a story with the above usual suspects is rather easy. So instead of a top down approach to startup life, I want to take a bottom-up approach (i.e.) take small stories, instances, anecdotes and events to work my way up to what I hope is a compelling startup story. I am not 100% sure if the story will end up that way, but we will all find out in another 10 minutes won't we?

Lets start with people – for every great story has its characters.





Prem went from being a Canadian Customs officer, to the glitzy world of advertising. All good, but where was the ownership? We've spoken at least a dozen times saying, "let's do something" — "let's start a restaurant maybe?". And that's when CloudCherry happened.

Vijay is the hopeless romantic. I don't think he (or I) could every work in any place other than a startup.

Sudha started with us at what I can perhaps say was half her market salary because she believed in the product and believed in the person (Vijay). This loyalty to the cause did not come with ESOPs. Rather, the ESOPs followed the commitment.

Nagendra's truest passion is to create wonderful things, architected to perfection. In another world, he would have been the architect from the Matrix or Inception.

What is the point I am getting at? A company is the sum of parts of its people, and then some. It takes all the effort to bring together a team that has passion, commitment and incredible talent to execute an idea.

You might still fail, but without the people, any idea is worth about as much as the paper it is written on.



RING 'EM BELLS My first month in CloudCherry was spent doing woodwork. My partner in crime was Selva, an office admin strongly recommended by a friend as someone who was "honest to a fault". That was not his only fault.

His other faults included his willingness to work 24/7/366 and then some, balance severe economic hardship at home and yet manage our money without my ever having to cross check, and a general willingness to help team CloudCherry with even personal errands, and quite simply always be there for us. Initiative is perhaps half the word needed to define his efforts!



Unlike Bob Dylan, our bell ringing signified something positively special. From something as big as signing a new customer, to something as 'little' as getting a new refrigerator, we rang that bell! And that's something we follow to this day.

In fact, a startup friend who gave us his office space in our early days in a new city loved the ritual so much, all he asked for as compensation was for us to buy him a bell!





In the early days of a startup (and maybe even years later), there's always a time when s*** hits the fan!

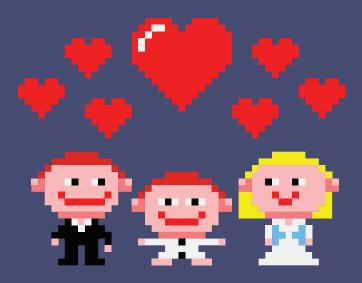
Just a few months after we started, I realized we had no money. It was October of 2014 and well, the money was going to take a little more time than expected. This was our first 'oops!' moment. I had to walk in to office, tell my people there is no money in the bank and that salaries will get delayed. Nobody in office is from a financial background where a month's salary doesn't make a difference.

Everyone has bills to pay and loans to honour. We ultimately paid salaries mid-month, but walking in everyday and seeing an office full of energy and people going about their work like nothing had changed told me what the startup culture is all about - SPIRIT!

It was also the most difficult 15 days for me, for I had never before realized what it meant to impact people's lives so adversely. I hope that episode is forgotten and never revisited again.

When I look back, I know figured out how my previous Startup boss & mentor, Venky from Market Simplified got those ulcers! Salute to you, my friend!





On 2nd May 2014, we clicked the first feedback on CloudCherry's new platform, amidst fanfare, red velvet cakes, and with our families by our side.

The product was still a fair way from complete market readiness, but we were already working with early beta clients.

Like my own experience with having children, the baby was beautiful in alpha, like a new born baby is despite the wrinkles and general disorder, when it is in beta like a toddler is when walking about with all the grace of a chicken and when it is in the hands of customers like when your child wears that school uniform, kisses you goodbye and runs away – telling you that her days of dependence on you are long gone.

She still loves you but something just changed. We are now in this phase where outside influences shape the product as much as our own efforts do. It is a matter of great pride to see your baby take its rightful place under the sun, but the romantic in you reminisces about the time she was all yours...!







I found the strangest comfort in switching off. Bootstrapped is a sexy word for 'I have no money', but I do not remember when a disproportionate amount of my mind space was consumed by the need for cash.

We always knew we were building something that would make an impact on the world and somehow to give undue attention to something like cash seemed rather incongruent with that philosophy.

So the funds came from the founders, friends came up and asked if they could invest and the right investors and mentors came along. Without belittling the whole effort of getting in capital, I look back with conviction that focusing on product and market is 90% of the job done. In today's business environment capital follows the above.

So what does this all lead to? We are barely 40 months old now, and hardly in legion of a Salesforce but we have on board phenomenal investors, very accommodating and supportive large customers, and a pipeline of large and prestigious brands who are seeing CloudCherry make a needle moving impact in their customer delight initiatives. The team is growing and so is the baby, making the transition from a little child to a gangly teenager.



The hardest to define, but the most critical attribute in the startup mix.

At CloudCherry, we believe in a free flowing one where we 'fight like you're right and listen like you are wrong'.

I think I read it in First Round Review, a highly recommended read for any entrepreneur. So, we fought, we screamed and we made our peace. We took no hostages and we are still very good friends.

If our early days (and even now), we believed that if we went more than a few days without an heated conversation, added with few (or many) cuss words, it was either a pointless conversation, or we just weren't passionate enough about it.

Culture isn't a message for the pin- up board.

Culture is the energy that envelops you and I know we are blessed with a good one. The only exception is perhaps our rooftop cricket matches, where the animal instinct trumps culture - but hey, we can't win 'em all, right?





For every brand in the world to not just satisfy, but delight their customers with CloudCherry.





We are not here to give the world yet another tech product. We are here to give them one that really matters.

We are here to give them one that WILL make a difference to their lives, make them sleep well at night knowing that their customer needs are taken care of.

We are here to stay agile, learn, ship it out and worry about the kinks as they come by.

We're here to create relationships with our customers, and not just sell them a product.

THE CREW AT CLOUDCHERRY



Netflix says its employees are part of their 'team' and not 'family' because teams play together to win; families don't necessarily do that. Now, crews are the best of both worlds – families and teams. Crews bring together diverse specialization and skill sets to pull off seemingly impossible tasks.

Do you know what the crew in a ship's bridge are most likely doing? Sipping on coffee knowing there isn't possible a safer place in that rough sea than where they are! Every sailor has seen such weather and about the ONLY thing that keeps them going is knowing that they are at sea with the best possible crew.

Everyone at CloudCherry has to feel the same way towards every other employee. We should be highly proud of the diverse repertoire of skills that each person brings to the table, and leverage this to achieve nothing but greatness.

THE CREW AT CLOUDCHERRY

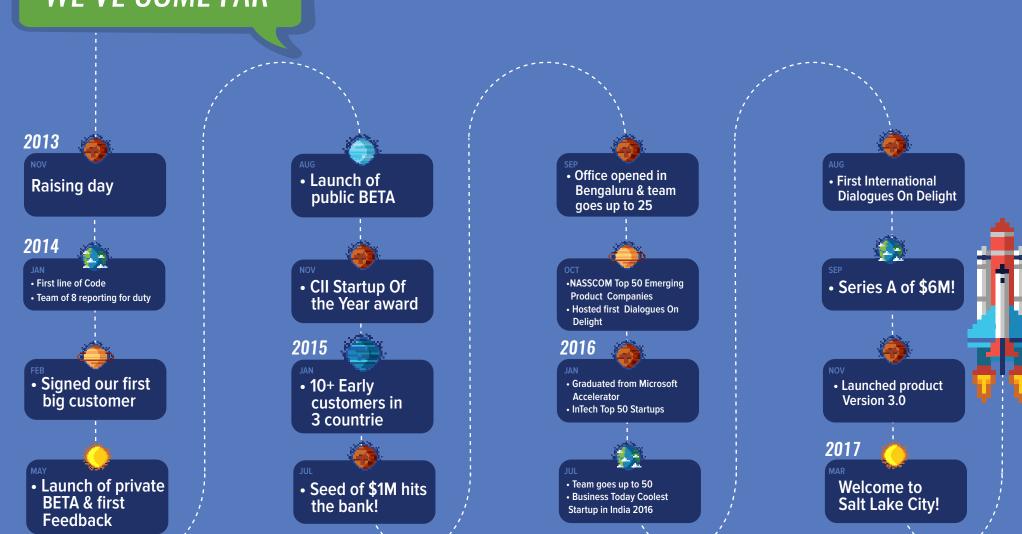


Another characteristic of crews is that they care for each other. They stand in when the other person cannot pull their weight. Do not look at your work at CloudCherry as a 'you vs me' situation. Understand the value of winning together. Empathize with what the other person might be going through in their personal life. Put a massive premium on outcome and yet be human.

Most of all, crews deliver. Every single day. And this is where the need to be outcome-driven becomes more important than ever. Are you delivering consistently irrespective of the effort put in? Are you helping your co-workers to deliver? Is your team as a whole able to meet targets and even exceed them?

The crew mentality reinforces team spirit, focus, dynamism and an undying commitment to be the best of the very best. That is precisely what we expect from you!

WE'VE COME FAR



ROCKIN' & ROLLIN'



- Delighted Employees
 - Offices across the globe
- 5 Customers
 - Global strategic partnerships
 - Dialogues On Delight events conducted
 - CloudCherry Premier League Cricket Tournaments conducted
 - **Bell Ringing moments**



MAKING THE RIGHT HIRE FOR YOUR STARTUP



Loki: "I have an army!"

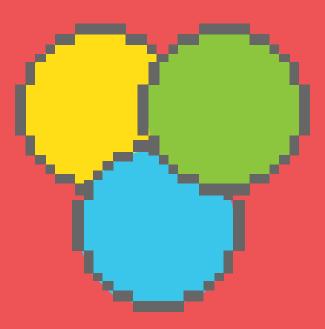
Ironman: "We have a Hulk!"

Who doesn't remember this iconic verbal duel? And while Iron Man's retort brought the roofs down at the cinemas, it probably won't at your startup. In that sense, Loki was probably right. You need an army - a really good one - to turn your idea into a global success. No product can sell on its own, and no culture can thrive on its own. You need high-performing, enthusiastic employees who align with your startup's vision, in a way that they produce impactful work consistently.

And finding this breed of employees can be painstaking. Most of the time, you wouldn't even know if you've made the right hire till later on. And in high-risk environments like a startup, you wouldn't want to leave something as crucial as hiring to chance.

So, how do you identify people who believe in your startup as much as you do? And what should you be looking for in your soldiers?

Visualise three concentric circles.



The first one is **Ability.** Their super power, the raw, pure skill to perform and execute what they are expected to. Say you are hiring a marketing campaign specialist. The assumption is that the person interviewed is really good at what he/she does — which is ideating, executing and managing marketing campaigns in this case - and every other assessment parameter is based on this very assumption.

The next circle is **Culture.** Now, no matter how different or unique your culture is (and no matter what brand of beer you serve!), there are three basic traits to determine if a prospective employee would be a cultural fit.

- Are they ultra-passionate? Do they exude passion for what they do, and confidently believe that they can bring their passion to your business?
- Are they naturally curious? Curious people tend to push the limits they innovate, invent and are willing to experiment. If you've got someone at an interview who hasn't tried your product out, understood your service, scoured your website inside out, and can't tell you something about you or your company, you've saved yourself a lot of interview time.



• How diligent are they? Diligence is all about preparation. How well-prepared are they? How well do they know your company and how well can they demonstrate how they can add value to what you do? Now, while cultural fit has its own significance, there can be nothing like hiring employees who have innate managerial skills. But how do you do that?

One way to go about it is to observe, when given a task, whether the person jumps directly into the fine print or whether they take a bird's eye view of the whole problem first and foremost. In other words, is this person capable of planning ahead, assessing all the variables, and putting together a clear, constructed plan to tackle the issue at hand, as opposed to diving headfirst into it?

You might be tempted to ask whether startups need to look out for core managerial skill sets even when they are not hiring for managers. Well, employees who marry their core talent with managerial capability – the ability to look far and act close - can be moulded effortlessly into leaders down the line!

The final circle, the one that will truly result in game changing work, is the **right Attitude.** Being a brilliant narcissist is no good for a start-up if you can't be a team player! Let's put it this way: Would you rather have Iron Man or Captain America on your side?



Great team players have a natural tendency to build high-performing teams, coach and mentor co-workers, earn respect rather than demanding it, and are happy to share credit with other employees.

Equally important is knowing whether the prospective employee is a fundamentally good human being. In fact, this is one of the top five traits of unicorn employees. The true achievers at work – the ones who make as little noise as possible - are usually extremely humble people.

And when these attitudinal traits sit on top of excellent core skills and a seamless cultural fit, you get the perfect hire!

An interesting caveat here for startup founders is that none of the above-mentioned characteristics/traits, barring work skills, are reliant on work experience. You might end up interviewing a digital marketer who has eight years of experience, one whose resume makes your eyeballs pop, but who turns out to be a total a**.

The responsibility to take your startup to the level of a global phenomenon is to be shared by all employees. Set the bar high, and give every single one of them the opportunity to perform consistently, with impact. You need the ones that understand your culture, believe in your vision, and feed off your passion. Like Loki said, you need that army. But for your start-up, what you need is an army of Hulks.





I had the pleasure of interacting with Dheeraj Pandey, the founder of Nutanix, and what he said about culture was this: "Culture does not beget success. Success begets culture."

While it seems slightly counter-intuitive, it can't be more accurate.

There's a proclivity to associate culture with office perks, Beer Fridays, workplace movie marathons, and whatnot. As tempting as that might be, culture is anything but that!

To set things straight and break the ice, culture is, simply put, the foundation upon which the success of a company is built, which means that the perks and everything else that employees enjoy and cherish, are the result OF great culture, and do not result IN the creation of great culture.

So, what make this great culture happen in the first place? How can startups let a healthy and successful culture breed and proliferate throughout the organisation?

It all starts with curiosity — something attitudinal, but which reflects largely on culture. Curious people discover new things, question status quo, invent, or at the very least, innovate. More importantly, curious people tend to push their boundaries, as well as those of their teammates, a little further.



Another prerequisite is to have team players. Clichéd, sure. Compulsory? Absolutely! It's totally permissible to compromise a bit on core work skills if employees make up for it by being exquisite team players, the reason being that brilliant narcissists, or solo players, can have the most detrimental effect on your company, and in your growing phase, that could be the end of days for you.

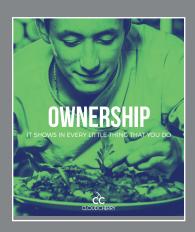
The next thing to look out for is whether your employees are fundamentally good human beings. How is this related to building great culture? As hard as it is to admit, the concept of "I can succeed without you failing" is hard to grasp for a lot of people. Employees who feed off others' failings are like slowly multiplying cancer cells. Not only do they spread negativity but bring down the overall performance of the company. On the other hand, fundamentally good and humble employees accept and realise that the only win in the organisation is if the organisation wins as a whole.

Next on the list is the approach taken to set up a hierarchy in your startup. A word of advice here: an organisation that believes in a flat hierarchy is any day better and more flexible and rewarding than the conventional top-down model, wherein the two-way flow of ideas is deeply restricted. Undoing this system is very tough. On a side note, a flat hierarchy doesn't mean that you don't have a boss or nobody is making more money than you. It indicates the ease of discussing ideas and opinions, even if they are contradictory, without the fear of retribution.

To put things into perspective, here are six crucial pillars that I believe are necessary constituents of a successful culture.

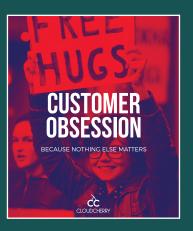


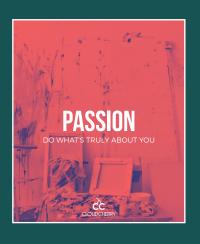
Freedom, in this regard, means the free will to exercise opinions, to experiment, and not be obstructed by conventional wisdom. Freedom as a cultural attribute gives employees the space to do what they believe is right for the company.



Freedom can be exercised in the right way only with ownership, because freedom without ownership is counterproductive.

Ownership, therefore, is the most basic cultural attribute. Only those employees who behave like owners are outcome-driven, with a clear sight on the end goal. And in an ownership-driven work environment, freedom is very important; simple fact, you can't have owners and not give them freedom. Ownership and freedom are therefore, in a way, two halves of the same cultural attribute.



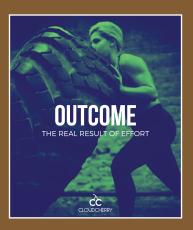


Being a customer delight company, we pride ourselves in being customer-obsessed. Stay up to date on anything and everything that happens to your client's business. Get to know key milestones, and the likes and dislikes of your clients.

Small gestures go a long way. Send a cake, or a hand scribbled card, or even a video note shot on your phone for a major milestone. Be the crew they turn to. 'Trust' is one of the greatest drivers of delight in Enterprises. Earn their trust by delivering outcomes and showing you genuinely care. The best way to 'look genuine' is to 'be genuine'.

If passion is a drug, your startup should be OD'ing on it all the time! If there's something you aren't passionate about, it's really hard to come to work, feel motivated, and full of energy.

So, passion is almost an underlying requirement to form great culture as people driven by passion are usually able to do well even in new domains and uncharted territories.





Being customer-obsessed is aligned with delivering outcomes. So, every time you approach a customer issue, think what resolution is best for the customer, not for you. This might sound obvious but when you do a post-mortem on a customer issue that blows up, you will find that ALL parties "did their job" but the customer is unhappy.

Know why? Because the product team said 'this was complicated', the Customer Success team 'had been escalating this for months', while the CEO "had been telling everyone we should be customer obsessed" and YET, nobody did what it took to understand the customer's perspective to deliver what was needed, WHEN it was needed. Outcomes matter, not effort.

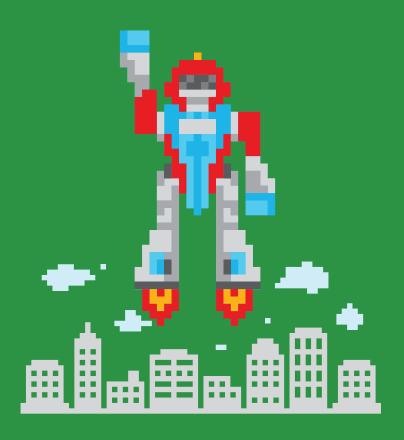
"You are never too old to set another goal or to dream a new dream" C.S. Lewis.

At CloudCherry, it is in our everyday routine to reinvent ourselves. We like people who are naturally curious and who are constantly looking to get better at what they do.

This is because of the simple fact that skills that are relevant today will be irrelevant tomorrow. Be willing to learn, unlearn, adapt quickly and take risks in your field. Every new initiative or idea implemented teaches you something, and ensures you aren't remaining stagnant.



WHY WE HIRED YOU



It's simple. We are looking for stronger people than ourselves.

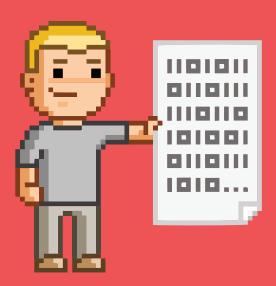
When unchecked, people tend to hire others who are lower-powered than themselves. But we completely avoid hiring people who are useful but not as powerful as we are. We look to and always hire people more capable than ourselves, not less.

In some ways, hiring lower-powered people is a natural response to having so much work to get done. In these conditions, hiring someone who is at least capable seems (in the short term) to be smarter than not hiring anyone at all.

But that's actually a huge mistake. We can always bring on temporary/contract help to get us through tough spots, but we should never lower the hiring bar. The other reason people start to hire "downhill" is a political one. At most organizations, it's beneficial to have an army of people doing your bidding.

At CloudCherry though, it's not. You'd damage the company and saddle yourself with a broken organization. Not fun!

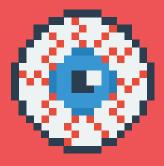
CODE OF CLOUDCHERRY



All the company guidelines reflect a commitment to our core values. As such, we hope and expect that you will strive to do great things with other Legends, search for better solutions and then top them, revel in your work, make us proud and play fair, play hard, and play to win.

Beyond these values, we also trust that like all of us you will strive for reliability, dependability, and high-level competence in your roles. Whether you're in the workplace or away from the office on company business, please behave with decency, respect, and in accordance with all applicable laws and regulations.





ROLES

We all take on the role that suits the work in front of us. Basically, Everyone is a sales person. Everyone can question each other's work. Anyone can recruit someone onto his or her project. Everyone must function as a "strategist," which really means figuring out how to do what's right for our customers. We all engage in analysis, measurement, predictions, evaluations.

FRESH EYE CONCEPT

In the first month, we encourage the concept of "fresh eyes" where you are expected to look at the company like OUTSIDERS and point out things that aren't apparent to us because we are 'part of the problem'. This cannot be done by you post 30 days because by then you will become one of us. Hence applying 'fresh eyes' to our culture, process, work, methods, everything is a critical requisite.

Post 30 days of your work experience with us, I would love to personally meet up or have a call with you to hear your observations and findings.





CAREER MAP

Working at CloudCherry provides an opportunity for extremely efficient and, in many cases, very accelerated, career growth. In particular, it provides an opportunity to broaden one's skill set well outside of the narrow constraints that careers can have at most other companies. So the "growth ladder" is tailored to you. It operates exactly as fast as you can manage to grow. You're in charge.

We believe that high-performance people are generally self-improving.

YOUR FIRST SIX MONTHS

You've solved the nuts-and-bolts issues. Now you're moving beyond wanting to just be productive day to day—you're ready to help shape your future, and CloudCherry's. Your own professional development and CloudCherry's growth are both now under your control.

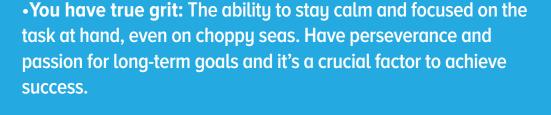
ARE YOU A UNICORN?



Unicorn employees are the ones who possess a unique set of qualities that make them extremely rare and valuable. Sort of like actual unicorns, they're hard to find, but once hired, they offer up enormous benefits in the workplace. To name a few, they shatter expectations, raise the bar for everyone and are simply a joy to be around. Unicorn employees can literally take your business to the next level.

Here are 5 qualities that you need to inherit to become one.

- You aren't limited by your job title: Wear many hats and excel at varied tasks which is critical at a fast-growing startup. Move across several departments, & make surprising leaps. Expand your knowledge and expertise across the business ... and grow your unicorn horns.
- •You think big and small: Exceptional employees can think strategically. This means having the ability to take a step back and see the overall company goals, or the industry as a whole, then apply it to your work. Running a business requires meticulous attention. Uni corn employees are those who take the time to read the fine print. These are the types of people I know I can entrust with serious responsibility.



- You're respectful by nature: never treat someone badly or undermine anyone —regardless of title. Respect the individual, and lead with humility.
- •You get it done: At the end of the day, you can be respectful, multi-talented, tenacious, detail-oriented and a big thinker. But if you don't produce real results and move the needle, all those traits are wasted. You must be able to execute. It's an essential unicorn quality.



This is one of my favourite articles about startup life, and all credit goes to Ryan Holmes of Hootsuite

https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/5-signs-youre-unicorn-employee-ryan-holmes

HOW YOU DOIN'?



We have two formalized methods of evaluating each other: peer reviews and performance evaluation.

Peer reviews are done in order to give each other useful/constructive feedback on how to best grow as individual contributors.

Performance Evaluation is done primarily as a method of understanding your capability in 360 degree. Both processes are driven by information gathered from each other—your peers.

PEER REVIEWS

We all need feedback about our performance—in order to improve, and in order to know we're not failing. Periodically we all give each other feedback about our work. Outside of these formalized peer reviews, the expectation is that we'll just pull feedback from those around us whenever we need to.

There is a framework for how we give this feedback to each other. A set of people (the set changes each time) interviews everyone in the whole company, asking who each person has worked with since the last round of peer reviews and how the experience of working with each person was. The purpose of the feedback is to provide people with information that will help them grow.

The feedback is then gathered, collated, anonymized, and delivered to each reviewee. Making the feedback anonymous definitely has pros and cons, but we think it's the best way to get the most useful information to each person.

ANNUAL PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

The performance evaluation we do annually is to understand one's capability in a 360 degree feedback process. Unlike peer reviews, which generate information for everyone, performance evaluation is done in order to gain insight into how an employee is providing the most value to the company and to thereby grow.

We evaluate you by your

- Skill level/Technical ability
- Productivity/Output
- Group Contribution
- Product Contribution
- Cultural Fit



MOTIVATIONAL SPEECH TIME!



Stay passionate: No attribute is good enough unless embedded in a passionate person.

Don't lose your core strengths: They define you. No matter how much you learn, do not let go of what makes you awesome.

Embrace change: All of us need to tread into uncharted territory. Be willing to embrace that change and work like you are building a billion-dollar company.

Fear is a friend: I worry every day and I am sure so do you. Fear is good. It is the enemy of complacency. It is what keeps a soldier awake for days at end in the trenches. It is what will make us innovate, build, grow every day.

Judge yourself purely on outcome: Not effort. Not intent. Insanely successful people do the former while the also rans do the latter. It is your choice whether you want to be a Michael Jordan or a Brian Scalabrine. They both had the same talent.

Know your competition: But don't follow it. Ultimately your only real competition is with yourself. Did you better yourself today?

Never settle for less: Finishing work is for services companies. Your work is never finished or good enough in a product company.

Process is not the enemy of innovation: It helps channel it. We will never have process for the sake of it; but only to ensure we get the best out of our time and effort. Balance is the key.

Real time Feedback rocks!: We are in the business of feedback. Within CloudCherry, share feedback continually, constructively and openly. Receive it the same way.

OH! YOU SCREWED UP?



Nobody has ever been fired at CloudCherry for making a mistake. It wouldn't make sense for us to operate that way.

Providing the freedom to fail is an important trait of the company— we couldn't expect so much of individuals if we also penalized people for errors. Even expensive mistakes, or ones which result in a very public failure, are genuinely looked at as opportunities to learn.

We can always repair the mistake or make up for it. Screwing up is a great way to find out that your assumptions were wrong or that your model of the world was a little bit off. As long as you update your model and move forward with a better picture, you're doing it right.

Look for ways to test your beliefs. Never be afraid to run an experiment or to collect more data. It helps to make predictions and anticipate nasty outcomes. Ask yourself "what would I expect to see if I'm right?". Ask yourself "what would I expect to see if I'm wrong?" Then ask yourself "what do I see?"

If something totally unexpected happens, try to figure out why. There are still some bad ways to fail. Repeating the same mistake over and over is one. Not listening to customers or peers before or after a failure is another. Never ignore the evidence; particularly when it says you're wrong!

One Important Rule: Use Good Judgment in all Situations!

ARE WE THERE YET?



CloudCherry will be a different company a few years from now because you are going to change it for the better. We can't wait to see where you take us.

The products, features, and experiences that you decide to create for customers are the things that will define us.

Whether it's a new game, a feature in Steam, a way to save customers money, a painting that teaches us what's beautiful, something that protects us from legal threats, a new typeface, an idea for how to be healthier while we work, a new tool for Integration, a spectacular animation, a new concept that lets us be smarter or (more likely) something nobody's thought of yet—we can't wait to see what kind of future you choose to build at CloudCherry.

Experience is the product. The product is just a souvenir.

At CloudCherry, we believe that nothing can be truer than this. No matter what happens, always enjoy your experience with us, and let's give everyone we work with an experience that stands above everything else!

SO, ARE YOU READY TO PLAY?

