

Organizational Review Final:

TikTok

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TikTok

Introduction ▼

TikTok is a video-sharing application that has grown popular among young adults and teenagers, creating opportunities for users and creators to produce short videos that have the capability to go viral based on hashtags, views, likes, and comments. Anyone is able to be a TikTok creator, from celebrities and politicians to teenagers and parents. Originating from China, this video-sharing experience has become popular because of the ability to have creative freedom as well as the complex algorithms which feed users what they want to view and who they want to follow. TikTok has become one of the most top-downloaded apps in the world, currently being in the top charts on Apple's App Store and Google's Google Play Store. Because of its popularity, TikTok has gained millions of producers and followers that have shaped the world's social landscape. ▼

Organizational Rationale ▼

We chose this organization because it has brought a lot of debate around national security and whether or not we can trust this organization with individuals' phone data. This organization is prevalent among the younger generations, so we are presently aware of some of the aspects of the organization. It also has a unique approach to general business practices. Being a social media network, it not only focuses on employee and company interactions but its creators as well. ▼

Interviews

For our interviews, we sent out a Google Form to a group of creators. Although corporate employees were intended to be part of the interviews as well, we got limited feedback that was unable to be transcribed in this document due to security reasons. The questions we asked were as follows:

1. What are your views on employees and what are their benefits?
2. How much power do you believe you hold with Tiktok?
3. What investments have you made towards your brand?
4. How have you built your brand?
5. Do you feel like you need to compete with other creators? 

What are your views on employees and what are their benefits?

“For employees of the company, I wish there was more transparency. I've never been banned from live-streaming , posting, or commenting, but I know a lot of creators get confused because they aren't aware of why those bans were put in place. I also wish they would explain the creator fund more. For Tiktok creators, I think it varies from person to person. I can't really generalize the wide variety of influencers on the app big and small. I wish that some were more mindful about doing bad things when they have so much influence over others, especially when their audiences are children.” -Keith McManus (teethforkeith)



“I don't think tiktok views it's influencers/creators as employees, so as far as people employed by tiktok, like managers and higher ups, I see them as helpful but not always the most engaged

with creators. I'm not sure of their benefits “ - Ian Drewery (ian.avery)

How much power do you believe you hold with Tiktok?

“Not much. I would like to think I am a positive influence and help others in some capacity but it does not feel like I make any difference.” - Ian Drewery (ian.avery)

“I don't think Tiktok has given me any "power" really, some people might follow me to other platforms of their own volition but I don't think I have power over that at all”-Victoria Septien (toridawn817)

What investments have you made towards your brand?

“Not much sadly, I did my best, but times can be hard.” -Vince (sevenoface)

“I choose mostly brands that are products I would use for brand deals, I spend a good amount on clothes to use in posts and establish my style and brand” -Joanna Crauswell (143joannagc)

How have you built your brand?

“It's built around who I am and what type of person I am and the things I enjoy.” -Joanna Crauswell (143joannagc)

“Videos on Tiktok and IG [Instagram] stories”-Jackiee (@jackiee_elana_chan)

Do you feel like you need to compete with other creators?

For this portion sent out, we used a yes or no format. We saw that many creators do not want to compete with one another. Many like to interact with one another and help each other out when needed. Many creators do not see TikTok as a competitive space.

Analysis

Structural Frame

1. Structurally, there are two spheres within the TikTok community: the corporate sphere and the creator sphere. The corporate sphere oversees all content, posts updates, and works towards improving and updating the TikTok application. As developers and regulators of the application, this more formal sphere provides rules and guidelines for the application. This sphere is an example of a simple hierarchy structure, as the chief executive officer oversees corporate executives who then oversee corporate employees. The second sphere is that of the creators. Creators in this sphere make up a majority of the people who are involved with TikTok and are a part of a structure more similar to an adhocracy, meaning that the creators are part of a more loose and flexible system, being connected through informal lateral means. Creators do not follow a hierarchical structure and are freer to make their own decisions. They do not report to the corporate sphere, but they do utilize the product which corporate produces (TikTok), and in turn, provide popularity and social trending for the corporate sphere to benefit from.
2. On the TikTok app, you must follow certain community guidelines to ensure that you are posting appropriate content that will not put anyone at risk. After

downloading the application, users must agree to these terms in order to continue utilizing its service. This ensures that the app is safe, that it does not target or put any person at risk, and protects corporate from lawsuits that may damage the company's reputation. The concept of these community guidelines honor the structural frame's assumption that "organizations exist to achieve established goals and objectives and devise strategies to reach those goals." (Bolman & Deal, 2017) One of the goals of TikTok is to encourage creative expression and spread joy. Honoring these community guidelines allows for creativity to be expressed without harming or interfering with the joy of TikTok's app users. An example of this would be how community guidelines prevent creators from posting inappropriate content that was not created for enjoyment or pleasure.

Human Resources Frame

1. TikTok invests heavily in their creators and heavily relies on creators to support business growth and popularity, understanding that the creativity and talent which creators possess corresponds with the success of the application. This expresses McGregor's Theory Y, believing that their creators are hardworking individuals who find fulfillment in their work. TikTok believes that the creator sphere is full of individuals who create because they find motivation within it, and because of this, TikTok works to support this sphere to increase motivation and engagement. This leads to sponsorships, ad placements, and many other benefits that popular creators can achieve. Once a person reaches a certain amount of followers and views, they can become a part of the creator fund as well, which allows them to profit from well-performing videos.

2. The TikTok interface includes an algorithm that provides viewers with the most favorable content. This content is tailored to each specific viewer, determining what viewers may enjoy based on previous likes and comments to certain videos and hashtags. In the essence of the human resource frame, TikTok works to continuously improve this algorithm so viewers are able to see what they enjoy and so that content creators have their videos seen. This honors the assumption that “organizations exist to serve human needs rather than the converse” (Bolman & Deal, 2018). TikTok exists to serve its base and not the other way around. It constantly works to improve its application to allow for creators to have greater creative expression by expanding music and effects databases and it works to connect creators and users with each other and form various communities and genres within the application to meet the interests of viewers. If creators did not exist, the TikTok app would struggle to be successful. If TikTok did not meet the needs and interests of users and viewers, it would not be able to thrive off of social popularity. It needs people to operate. ▼

Political Frame

1. Tiktok creates a competitive arena for creators vying for the attention of users on Tiktok and gaining likes, comments, and views, trying to achieve a high platform for social influence and clout. Creators have the drive to create the most popular content that will create new social trends, providing them with more social power. Some users collaborate with each other in order to boost each other’s viewerships while others compete with each other, creating videos and stories that may incite drama between both creators and viewers. It is the social trends and the personal

interests of viewers that provide content creators with clout, and the entire TikTok community is the arena where the game for engaging in these interests is played.

A lot of personal power, as well as alliances and network power, are used in order to achieve the goals of having greater popularity.

2. This year, TikTok has come under a vast amount of scrutiny due to worries in the application having potential security issues as well as the potential for there to be performed data exploitation on application users. The United States government has criticized TikTok on this issue, asking for them to solve these potentials from becoming a reality. The political frame is at work here because the United States wants to be able to have more control over the TikTok app, especially over its information. A lot of stakeholders are at work here, from TikTok corporate to the Chinese and United States governments, and even TikTok creators and viewers. All of these groups wish for TikTok to be controlled or monitored in a certain way, whether that be through information and data management, economical market decisions, or government interference. China would like to have more control over the application in order to have potential data about its users, the United States wishes for TikTok corporate to be more present within its borders so that this data may be protected by American interests, and creators and users want to be able to continue utilizing the app where they live, which is in jeopardy due to these political tensions. ♥

Symbolic Frame

1. Tiktok sets a foundation for how they operate their application through their mission statement: “TikTok is the leading destination for short-form mobile

video. Our mission is to inspire creativity and bring joy.” (TikTok, 2018) This mission statement attributes to the culture that Tiktok works to uphold: a culture that wishes to provide everyone with the opportunity to express their creativity through video content and spread joy. This is an example of the symbolic frame because TikTok’s mission contributes to establishing a culture, this culture influencing the decisions which are made within TikTok corporate. TikTok wants to be able to have their application be one that promotes creativity most effectively and efficiently, and the actions which are performed in order to do so may be defended by this mission.

2. Tiktok houses are a large symbol of power and influence on Tiktok, these houses being where groups of creators live to make content together and collaborate. These houses and the creators who live within them are seen as icons and living logos who embody and model social trends and popular content. Creators are not only able to collaborate with their peers, but they are also more inclined to receive attention from other corporations who wish to sponsor them and ride off of the social clout they have gained. This is an example of the symbolic frame because of how various creators turn into social icons and create their own symbols and culture within the TikTok app and with their peers. When they have a large enough amount of a following, corporations who have established symbols, icons, logos, and cultures then partner with them in order to have their cultures prosper, especially within the social media spheres. Creators and businesses influence each other, strengthening their culture, and potentially creating new ones. ▼

The Predominant Frame: Symbolic

The predominant frame within the world of TikTok has proven to be that of the symbolic frame. TikTok has foundational values that greatly reflect and affect the business and creator spheres, and they also establish and reestablish both old and new symbols through the content published on the TikTok application. TikTok's mission statement is to "...inspire creativity and bring joy" (TikTok, 2018), and in this, they are succeeding. TikTok has continuously developed to serve both creator and viewer, allowing for creators to utilize more tools to edit their videos as well as fine-tuning viewer content so that computer algorithms may show the most favorable TikToks based on likes, comments, views, and hashtags. Because of this, there have been many "types" of TikTok that have been formed. These types within the application form based on how viewers interact with the application. If viewers like or comment on a dancing TikTok, they will be shown more dancing videos and accounts. "The algorithm" which TikTok uses to feed viewers what they enjoy has created various communities geared towards certain interests. These communities (cooking, gaming, politics, music, visual art, humor, therapy, fashion, etc.) have been able to create their own distinct symbols, idols, and cultures, sometimes overlapping with each other. As these areas create social media and have control in various social spheres, a relationship is formed in which creators both create and are influenced by social trends and symbols. Because TikTok allows creators to utilize other TikToks and older pieces of music as part of their videos, a vast amount of symbols, new and old, are introduced to viewers. TikTok solely survives on this great exchanging and collaboration between symbols, idols, and cultures, thriving on social trends and popular media. If there were no social media trends and creators left the application for another media platform, TikTok would lose the cultural value it had gained from the popular artists and accounts it had once housed. In essence, TikTok is following its mission and culture of creative expression while at the same time creating new values and

cultures birthed from the communities it creates. TikTok's community is not one of stagnation and monoculture, but it is one that is variable and prosperous in the sense that its sole culture provides the opportunity for other cultures to take shape and affect each other. ▼

Recommendations

The issue we found with TikTok was on the corporate side of the company and how they neglect creator support and feedback. The first problem that corporate creates is how they only care about the creators but do not address the issues brought up by them in an effective manner. The second problem at hand is how the reputation of TikTok leaves users on edge due to the potential security risks and information exploitation of creators and viewers. Lastly, TikTok's video review system within the app is broken. ▼ As a team, we came up with three solutions related to the frames to improve the app. The first solution correlates with the human resources frame. TikTok should allow creators to be more involved in corporate positions so creators have more involvement in corporate decisions. This solution in turn would allow for creators to solve problems within the app in a more effective manner because creators know their needs the better and can thus fulfill them in a better manner. This corresponds to the human resource frame because it honors the assumption that organizations are created to meet the needs of people and not the other way around. The second solution coincides with the political frame, in order to rebuild the reputation TikTok once had there need to be stricter security guidelines on information, and honesty and openness to make sure that all security needs are met. Finally, the framework of the TikTok app needs to be redeveloped to improve its quality assurance and safety nets. This increases the efficiency and effectiveness of corporate problem-solving. ▼

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