CORPORATE ANTHROPOLOGY STARTER KIT

What Is Corporate Anthropology?

Corporate anthropology is the process of looking at a company as a new and unfamiliar culture. By applying classic anthropological techniques—such as observational research and exploration— to business settings, it's possible to arrive at new insights that help companies sustain growth and adapt to changing environments. Corporate anthropology is the key to seeing a business problem in a new light or finding previously unimagined opportunities, instead of remaining stuck by reverting to old habits, old solutions, or old cultures.

What Techniques Can Be Used?

Companies are often confronted by challenges that bring about the realization that they must adapt to changing times. To achieve this adaptation, it is incredibly helpful for business leaders to take a step back and look at their companies with fresh eyes. There are many techniques that can be used to see business situations through a new lens, but the following four are a great placed to start:

Day in the Life

This technique requires senior executives and CEOs to get out of their offices and literally spend a day following around their customers in order to gain a new perspective and capture the essence of what people really value and want from a company. When you plan to spend a day in a customer's life, the most important thing to remember is not to have your answers already in your mind. The purpose of going exploring is to see things with fresh eyes.

Deep Hanging Out

Unlike a "Day in the Life," which is a type of observational research where you are an external observer and the subjects are aware that you are deliberately studying what they are doing, "Deep Hanging Out" is just that: participating as part of the group. In fact, observations gleaned from deep hanging out often end up being the most meaningful insights of one's anthropological research. The key is to ensure that you truly listen to those around you in order to gain authentic insights, while refraining from asking too many questions.

Culture Probes

If you really want to know how your customers/employees/clients really "feel" about something—your products, services, workplace—a culture probe is a great option. Remember, since people buy with emotions and justify with logic, what they say and what you see is very important, but how they feel is perhaps even more valuable for you to get the insights you are looking for. Culture probes can include asking your customers to create diaries or blogs, or providing your customers with packs of relevant objects that they must

then use and react to. All culture probes are meant to reveal what is going on in the minds of the people you want to know more about, as you watch them deal with situations or apply certain products to solve their problems.

Customer Diaries

When the goal is to learn more about a problem or customer, or when you want to go exploring to find new markets, to see how your employees are *really* doing their jobs, or to watch clients make relevant decisions, a great technique is to pick up a camera, an iPhone, an Android or video camera and go out into the field to make a visual customer diary. Since the purpose of this exploring is to help a business leader "see, feel and think" more clearly about a particular problem, using images can help to formulate a pattern that makes sense out of what people are doing. The use of pictures and videos is an excellent way to capture what is happening. You will be amazed at the disconnect between what you think you are seeing or what people tell you they are doing and what those pictures or videos truly capture as you review them at a later time and with colleagues.

What Results Can You Expect?

Regardless of which corporate anthropology technique a business leader uses to arrive at a "eureka" moment, once they get there their view of the world can dramatically change. They can discover needs that haven't been met, customers they have never tried to reach, markets they have never imagined, and phenomenal growth and success.

For more detailed descriptions about how to apply the corporate anthropology techniques above, check out the other whitepapers offered on Andi's **Tools You Can Use** page.