Am I a brilliant jerk?

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QCon SF 2017

Nobody enjoys working with brilliant jerks

Audience poll

Has worked with a brilliant jerk?

Has worked with a brilliant jerk?

Enjoyed working with the brilliant jerk?

Story: Brilliant jerks leave

Brilliant jerks leave

Small team of engineers with two jerks

Brilliant jerks leave

Small team of engineers with two jerks

Practice jerk avoidance, limit interactions

Brilliant jerks leave

Small team of engineers with two jerks

Practice jerk avoidance, limit interactions

A jerk leaves, work on another team

Brilliant jerks leave

Small team of engineers with two jerks

Practice jerk avoidance, limit interactions

A jerk leaves, work on another team

Other jerk leaves, no jerks left

Brilliant jerks leave

Small team of engineers with two jerks

Practice jerk avoidance, limit interactions

A jerk leaves, work on another team

Other jerk leaves, no jerks left

Coding nights and weekends

Brilliant jerks leave

Didn't happen, not working nights and weekends

Brilliant jerks leave

Didn't happen, not working nights and weekends

Deliver higher quality software, more often

Brilliant jerks leave

Didn't happen, not working nights and weekends

Deliver higher quality software, more often

More effective as a team

Brilliant jerks leave

Didn't happen, not working nights and weekends

Deliver higher quality software, more often

More effective as a team

Assumed we went into hyper productivity mode

Brilliant jerks leave

Didn't happen, not working nights and weekends

Deliver higher quality software, more often

More effective as a team

Assumed we went into hyper productivity mode

Didn't analyze the situation

Amazing content

Amazing culture

NETFLIX

Amazing content

Amazing culture

NETFLIX

Freedom and responsibility

Context over control

No brilliant jerks

Amazing culture

NETFLIX

Netflix Culture:
Freedom & Responsibility

Culture at Netflix

A hundred million members is a good start, but we want to entertain everyone.

Entertainment, like friendship, is a core human need. It changes how we feel and gives us common ground. The invention of motion pictures 120 years ago, and then of television 70 years ago, were the first two entertainment revolutions. The third revolution is streaming, personalized any-screen anytime anyplace video, which allows Netflix to provide better entertainment at lower cost and greater scale than the world has ever seen.

This document is about our internal employee culture: the unusual ways we work together so we can eventually entertain everyone.

Like many great companies, we strive to hire the best and we value integrity, excellence, respect, and collaboration. What is unique and special, though, about Netflix is how much we:

1. encourage independent decision-making by employees
2. share information openly, broadly, and deliberately
3. are extraordinarily candid with each other
4. keep only our highly effective people
5. avoid rules

"no brilliant jerks the cost to teamwork is too high"

Relationship between quality, teamwork, and brilliant jerks?

Brilliant jerk definition

Someone with a high IQ

Brilliant jerk definition

Someone with a high IQ

Someone who treats people poorly

A brilliant jerk is someone who treats people poorly with a high IQ

Quality, teamwork, brilliant jerks

Quality, teamwork, brilliant jerks

Delivering high quality software depends on teamwork

Quality, teamwork, brilliant jerks

Delivering high quality software depends on teamwork

Specifically, collaboration and feedback

Quality, teamwork, brilliant jerks

Delivering high quality software depends on teamwork

Specifically, collaboration and feedback

Design sessions, code reviews, troubleshoot prod issue

Quality, teamwork, brilliant jerks

Collaboration and feedback require healthy relationships

Quality, teamwork, brilliant jerks

Collaboration and feedback require healthy relationships

Specifically, trust, vulnerability, and support

Quality, teamwork, brilliant jerks

Collaboration and feedback require healthy relationships

Specifically, trust, vulnerability, and support

Speaking honestly, asking for help, assisting a teammate

Quality, teamwork, brilliant jerks

Jerks treat people poorly

Quality, teamwork, brilliant jerks

Jerks treat people poorly

   As a result, we're unlikely to trust them

Quality, teamwork, brilliant jerks

Jerks treat people poorly

As a result, we're unlikely to trust them

We're probably not going to be vulnerable with them

Quality, teamwork, brilliant jerks

Jerks treat people poorly

As a result, we're unlikely to trust them

We're probably not going to be vulnerable with them

Supporting them will be really hard

Quality, teamwork, brilliant jerks

Jerks treat people poorly

As a result, we're unlikely to trust them

We're probably not going to be vulnerable with them

Supporting them will be really hard

Building a healthy relationship is going to be difficult

Teams with brilliant jerks produce lower quality software

Intuition check

Thought experiment

Refer back to last high quality project

Did you collaborate?

Did you seek out feedback?

Improved the quality of software

Intuition check

Imagine person is a jerk

No trust, vulnerability, or support

No feedback or collaboration

Low quality software

But, by how much?

Trade off quality for IQ?

"no brilliant jerks"

Story: Some jerk for more brilliant

Some jerk for more brilliant

Relationship: quality, collaboration and feedback

Some jerk for more brilliant

Relationship: quality, collaboration and feedback

Relationship: quality, complexity collaboration and feedback

Some jerk for more brilliant

Relationship: quality, collaboration and feedback

Relationship: quality, complexity collaboration and feedback

Complex systems require *more* collaboration and feedback.

Some jerk for more brilliant

We were building complex system

Some jerk for more brilliant

We were building complex system

Trade off worth it?

Some jerk for more brilliant

We were building complex system

Trade off worth it?

Absolutely *not*

Some jerk for more brilliant

We were building complex system

Trade off worth it?

Absolutely *not*

Brilliant people introduce brilliant ideas

Some jerk for more brilliant

Brilliant ideas, like all ideas, need to be vetted

Some jerk for more brilliant

Brilliant ideas, like all ideas, need to be vetted

Especially in complex software systems

Some jerk for more brilliant

Brilliant ideas, like all ideas, need to be vetted

Especially in complex software systems

When complexity exceeds what a person can manage

Some jerk for more brilliant

Brilliant ideas, like all ideas, need to be vetted

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When complexity exceeds what a person can manage

Some jerk for more brilliant

Brilliant ideas, like all ideas, need to be vetted

Especially in complex software systems

When complexity exceeds what a person can manage

Critical to collaborate and get feedback

Some jerk for more brilliant

Brilliant ideas, like all ideas, need to be vetted

Especially in complex software systems

When complexity exceeds what a person can manage

Critical to collaborate and get feedback

Brilliant jerks rarely collaborate or receive feedback

Some jerk for more brilliant

Nobody enjoys working with jerk

Some jerk for more brilliant

Nobody enjoys working with jerk

Especially for a long period of time

Some jerk for more brilliant

Nobody enjoys working with jerk

Especially for a long period of time

Jerk tolerance budget exhausted

Some jerk for more brilliant

Nobody enjoys working with jerk

Especially for a long period of time

Jerk tolerance budget exhausted

Some jerk for more brilliant

Nobody enjoys working with jerk

Especially for a long period of time

Jerk tolerance budget exhausted

Disproportionately influence outcomes

Some jerk for more brilliant

Nobody enjoys working with jerk

Especially for a long period of time

Jerk tolerance budget exhausted

Disproportionately influence outcomes

Disproportionately lower software quality

Some jerk for more brilliant

Nobody enjoys working with jerk

Especially for a long period of time

Jerk tolerance budget exhausted

Disproportionately influence outcomes

Disproportionately lower software quality

Brilliant jerks disproportionately lower software quality

Intuition check

Thought experiment

Refer back to last brilliant jerk

Same amount of scrutiny?

Collaborate?

Lower the quality of software

Slip through our interview process

Do we fire, first time exhibit behaviors?

Slip through our interview process

Do we fire, first time exhibit behaviors?

No, we should attempt to rehab jerk

Understand how a brilliant jerk behaves then rehab

Nobody wants to be a brilliant jerk

They do exist, what's going on?

Audience poll

Think you might be, or have been, a brilliant jerk

Think you might be, or have been, a brilliant jerk

Enjoy being a brilliant jerk?

Nobody wants to be a brilliant jerk

They do exist, what's going on?

Answer, jerks *ignore* data

Engineers love data

Engineers love data

Evaluate and predict

Engineers love data

Evaluate and predict

Intelligent decisions

Engineers love data

Evaluate and predict

Intelligent decisions

Emotions *are* data

Emotions *are* data

Evaluate and predict

Emotions *are* data

Evaluate and predict

Intelligent decisions

Story: Rational behavior only

Rational behavior only

Harsh code review comments

Rational behavior only

Harsh code review comments

No design discussions

Rational behavior only

Harsh code review comments

No design discussions

On call nightmare

Rational behavior only

Well intentioned, all very rational

Rational behavior only

Well intentioned, all very rational

Did not evaluate

Rational behavior only

Well intentioned, all very rational

Did not evaluate

Did not predict

Rational behavior only

Well intentioned, all very rational

Did not evaluate

Did not predict

Did not make intelligent decision

Rational behavior only

Well intentioned, all very rational

Did not evaluate

Did not predict

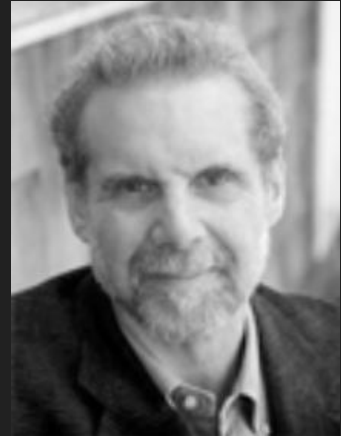Did not make intelligent decision

Treating people poorly

Emotional intelligence (EQ) is understanding and managing our emotions. It's relating to others.

Emotional intelligence (EQ) is understanding and managing our emotions. It's relating to others.

Daniel Goleman

www.danielgoleman.info

How emotionally intelligent are you

Someone with a high EQ

Self-aware

Someone with a high EQ

Self-aware

Someone with a high EQ

Self-aware

Self-regulates

Someone with a high EQ

Self-aware

Self-regulates

Exercises empathy

Someone with a high EQ

Self-aware

Self-regulates

Exercises empathy

Social skills

Someone with a high EQ

Self-aware

Self-regulates

Exercises empathy

Social skills

Intrinsically motivated

Story: ~~Rational~~ EQ/IQ behavior only

EQ/IQ behavior only

Self aware they are angry and stressed

EQ/IQ behavior only

Self aware they are angry and stressed

EQ/IQ behavior only

Self aware they are angry and stressed

EQ/IQ behavior only

Self aware they are angry and stressed

EQ/IQ behavior only

Self aware they are angry and stressed

Self regulate by not lashing out

EQ/IQ behavior only

Self aware they are angry and stressed

Self regulate by not lashing out

EQ/IQ behavior only

Self aware they are angry and stressed

Self regulate by not lashing out

Respond with constructive feedback

Story: ~~Rational~~ EQ/IQ behavior only

EQ/IQ behavior only

Design proposal by someone new

EQ/IQ behavior only

Design proposal by someone new

Lacks deep systems context

EQ/IQ behavior only

Design proposal by someone new

Lacks deep systems context

Jerk aggressively questioning design

EQ/IQ behavior only

Design proposal by someone new

Lacks deep systems context

Jerk aggressively questioning design

EQ/IQ behavior only

Design proposal by someone new

Lacks deep systems context

Jerk aggressively questioning design

Social skills, empathy, and motivations

EQ/IQ behavior only

Design proposal by someone new

Lacks deep systems context

Jerk aggressively questioning design

Social skills, empathy, and motivations

EQ/IQ behavior only

Design proposal by someone new

Lacks deep systems context

Jerk aggressively questioning design

Social skills, empathy, and motivations

EQ/IQ behavior only

Design proposal by someone new to team

Lacks deep systems context

Jerk aggressively questioning design

Social skills, empathy, and motivations

Exercise EQ, more effective design session

A brilliant jerk treats people poorly because they ignore **emotional data** and do not exercise **emotional intelligence**.

Intuition check

Thought experiment

Refer back to interactions with brilliant jerk

Did they have EQ?

What if they did?

There is good news. Hope.

...ignore emotional data and **do not** exercise emotional intelligence.

Two ways to rehab a brilliant jerk.

Courage

Honesty and commitment

Be courageous, be brave

Working with a jerk? Tell them

Be courageous, be brave

Working with a jerk? Tell them

Considered all the data

Be courageous, be brave

Working with a jerk? Tell them

Considered all the data

Emotional data

Emotional intelligence

Be courageous, be brave

Working with a jerk? Tell them

Considered all the data

Emotional data

Emotional intelligence

Healthy relationships, teamwork, quality

Be honest and committed

Am I a brilliant jerk?

Be honest and committed

Am I a brilliant jerk?

Do I ignore emotional data?

Do I have a high EQ?

Be honest and committed

Am I a brilliant jerk?

Do I ignore emotional data?

Do I have a high EQ?

Do I struggle to build healthy relationships?

Be honest and committed

Am I a brilliant jerk?

Do I ignore emotional data?

Do I have a high EQ?

Do I struggle to build healthy relationships?

Be committed

You can rehad a brilliant jerk.
I am proof.

You can rehad a brilliant jerk.
I am proof.

Final request

Am I a brilliant jerk?

Thank you!