

Strategy and culture playbook

Accelerating the world's
transition to soft skills-first
hiring



A word from the CEO and Co-founder

This document is like our company manifesto and employee playbook combined. It shows who we are and who we want to become.

Whether you're considering joining Clevry (which we hope you do because we're awesome!), getting onboarded (congratulations on that great decision!), or you've been with us for a decade (you're a heavy-weight, wow!), we want this document to honestly reflect our values, beliefs, and how we work. It's also about our aspirations for the future.

For our clever rebels who are already part of the team, we hope this document sets the right expectations and gives you purpose in everything we do. It'll help us all align and work towards our vision.

And for those thinking of joining us, we hope this document makes your decision easier – whatever you choose.

Let me know what you think and how we can improve.

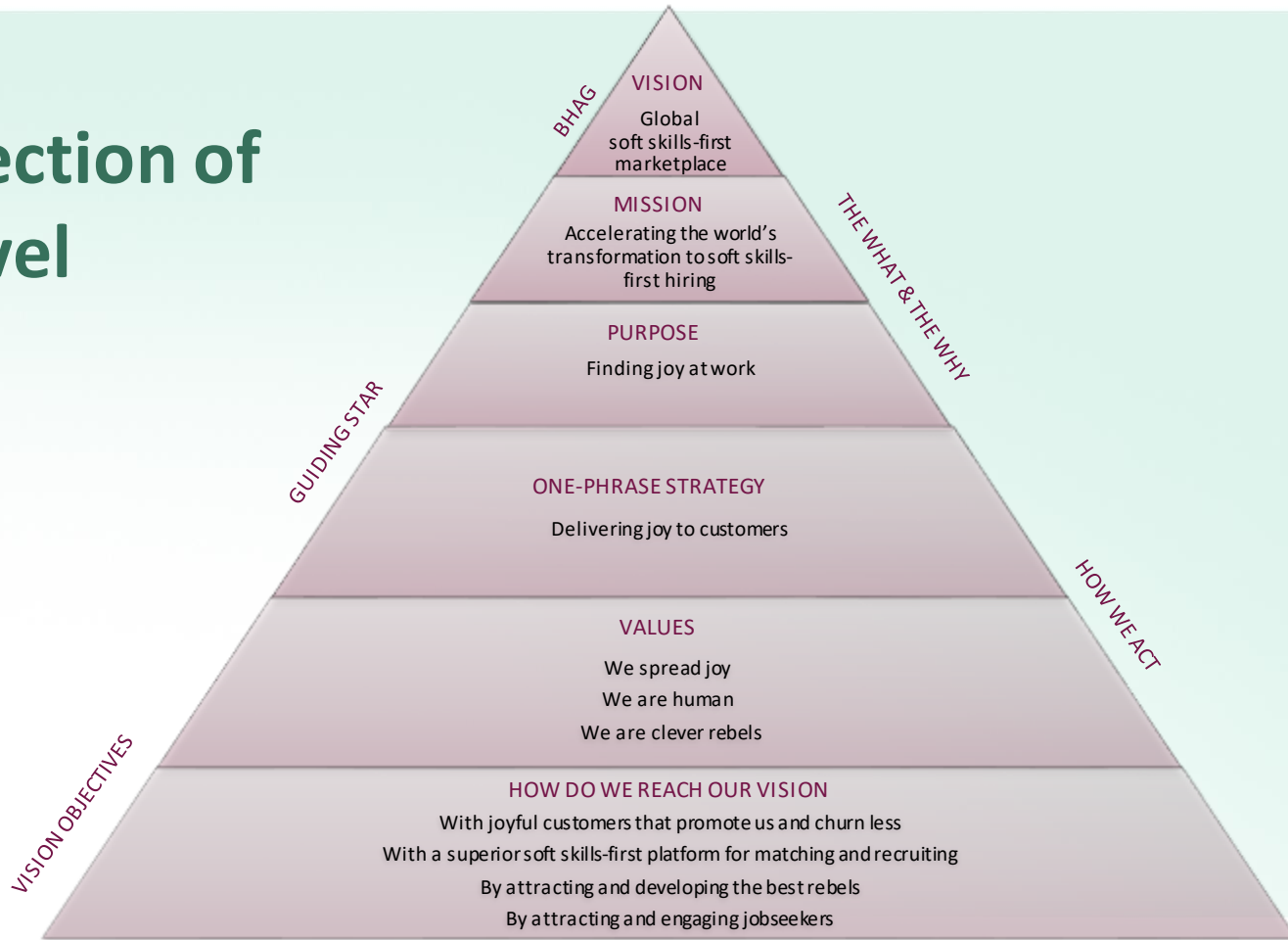
Joyful wishes,

Luke

Overview of contents

- Our vision and purpose
 - Direction of travel: Clevery's pyramid
 - Vision Objectives: How we will achieve our vision
 - The world we are fighting for
 - Purpose: The broader impact and contribution we are making in society
- Soft skills
 - What is soft skills and why do they matter
 - Soft skills vs hard skills
 - What the future looks like
- Soft skills-first hiring
 - Our mission: Accelerating the world's transition to soft skills-first hiring
 - Traditional way vs first skills-first hiring
 - Breaking down soft skills-first hiring
 - Brief history of the assessment industry
- One-Phrase Strategy: Delivering customer joy
 - The importance of collecting and sharing customer feedback
 - Winning on purpose
 - Our priority order
- Culture and Values:
 - The guiding principles and beliefs that shape our culture, behaviours, and relationships
- Employment Proposition: Our promise to every rebel
 - The three P's
 - The partner program
 - Our way of working transparently with goal setting (OKRs)

Direction of Travel



Our vision objectives

Our vision objectives are aspirational objectives that we need to achieve to reach our vision. They work as the perfect summary of this playbook:

Joyful customers that promote us and churn less

+ Superior soft skills-first platform for matching and recruiting

+ Attracting and developing the best rebels

+ Attracting and engaging jobseekers



= The global soft skills-first marketplace

The world we are fighting for

Soft skills-first hiring, which prioritises evaluating and selecting candidates based on their soft skills over technical hard skills alone, can offer several benefits for the world:

- More human! With soft skills you can enhance leadership, build a supportive and positive work culture that encourages collaboration, recognition, and mutual respect. Employees thrive when they feel valued and appreciated.
- More joy! Employees that have found roles that match their soft skills are more engaged and have a sense of belonging. They are likely to feel more supported and valued within the organization, leading to lower turnover rates and enhanced performance.
- More diversity and inclusion! By focusing on candidates' soft skills, organisations can attract individuals with diverse backgrounds and perspectives, leading to a more inclusive workplace culture.

We are not selling assessments and recruitments. We are finding joy at work.

Our purpose is the fundamental reason for existence. It is the broader impact and contribution that we aim to make in society.

Finding joy at work refers to experiencing a sense of fulfilment in one's job and professional environment. It goes beyond mere contentment and satisfaction. It reflects a deeper level of enjoyment and passion for the work being done. Joyful employees have a positive attitude, high levels of motivation, and a genuine enthusiasm for their tasks and responsibilities.

Employees find joy at work when their work aligns with their values, preferences and passions. Having a sense of purpose and feeling that their contributions make a difference can bring deep fulfilment. In essence, that they are doing meaningful work.

Joy at work has significant benefits for both employees and organizations. It leads to increased productivity, improved job satisfaction, reduced burnout, and higher levels of employee retention. Moreover, joyful employees tend to be more creative, collaborative, and resilient, contributing positively to the overall success and growth of the company.

Soft skills are the best predictor of future job performance

Soft skills, also known as interpersonal or people skills, refer to the personal attributes, traits, capabilities, qualities, and abilities that enable individuals to interact effectively and harmoniously with others. Soft skills are vital in all areas of life, including the workplace. Soft skills are essential for building strong professional relationships, fostering teamwork, and achieving personal and organisational success – or as we call it – joy at work.

In today's data-driven, dynamic and interconnected world, soft skills are increasingly valued and are crucial for recruitment, and career growth, advancement and success.

The future is soft

Deloitte predicts that 2/3 of all jobs in 2030 will be soft skills intensive (i.e. jobs require specific soft skills rather than hard skills). Several factors contribute to this trend:

1. **Automation and technology:** With the rapid advancement of technology, many routine and repetitive tasks are being automated. As a result, the demand for uniquely human skills, such as creativity, emotional intelligence, and problem-solving, has increased. Soft skills are harder for machines to replicate, making them even more valuable in the modern workforce.
2. **Globalization and multiculturalism:** In today's interconnected world, businesses often operate in diverse and multicultural environments. Effective communication, cross-cultural understanding, and adaptability are essential for success in such settings.
3. **Team-based work structures:** Collaborative and cross-functional team structures are becoming more prevalent in organizations. Soft skills like collaboration, communication, and conflict resolution are vital for building productive and harmonious teams.
4. **Customer-centric approach:** Many businesses are adopting a customer-centric approach, emphasizing the importance of understanding and meeting customer needs. Soft skills like empathy and active listening are crucial for providing excellent customer service and building strong client relationships.
5. **Leadership and management styles:** The traditional top-down management style is giving way to more inclusive and participative leadership approaches. Effective leaders need strong soft skills to inspire and motivate their teams.
6. **Flexible and virtual work:** The shift towards flexible and virtual work arrangements requires employees to rely more on communication and collaboration tools, making effective soft skills even more critical for maintaining productivity and team cohesion.

Soft skills try to answer three questions

Can you do the job?

Cognitive ability refers to a person's general capacity for problem-solving, critical thinking, learning, and decision-making. Research has consistently shown that cognitive ability is a strong predictor of job performance across different professions and industries.

How will you do the job?

Personality traits: Certain traits significantly influence job performance.

For example, traits like resilience, a ability to handle stress, and a adaptability have been linked to better job performance in various roles. Soft skills help employees navigate change, cope with challenges, and bounce back from setbacks more effectively.

Do you want the job?

Motivation and work ethic: Preferences, passion for the job, and motivation can significantly influence an individual's commitment and dedication to performing well in their role.

What correlates with future job performance:

Hard skills **X** Soft skills **X** The other stuff **=** Performance

While hard skills demonstrate your expertise in a specific area, e.g., programming or negotiation tactics, it's the soft skills that determine how effectively you can apply those hard skills and succeed in various situations.

You can read every book and have 10 years of experience in sales or leadership, but grit, motivation, optimism, interpersonal and other soft skills, will ultimately determine your success.

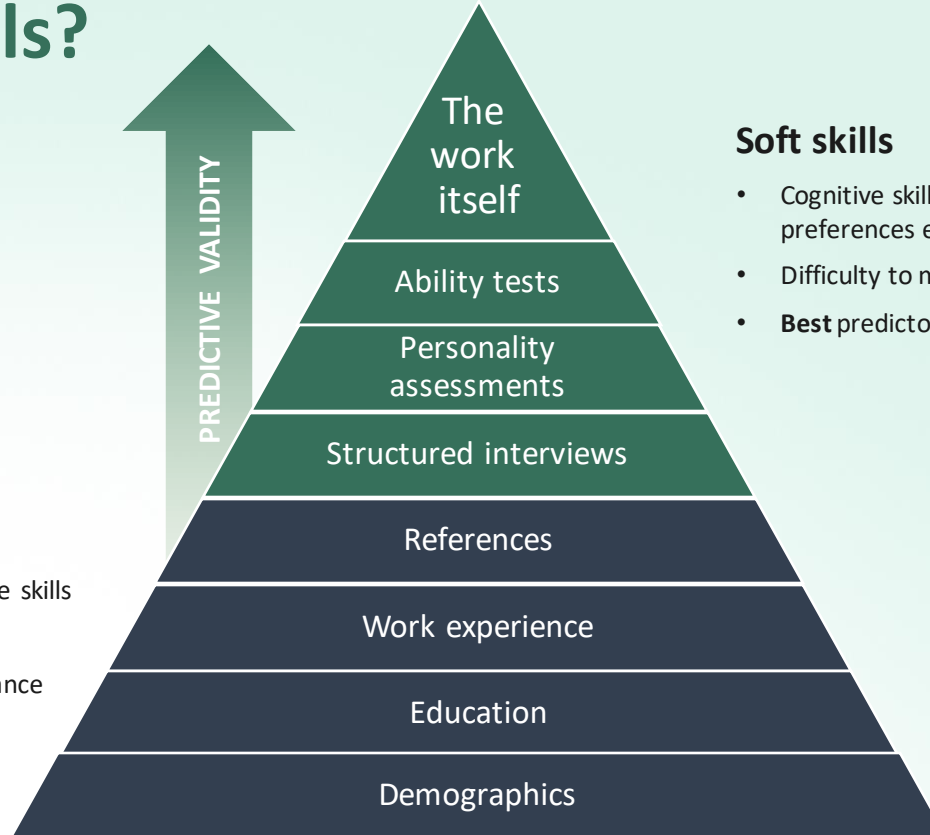
There are no one hundred percent correlations between predictive indicators used in the hiring process and the actual job performance when recruiting. People are tricky. Science demonstrates that we can reach 85% accuracy in pre-employment accuracy through a valid and robust assessment of soft skills and vetting hard skills. The rest is made of the other stuff, like the right onboarding, leadership, team dynamics, culture, work-life balance, and dumb luck.

Why soft skills?

Difficult to measure.
Best predictor of job performance.

Hard skills

- Such as CV, bio data, MS Office skills
- Easy to measure
- Does **not** predict job performance



Soft skills

- Cognitive skills, Personality, motivation, preferences etc.
- Difficulty to measure
- **Best** predictor of job performance

Accelerating the world's transition to soft skills-first hiring

The transition to soft skills-first hiring is happening with or without us. However, the change does not happen automatically, and companies are struggling with adapting to the shift. Our mission is to help streamline the transformation to soft skills-first hiring and make sure our customers maximise the benefits from it.

The change to soft skills-first hiring is happening and the speed is just picking up. According to LinkedIn's talent report 2023:

- Recruiters are when recruiting +25% more likely to search by skills than they were three years ago
- Recruiters are +50% more likely to search by skills than by years of experience
- Jobs post that does not require a degree are at the same time up by 30%

Recruit for soft skills, check hard skills

Every recruitment process should assess essential soft skills and check hard skills. Done correctly, we can reach 85% in pre-employment accuracy.

Always strive to remove all “good-to-have” skills not correlating with long-lasting success. Never have specific years of experience, e.g. four years, as a must-have criteria in sifting and selection.

After sifting and selection it is time for the structured interview. This is where recruiters dive deeper into the candidate’s specific soft skills, strengths and preferences according to a set interview process. This is also where you bone out goals, role objectives, team dynamics, and employment practicalities such as compensation packages and policies.

Finally, when you have found your future colleague, do not forget the importance of proper onboarding. We see onboarding as a vital part of the recruitment and should not be considered as a separate process. Onboarding should be a seamless part of the recruitment process; a smooth transition from the final interview to pre- and onboarding. Make sure you get the most out of the new employee and the best start to the employment by utilizing what you learned about the candidate’s soft skills. Onboarding done right can be a two-times success multiplier. (Psst, this is why we have developed the Onboarding report.)

Traditional vs soft skills-first hiring

THE TRADITIONAL WAY – LOW VALIDITY & RELIABILITY	THE CLEVRY WAY - HIGH VALIDITY & RELIABILITY
Hire for hard skills, check soft skills	Hire for soft skills, check essential hard skills
“Essential” skills are not known, Subjective or “good-to-have” skills are the norm	Assess essential role-specific traits that scientifically correlate with success
Non-relevant selection criteria e.g. attended school or years of experience	Uses only relevant selection criteria. Degree and knowledge/seniority level can affect performance, but the specific school or exact number of years of experience have no/little relevance.
Bio-data (age, gender, name etc.) are asked early in the sifting process which creates biases	Automated matching based on skills. Drives diversification and inclusion. Bio-data not part of the matching process and not visible until later stages of the recruitment process.
Candidates are seen as resources	Candidates are customers
Psychometric assessment are used selectively	Assessments are used always and regardless of role
Unstructured interview process, the recruiter/line manager uses their own questions and assessment criteria	Structured interview processes
Trained super users own and have access to soft skills data	Candidate own their soft skills data and make it visible for recruiters, managers and colleagues

Soft skills-first hiring

What hopefully is obvious by now is that soft skills should come first when hiring. Hard skills are important, but putting them first, or giving them too much emphasis, can affect the validity, reliability, quality and diversity.

It's essential to note that the context and requirements of each job can influence which skills are more critical for predicting job performance.

In more qualified roles, let's say leadership, the hiring process should consider a more holistic assessment of the candidates, combining structured in-depth interviews, leadership assessments, work samples, and references to evaluate both relevant hard skill competencies and soft skills relevant to the position. Different jobs and organisations might prioritise different aspects of prediction based on their unique needs and work environments.

In entry level roles, let's say in customer service, you might only need to assess the nine specific traits that correlate with success in the service industry using a short assessment and following it up with a call to check relevant hard skills and run through practicalities.

The soft skills-first marketplace

What is a marketplace?

A marketplace connects buyers and sellers. In our case buyers are organisations that have a demand for specific skills, and sellers are job seekers providing skills.

What is the soft skills-first marketplace?

It's a psychometric powered marketplace matching jobseekers and employers based on essential soft skills and hard skills (in that order). Clevry's AI-powered software helps recruiters source, sift, match, and engage with pre-validated and vetted candidates.

And you know what is really cool? We are the world's first soft skills-first marketplace. Sunglasses please, mic-drop, boom!

Brief history of the assessment industry

LATE 19TH CENTURY

Interest awakens

- Emergence of psychological theories and interest in understanding human personality.
- Early attempts to categorize personality traits and types.
- Sigmund Freud's Contributions (Late 19th to Early 20th Century)

- Carl Jung's Contributions: introducing e.g., personality archetypes and introversion/extroversion.
- Development of psychological types and the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) later based on Jung's work

EARLY 20TH CENTURY

Type based, theoretical models are born

MID TO LATE 20TH CENTURY

Emergence of empirical models and the Big 5

- Advancements in statistical methods lead to empirical studies aiming to identify and measure personality traits.
- Raymond Cattell's 16 Personality Factors (16PF) questionnaire contributes to the development of factor analysis
- Emergence of the Five Factor Model (Big Five) as a comprehensive framework for describing personality traits: openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism.

LATE 20TH CENTURY

Workplace applications and Rational Models

- Applying personality assessments to workplace settings for hiring and employee development
- Transition to rational models that connect personality traits to job-related competencies.
- Integration of personality assessments into broader talent management and organizational strategies.

MODERN
TIMES

“There is only one way to grow a business profitably. Treat our customers so well that they come back for more and bring their friends.”

Our one-phrase strategy is the essence of the entire organisation's strategic direction. It serves as a guiding principle that helps align decision-making and actions throughout the organization.

Delivering customer joy isn't about fulfilling every customer desire or chasing top NPS scores (we used to believe that). It's about gathering as much productive feedback as possible, share it with colleagues, and make sure we improve in order to ensure customer happiness, loyalty, and referrals.

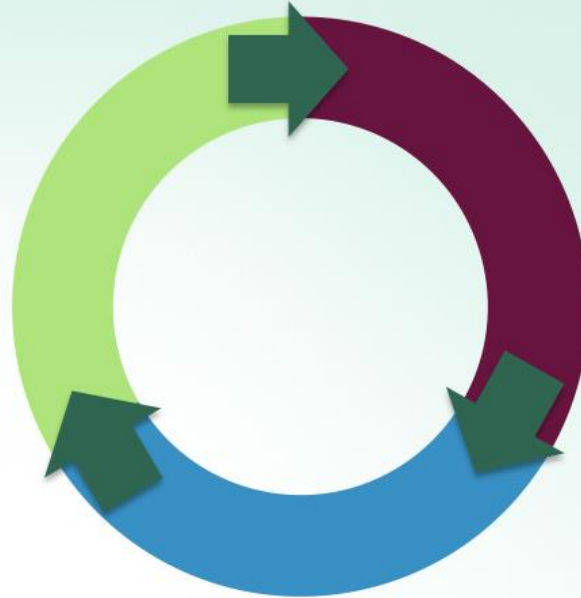
To recognise the importance in collecting and taking action on feedback, we have the Customer Joy Award (formerly we had the Top NPS award) . Today we value the quantity, quality, and actionability of feedback rather than high scores.

Receiving honest feedback is what truly matters in creating happy customers.

Customers are the best teachers

TAKE ACTION

Take action with your team. Elevate bigger improvement/solutions to senior management when needed



MAXIMISE QUALIFIED FEEDBACK:

Ask customers or browse feedback forms in Hubspot for feedback. Qualified feedback is tangible and concrete feedback that can lead to either us enhancing something specific we are doing well today, or something concrete we can improve.

SHARE AT LEAST ONE FEEDBACK WITH YOUR TEAM EACH WEEK

together with a possible solutions/an improvement

Winning on purpose

“Winning on Purpose”, written by Reichheld, is the must-read book for anyone at Clevry. It’s our guide - or some might say bible - to Delivering Customer Joy. The book and its philosophy has shaped Clevry’s one-phrase strategy fundamentally. It made us move away from pure financial strategies, focused on turnover and profit growth, and centre around Customer Joy. It has brought the following in Clevry:

- Feedback centred culture
- Empowering teams to feel in charge of not only their culture, engagement, well-being, but also how we serve customers
- Weekly team huddles centred around customer feedback and our Customer Joy Award
- Investing more into Success and becoming experts on welcoming, serving, and keeping our customers
- Investing into support
- Understanding who our loyal customers are and making sure they get benefits. Treat these people as platinum gold members.
- Transparent processes through the marketplace and sourcing reports. We don’t want to hide anything. We are strong enough to admit when we fail.
- Customer joy metrics and KPIs such as earned customers, referrals, Churn, and Life-time-value
- Remove short-term “bad” profits and focus on long-term customer joy. This includes removing bad contract terms or policies that diminish customer joy.

Here is our priority order:

Customer > Company > Individual

When in doubt, prioritize the customer's interest over the company's or your own.

For every important decision we ask ourselves, what is in it for our customers? We are on the right track as long as we can expect that the decision will delight our customers!

Our culture

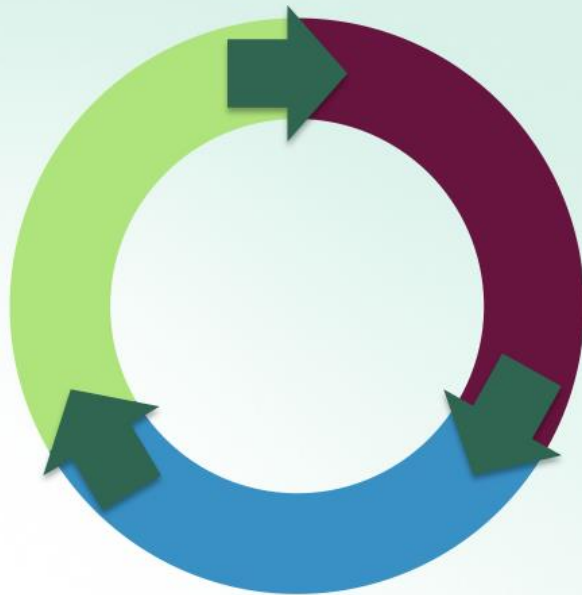
We want a company where the last person leaving the office turns off the lights, the first one in puts the music on. We want a workplace where you smile and ask your colleagues how they are doing. We want a workplace where nobody ignores picking up trash on the floor. Nobody should simply leave it for someone else to take care of. We at Clevry want colleagues that take the same responsibility as they would at home. Picking up the trash is a metaphor for taking care of problems, small and large, and never thinking “that’s someone else’s job.”

We want a workplace where everyone leads with example, challenge, encourage, support, and cheer for colleagues to become the best in what they do. We want a culture where we applaud success and encourage improvement through feedback and coaching. We want a culture where everyone wants to grow to the best in industry. We want a workplace where everyone believes in our vision and mission: Accelerating the world to soft skills-first hiring.

We strive to improve, not preserve, culture

EASIER RECRUITMENT

Top performers want to be part of high-performing teams. As a global company, we compete for talent with the best teams worldwide. That is why we have high expectations for those who join us, making Clevrly a selective choice. Clevrly is not for everyone.



GREATER CULTURE

Culture is not static; it evolves, changes, and fluctuates over time. That is why we do not strive to preserve our culture, but to continuously improve it. The best culture is cultivated from the bottom up.

STRONGER PERFORMANCE

Ambition and standards are contagious. We must hire, promote, and reward rebels who truly aim to be the best in their respective roles. A simple test is whether we'd fight to keep them if another employer approached them.

Leadership and culture

We aim to minimize the number of managers and their involvement in decision-making. Having fewer managers and management layers makes us more agile and gives individuals more freedom. We believe in "context rather than control". This principle works best when leaders oversee multiple direct reports. Sometimes we will need smaller teams due to specialization, but those should be exceptions and not the norm. Generally, leaders find between six and twelve direct reports to be a good balance.

Most questions can be solved by simply talking to your manager. We trust that the two of you are best suited to figure out what to do in each situation without jeopardizing customer joy, Clevry's culture, or the team's or your performance. We do not need HR, meetings or detailed policies for 99% of the decisions taken in our organization every day.

Freedom does not mean we do not have activities and processes. Humans need structure and data too. We believe everyone should have a blueprint to success. You should know what activities bring success if performed with high quality and efficiency (this is where the coaching comes in).

We believe in supportive leadership. Leaders should coach, set processes, offer context, and provide feedback while empowering their team members to succeed. Freedom doesn't mean your managers are not involved in your work. Getting input from leaders, peers or direct reports improves decision making.

Results matter most

Company

The company is responsible for overall strategy, processes, compensation models, and budgeting.



Team & Individuals

Teams are responsible for their results, performance, engagement, well-being, joy at work, collecting and sharing feedback.

Clevry aims to inspire rebels rather than manage them. Our goal is to create a sense of responsibility and accountability on team level, so that individuals – rather than the company – do their best to achieve our mission.

WE SPREAD JOY

Spreading joy is helping people to grow through fun, energy, and sparkle. It's about being optimistic, positive, and a force for good. To be engaging, generous with our praise, and to celebrate our success together.

- We are positive, optimistic, and thankful
- We share energy with others
- We acknowledge colleagues, smile, say hi and ask how their day is going
- Spreading joy is about putting the team before the individual

Spreading joy is about the team

We come into the office and sit with our team to spread joy to others. In a business like ours, nothing can replace the ability to connect, observe, spread joy, and grow with peers that comes from being physically together.

We share, discuss and focus on engagement every week in team huddles. The team is responsible for the team's and each individual's engagement and feeling of inclusion.

We celebrate every win, big or small, every booking, order, placement, and deal by sharing it in Teams, Whatsapp, by ringing bells, honking horns, applauses, and most importantly recognizing who has made it all possible.

Team



Individual

It's really not about you

It takes selflessness (and sometimes courage) to stand up, share joy and shout-outs, and celebrate wins with your colleagues.

But we cannot stress enough the importance of it. It's about giving back to everyone who has made the success happen. At Clevry all functions work together to make magic happen. So be sure to mention and thank the marketing team for any inbound SQL, to thank the SDR who booked the meeting, the recruiter who placed the assignment, the Science and Tech team for the marketplace functions that helped you close the deal, or any business psychologist or other rebel who helped you succeed.

(And all you heroes in Human services, Finance and other support functions – we have not forgotten about you. You are keeping everything together. Thank you!)

Company



Individuals

WE ARE HUMAN

Human beings are at the core of everything we do. To be human is to show compassion and support each other. To keep to our word and build trust. To be inclusive and fair. We are human and sometimes we fail, but we always learn to succeed for next time.

- The future is more human. Soft skills is all about being human.
- We are kind, helpful, and humble
- We share information openly, broadly, and deliberately
- We make time to help colleagues across Clevry succeed
- We maximize our time together. Teams sit together as much as possible. We have team huddles, coaching and feedback sessions whenever needed and possible.
- We communicate candidly and directly
- We grow through coaching and feedback. We ask open questions, support and help fellow rebels find the answers.

Humans grow through feedback

At Clevry, positive and constructive feedback is part of everyday life—not only once a month or quarter. Meaningful feedback can be hard to give or accept. But like any new habit, it gets easier with practice. So, we help people learn to give and receive feedback through coaching and modeling the behaviors we want to see across the company. All rebels take our awesome business psychology team’s “Coaching” and “Feedbacking” soft skills-modules and practice our learnings every day.

It takes courage and selflessness to ask someone what you could be doing better, or to ask yourself what feedback you have yet to share with a colleague. Both rely on trust and positive intent. We know this level of candor can be especially challenging for new hires. Direct feedback can be uncommon, and especially if there’s a power imbalance. But it is an important part of getting stronger, as individuals and as a company.

WE ARE CLEVER REBELS

Clever is about making it easy, being curious, creative, street-smart, and scientific. To rebel is to resist and defy traditional hard-skill centered norms and prejudices. Clever rebels are the change makers who challenge conventional attitudes and help people find joy at work.

- We are going our own way and changing the industry
- We are curious
- We have a growth mindset
- We ask questions (open ended). We listen, ask and always strive to find solutions to customers', colleagues' and candidates' questions, problems and worries
- We focus on the 20% that brings 80% of the value and impact
- We come with solution, not problems
- We are full of grit. We show up and do not give up. We stick with the plan to get to the vision.
- We lead with example and take responsibility
- We encourage decision-making by employees

Employment proposition: Our promise to you

PURPOSE

A value and purpose driven organisation

POSSIBILITY TO GROW

Market leading onboarding, training and career development

PARTNERSHIP

Possibility to become shareholder and group partner

At Clevry, we offer more than the usual job perks. Our promise goes beyond the standard offerings of work-life balance, compensation, and benefits.

Firstly, we offer a purpose-driven workplace for our trailblazers. Our core values, strategic direction, and ambitious vision serve as our guiding stars. We're driven by a deeper purpose beyond mere profits – we're here to find joy at work.

Secondly, we believe in nurturing the growth of every individual – our valued rebels. Whether your aspiration is in leadership, gaining international experiences, or exploring diverse roles within Clevry, we're dedicated to nurturing your professional journey. Sharpen your essential skills with our soft skills modules, designed to empower you. Our leaders are mentors, leading their teams to success through guidance and support.

Finally, for those envisioning a role in shaping Clevry's destiny and holding a stake in our success story, we have our partner program. Eligible candidates have the chance to become shareholders, gaining access to our exclusive partner forum.

The partner program

We firmly believe that shared ownership is the best kind of ownership. Ownership breeds the strongest commitment.

Why become a partner? Partners participate in discussions about Clevry's goals, strategies, and other changes impacting Clevry during annual partner meetings.

How do you become a partner? Partners discuss and pick nominees every November. Typically, you need to have been with us at least one year, show a successful track record, have a strong commitment to our culture, and ambitions, and naturally have a desire to be part of the partner forum.

If you're interested, do not hesitate to talk to a partner today. And remember, if you're not voted in this year, don't worry; there's always next year. The door remains open.

Objectives & key results (OKRs)

At Clevry, we like to think big. We use a process called objectives and key results (OKRs) to help us set goals, communicate, measure, and achieve those lofty goals.

Our actions determine Clevry's future. Thus, it is crucial that we make conscious, careful, and informed choices about how we allocate our time and energy — as individuals and as members of teams. OKRs manifest those careful choices, and how we coordinate the actions of individuals to achieve great collective goals.

We use OKRs to plan what people are going to produce, track their progress vs. plan, and coordinate priorities and milestones between people and teams. We also use OKRs to help people stay focused on the most important goals, and help them avoid being distracted by urgent but less important goals.

Every OKR, starting from the group to team level, are shared openly, broadly, and deliberately in a software called 4Straction.

If you want to learn more about writing or working with OKRs, please contact Human Services.