

Corporate Cult

Google executives sparkle with self-love.

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Someone who must have suffered the experience in-person [leaked](#) an hour-long video of a Google “TGIF” employee meeting, held just after the 2016 election. The video features Google co-founder Sergey Brin, CEO Sundar Pichai, and numerous other high-ranking figures speaking in funeral tones about Donald Trump’s victory. Brin opens by talking about how “upset” and “sad” most people are. He describes the worries and fears of “minorities, immigrants, women,” and, somewhat preposterously, “people with kids.” As my Power Line colleague John Hinderaker [observed](#), the video offers “much discussion about what Google can do to reverse the benighted world-wide tide exemplified by Brexit and Trump’s election.”

The video is weird almost beyond belief, and it makes Google appear like a cult in the rigidity of the doctrines held and inculcated by its leadership. At one point, everyone is instructed to hug the person next to him, as at a human-potential movement weekend. It’s enough to make a reasonable person of moderate temperament gag.

Google’s senior officers refer repeatedly to the firm’s “[values](#)”—ten in number, like the biblical commandments. Google’s commandments are, of course oriented to matters central to company business—“focus on the user and all else will follow,” as one law instructs—and they have a [flexibility](#) lacking in the biblical ten, as pertains to the bottom line. In any case, the publicly articulated Google values have no clear bearing on the 2016 presidential election.

Watching the video, though, one would think that Google's business is politics, or that its business adheres to the quasi-religion of progressive liberalism. It's hard to keep in mind while watching that what one is seeing is a regularly scheduled employee meeting of a high-tech company, in part because Google management glows with such enlightened self-regard. Google executives draw few distinctions between their company's business and progressive politics—though they see these values as being self-evident. As the company's "vice president of people operations," Eileen Naughton, explains, "the values that are held dear in this company transcend politics because we're going to constantly fight to preserve them."

Google executives are so committed to the virtue of their corporate mission that they see any government policy that might interfere with it as manifestly immoral. The impassioned Naughton—in the video, she looks to be on the verge of tears—explains that the company will fight to protect the "10,000 Googlers" residing in the United States on work visas. She also says that the company's "policy office in D.C." (read: lobbyists) will fight to fix the country's "very broken immigration system," by which she means the retention of all visas, "and then some."

Google's post-election encounter-group-like meeting was especially striking to me because it evoked such a contrast with my own professional experience in a publicly held company. I worked in the legal department of TCF Financial Corporation for a sizable chunk of my career. During my time at TCF, the company held quarterly officers' meetings, regularly attended by several hundred employees. Bill Cooper was TCF's chairman and chief executive officer. He also served as chairman of the Minnesota Republican Party from 1997 to 1999. In our officers' meetings, Bill scrupulously refrained from expressing his political views. In a recording played for every new employee at orientation, Bill encouraged TCF employees to engage in some meaningful civic activity away from work—no mention of politics. Whatever the cause, Bill assured us, TCF would support us. He was one of the most philanthropic people I have ever met.

Bill died last year at the age of 73. Though he himself proudly resisted technological sophistication, there is much that he could have taught the titans of Google.

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