

# HubSpot

By Lauren Noël and Christie Hunter Arcscott

## THE CHALLENGE

Maggie Georgieva is a deeply talented product manager at HubSpot, a high growth inbound marketing firm headquartered in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Georgieva, who hails from Bulgaria, is passionate about the changing landscape of marketing and new media technologies.



Maggie  
Georgieva  
HubSpot

Georgieva joined HubSpot out of University and months later set the Guinness Record for the world's largest marketing webinar. She values how she's had the opportunity to move laterally at HubSpot to work on email marketing, page optimization, PR, eBook creation, and more. "Now is the time to take a risk and learn quickly," Georgieva says. Learning is at the center of what makes HubSpot a millennial magnet. Georgieva's eyes light up when she talks about how much she's learning at HubSpot. "Learning is the most

important thing for me. I have a notebook where I write down the new thing I've learned each day. Women in my age group want to be constantly challenged," Georgieva explains.

With millennials projected to account for 75% of the workforce by 2025 and women accounting for upwards of 50% of that total, executives are increasingly focused on cracking the code of how to attract, advance, and retain millennial women like Maggie. Here's how HubSpot has created a culture where star millennial women—and top talent across genders and generations—thrive.

## ABOUT HUBSPOT

HubSpot was founded by Brian Halligan and Dharmesh Shah in 2006 in a one room office a block from the MIT campus. Their vision was to make the world inbound—to help businesses draw more visitors to their websites, more leads for

their sales teams, and more customers to fuel growth. By the end of 2014, HubSpot had over US\$115 million in annual revenue, more than 13,000 customers in 93 countries, and was trading under the ticker symbol HUBS on the New York Stock Exchange.

HubSpot's executives recognize that employees today—fueled by the desires of the millennial generation—are calling for shifts in how they live and work. HubSpot's leaders embrace this and have designed the company around these new needs. The company offers impressive perks—free snacks, beer, coffee, a game room, and more—but HubSpot's revolutionary approach extends far beyond perks. HubSpot's Culture Code, created by Dharmesh Shah, the company's Co-Founder and Chief Technology Officer, explains the company's unique culture. The Culture Code, which has been viewed online by more than 1.5 million people, highlights the shifts taking place:

Table 1: Source – HubSpot Culture Code

	Then	Now
FOCUS	Pension	Purpose
NEED	Good Boss	Great Colleagues
HOURS	9-5	Whenever
WORKPLACE	Office	Wherever
TENURE	Whole Career	Whatever

HubSpot's leaders recognize that a great culture helps people produce their best work and attracts top talent to the company. Thus, rather than fighting the needs of this new generation, HubSpot embraces these changes and has created a culture that employees love. HubSpot's 785 employees, many of them millennials, thrive due to HubSpot's unique culture. Here's how HubSpot has become a millennial magnet and has achieved stellar business growth.

## "KNOW ME"

**HubSpot's leaders invest the time to understand employees as people, including their passions, interests, desires, and needs both in and out of work.**

*"At HubSpot the idea is to optimize work around your life, not the other way around,"* Katie Burke, HubSpot

HubSpot offers unlimited vacation time and flexible hours, enabling millennials and employees of all ages the opportunity to make the most of their time. HubSpot's flexibility policy boils down to three words: "use good judgment." In practice, this means that employees work it out with their teams to determine the hours and location where they can



**Pam Vaughan**  
HubSpot

best produce their work. For example, HubSpot's Pam Vaughan explains, "A lot of people on my team write for the HubSpot blog so they are writing and editing all day and need a long stretch of time to write with no interruptions so working from home makes sense." The company's flexible hours also enable employees to pursue their individual passions and interests, which is particularly important to millennials. "We have lots of rowers and tri-athletes at HubSpot so they pursue their athletic passions in the morning and then start work," explains HubSpot's Katie Burke. To be clear, flexibility does not necessarily equate to shorter hours. "At HubSpot, the hours are long but flexible," says HubSpot's Meghan Keaney Anderson.

Flexibility is offered to everyone at the company, but moms certainly benefit as well. Case in point is Vaughan, a millennial mom of two young children, who works from home three days a week and comes into the office twice a week. She also offers to talk to moms thinking about working at the company. "We were recruiting someone to the marketing team who is a mom. She had concerns because she had heard the work environment at HubSpot was intense. I talked to her and put aside her worries," explains Vaughan.

*"The key question is, 'are you making progress on the things that matter?'"*

**Maggie Georgieva, HubSpot**

The company's mantra is "results matter more than the hours we work" and "results matter more than where we produce them." This philosophy is deeply embedded into the company's culture. As Georgieva explains, "the key question is, 'are you making progress on the things that matter?'" It also helps when senior executives role model flexible working. One HubSpot executive is not a morning person so he blocks his calendar each day until 10:00 a.m. What's more, HubSpot CEO Brian Halligan works from home one day a week.

Also, employees who have been at HubSpot for five years qualify for a sabbatical. When a HubSpotter "turns five," they get full pay to take a four week sabbatical. They even receive a separate sabbatical check for US\$5,000. There are no restrictions on the sabbatical. The idea is to do whatever would enable you to recharge for four weeks – work on your novel, take a family vacation, or pursue whatever passion you may have.

## “UNLEASH ME”

**Employees have the opportunity to lead initiatives, have their voices heard, experiment, and use their entrepreneurial flair.**

*“I love that HubSpot lets you take a project and run with it and own it,”*  
Pam Vaughan, HubSpot

HubSpot’s Culture Code states: “We give ourselves the autonomy to be awesome.” Georgieva explains why she values this independence, “One of the reasons why I joined HubSpot was the company’s flat culture. It is so liberating. You can just do whatever you feel is the right thing to do. You have to feel ownership in order to care about the product you’re building.”

HubSpot facilitates this sense of ownership by keeping teams small, making it possible for the company to be flexible, agile, and to move quickly without running decisions by a large number of people.

HubSpot’s culture of taking ownership has a trickledown effect. For example, now that Georgieva is a manager herself, she enjoys letting the developers on her team take ownership over decisions. For example, she explains her approach to working with developers, “My job is to facilitate the product decisions that we make. It’s not my job to tell the developers what to do. I think that’s probably the worst thing that you can do, because that will take away their ownership from the product they’re building. The developers on my team have so many great ideas. I shouldn’t tell them what to do.”



**Katie Burke**  
HubSpot

The company’s senior leaders give junior talent lots of responsibility early on. For example, the HubSpot Culture Code reads: “Influence should be independent of hierarchy.” The company rewards accordingly. “We reward based on ingenuity and results, not time,” says Burke. One example of that is Alison Elworthy, a millennial woman who has already risen to HubSpot’s Management Team as VP of Operations and was promoted to the role while expecting her first child.

Senior leaders also encourage experimentation and risk taking. “I get to experiment a lot. Experimentation is so valued here and that’s what makes these projects exciting to me because I don’t have to ask for permission to do something. The idea is ‘just do it,’” says Georgieva.

great reward. If you don’t take risks then you only see incremental growth. We want to see exponential growth.”

## “CHALLENGE ME”

**HubSpot’s employees have the opportunity to grow and continue their learning through new challenges.**

*“What I look for all the time is how fast am I learning?”* Maggie Georgieva, HubSpot

Georgieva highlights the challenge that ambitious millennial women, driven to be exceptional, bring to organizations, “When you join a company, there’s a steep learning curve in the first three months. If you are the type of person that was exhilarated by the learning in the first few months, you expect it to keep going. Comparing month twelve to month two in a job is a big difference. If you’re the type of person who liked month two a lot even though it was hectic and busy, there’s those certain expectations that were set.”

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enriching.”*

**Meghan Keane Anderson, HubSpot**

Or consider that Mike Volpe, HubSpot’s Chief Marketing Officer, will occasionally email the marketing team encouraging them to “try something crazy.” As Vaughan explains, “Senior leaders want you to take risks. With great risk comes

HubSpot gives employees plenty of ongoing learning, big challenges, and broad exposure. For example, the company’s free books policy let’s employees expense any book that will further them as a HubSpotter.

The company hosts “HubTalks,” small informal talks given by CEOs and leading executives from a wide range of industries including music, philanthropy, technology, and beyond. Managers lead round table discussions. “In many ways, working at HubSpot is like being at a University. The work environment is incredibly enriching,” says Keaney Anderson.

Having a great developmental boss matters a lot. Georgieva explains an experience with a recent stellar manager, “My manager never let me plateau. He would always give me new products to work with, shift me to a different team, and expose me to new challenges.” Millennial women also understand that it’s incumbent upon them to seek out new learning opportunities. According to Vaughan, “The possibilities of working on other projects throughout the company are endless. There’s always something you can do. The people that take the initiative to find those opportunities thrive here.”

The company’s leaders highly encourage horizontal movement. Executives push people out of their comfort zone and encourage employees to try out different teams. For example, Volpe encourages people on the marketing team to switch what they are doing every six months. Georgieva highly values this. “Lateral movement is very much like in college when you just take another class because you haven’t been exposed to a topic,” Georgieva explains.

## “CONNECT ME”

**HubSpotters interact, collaborate, and build relationships with a dynamic network of people.**

*“Working here is more than just trying to finish my to-do list every day. It’s more than just a job. HubSpot is built as a community and an experience,”*  
Meghan Keaney Anderson, HubSpot



**Meghan Keaney Anderson**  
HubSpot

Walk into the HubSpot office and you immediately sense the friendship and camaraderie among HubSpotters. These connections are fostered by senior leaders. “HubSpot’s senior leaders see themselves as architects of teams,” says Georgieva. For example, employees go through a semi-random seat shuffle every three months to enable employees to meet new people. Furthermore, executives stay connected to employees because rather than having permanent desks, they sit at “nomad tables” throughout the HubSpot office. The nomad tables

are intentionally positioned in the center of big rooms where there’s a constant flow of people.

What’s more, HubSpot uses technology to connect employees with their managers. HubSpot uses the app 15Five, which allows people to highlight achievements and challenges to their managers. “What I like about 15Five is that you don’t have to constantly meet with your manager but they are in the loop of what you are doing so they can bring it up when talking with others. The other good thing is that you can see your peers’ wins and challenges. Sometimes we see a trend and can talk about it,” says Georgieva.

HubSpotters push each other to succeed. “At HubSpot, my peers are outstanding. They are so driven and smart. They are so quick in how they adapt. For me, that’s motivating because they are some of my best friends but they’re also upping the level for me. I’m always thinking, ‘I need to be as good as them.’ Having that peer group of high achieving women is even more powerful than having people above me pave the way for me because if we’re upping each other’s games, then we’re raising the standards together,” says Keaney Anderson.

*“Having that peer group of high achieving women is even more powerful than having people above me pave the way for me.”*

**Meghan Keaney Anderson, HubSpot**

Keaney Anderson explains that she sees this dynamic in the more junior levels as well: “I watch the women on my team keeping track of what their peers are doing and being fascinated with breakout projects. I think that tension of knowing you’re in a cohort of people who are incredibly talented will naturally progress you to be better especially with millennials who are hyperaware of that.”

## THE PATH FORWARD

HubSpot’s business is growing by leaps and bounds: the company experienced a 49% growth in revenues in 2014. And, in the process, the company is growing millennial women leaders and exceptional talent across genders and generations. By knowing what employees want, unleashing them to lead, fostering camaraderie, and letting employees take on exciting new challenges, this young company will be a force for years to come.

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