

The Arista Way: Practicing and Cherishing Our Ongoing Unique Culture

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Every company defines a clear corporate culture but often, over time, the culture drifts to become something different or completely degrades to something unrecognizable to its founders and creators. Not so at Arista. The Arista Founders have underscored the importance of culture at all levels of the company and 15+ years later it is reinforced and still practiced with passion daily. It is a salient and important set of values that we love and cherish at Arista. Let us take a closer look at some of the key tenets of the Arista Way.

Do the Right Thing

This may sound obvious but it is much easier said than done. Its applicability is indeed as broad as it sounds. Doing what is legally, ethically right at every step for the company, customer, employee or shareholder leaves, at times, room for interpretation. At the core, it is to apply fairness and treat people with dignity at all times. It means always maintaining our integrity and transparency and not trading off short term success for the long term health of the customer or Arista. Personal success or success at all costs is highly discouraged in favor of the journey.

Does everyone always know what the right thing is?

No. However, our experience has been that most employees want to do the right thing, instinctively. Regular messaging and personal behavior and examples from top executives are important in reinforcing the good instincts employees already have. Maintaining this value daily and instilling this in new hires at orientation and onboarding is also key. The definition of the right thing may also iterate and change over time.

Extrapolate with Judgement

Employees' judgement and instincts always augment processes. While judgement can be subjective, it is usually based on wisdom and years of experience, and has its basis grounded from data.

Won't this lead to chaos and many different ways of doing things?

Actually, it can be the opposite. Sometimes it encourages more than one way of doing things. Eventually the best way gets stickier and becomes the preferred path of evolution.

Making Agile, Good Decisions

While large organizations need structure and hierarchy to manage large teams and complex projects, no one person or committee should always control or monopolize the decision. Decentralized leadership can be applied widely into strategy to project proposals to who-works-on-what to customer decisions.

Won't this lead to delays and indecision?

Not if it is done properly - without individual and personal agendas. At Arista, we eliminate finger pointing and fear of being chastised for a bad decision. Collectively owning the fallout of each decision yet iterating to improve it is the ultimate measure of success.

Focusing on Customer Quality, not artificial deadlines

*"Quality is *the* most important attribute of our product. Not one-of-the-most-important, but the-most-important attribute. Because you know why, if networks ain't working, ain't nothing working." - [Ken Duda](#), Founder and CTO, Arista Networks*

This [heartfelt talk](#) from our CTO exemplifies Arista's culture of quality. There is no forced incentive for hitting artificial deadlines. There is much recognition and success, however, for achieving high quality.

But what happens if your big customer is asking for a feature yesterday? The fact is no customer seeks poor quality products and all will unanimously prefer to ensure quality over a specific feature. Our customers often can work around a feature but it is impossible to work around quality. As per Ken's talk, by shipping not-yet-really-ready code, we are transferring risk from our customers' balance sheet to Arista's. What makes us distinctly different at Arista is our top management's resolve to always prioritize customers sometimes at the risk of short-term revenues.

Unlike traditional companies, Arista famously has no separate testing team. Every engineer is responsible for his or her code's automated testing and quality. Our engineering team is dedicated to building internal tools and infrastructure that empowers developers to achieve quality in a smart and efficient way.

Every Employee is a "Mini CEO"

Our Sales/SE leaders do not have artificial quotas that is often a common practice in traditional sales. We believe in providing our customers solutions that fit their budget and not extracting artificial budget from them or giving them additional discounts at the end of a quarter or year. Each sales leader is the master of their regional territory, applying, of course, the Arista Way and principles each and every day.

Empowered Leadership Not Structured Management

The goal of great leaders is to hire and cultivate good talent, empower them, remove barriers and get out of their way. They are true player-coaches, who lead by example, and not like "helicopter" parents. If a change has to be brought into the company, the logic of explaining, encouraging and gaining agreement instead of mandating has a much more powerful effect. As often said, viewpoints can be debated and disagreed but eventually, alignment is key.

Can this be time consuming sometimes to gain consensus? It is more an upfront investment where the longer term benefits greatly outweighs the costs.

Increasing Efficiency by Reducing Manual Tasks

Repetitive tasks take away the joy of software development. Anyone at Arista has the authority to take a step back and automate away a manual task. Not only is it allowed, but it is highly encouraged.

Isn't automation a lot of investment that may not directly translate to revenues? Automation has a multiplicative effect on every employee's productivity. Not only does it make them productive, but it makes customers and employees happy and encourages a superscalar effect. Arista's productivity in Engineering and Sales speaks to this efficiency.

Roles Instead of Designated Titles

Leaders must emerge and not be designated. Even when there are leadership titles it is just a recognition of a role people have already been playing for a long time and their continuous individual contributions. It is rare for Arista to hire managers directly from outside and when we do, we work hard to integrate them into the Arista Way.

So one may wonder, that without titles how do people know who to look up to for decisions? Real and impactful contributors emerge independent of their title. Arista's peer review based performance reinforces the importance of both manager review and the team collaboration input.

Conviction of Purpose

In the pursuit of greatness at Arista, employees act as visionaries and people of action. They not only create an initial wave of success, but also help build an everlasting foundation for future phases. This is easier said than done in practical cases. It often requires employees to question the norm and not follow the popular vote. Instead, they must examine the nuances and the opposite of the prevailing view. The ability to question the status quo of engrained habits and even oneself to navigate the right direction is vital.

Change is never easy. Sometimes you need that re-architecture or significantly shift direction. What destroys many companies is complacency, stifling innovation, denying new trends, overconfidence, and even arrogance.

The Arista Way Every Day!

At Arista we try to break down silos and contribute beyond the local task. Whether it's a review of code or network design or a complex customer debugging issue, teams are frequently contributing to a particular area across functional groups. Practicing the Arista Way is a daily habit.

Some of the Arista ways may sound idealistic and too good to be true. Even ex-employees who have returned back to Arista, reinforce that it is rare to see this unique culture and continuous reinforcement of it. The secret sauce is the practical and pragmatic approach to these ideals via Arista's [leadership team](#). The CEO and our Leadership team champion these ideals every single day across every single individual.

Thank you to every Arista champion of the Arista Way!

Reference :

The Arista Way

1. Drive for **customer success** in every aspect: support, quality, innovation and experience
2. Do the **right thing** be it for products, quality, customers and daily interactions
3. **Challenge status quo**, question traditional habits and be cost-effective
4. Develop alternative ways of achieving **disruptive** innovation in every function, preserving quality
5. Develop **agile and mobile teams** that can respond to priorities (as opposed to fixed or top-down organizations)
6. Maintain the highest level of **integrity** in conduct
7. Discuss, debate but quickly **align** to priorities
8. Treat your peers, vendors, customers with **respect** and develop a win-win partnership
9. Mentor individuals and develop teams for **overall success**, not persona, success
10. Cultivate **Arista pride** but never ego or arrogance in our culture