People Operations at Mozilla Corporation:

Scaling a Peer-to-Peer Global Community

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The Mozilla case study describes Vice President and Chief of People Debbie Cohen's key initiatives in a software entity that was one of the pioneers of the "open source" movement. The case study showcases Mozilla's unique culture of distributed decision making and delegated leadership. Mozilla has a small staff of over 1,100 and millions of volunteers around the world. The case also showcases Cohen's innovative, yet tailored, talent strategy for Mozilla, and the implementation of a series of initiatives related to compensation, onboarding, and development. The case study concludes in April 2013, when Cohen is able to reflect on her time working at such a unique and some would say "cultish" organization. (Keywords: Human Resources Management, International Business, Internet, Leadership, Management Philosophy, Peer-To-Peer, Volunteers)

"I champion others to be their best selves."
—Debbie Cohen, Chief of People, Mozilla Corporation

"Our biggest challenge is to have an organization that relies on the behaviors and interactions of millions of volunteers for its identity."
—Gary Kovacs, CEO, Mozilla Corporation

In April 2013, Debbie Cohen, Vice President and Chief of People at Mozilla Corporation, sat at her cubicle space at the Mozilla headquarters in Mountain View, California, reflecting on her brief but busy two-year tenure at Mozilla (often called "The Mozilla Project" or simply "The Project"). She was preparing to meet with CEO Gary Kovacs to discuss the next phase of People efforts at Mozilla.

She marveled at what the mission-based open source[1] organization had achieved in just 15 years. Mozilla had shown that valuable and competitive products could be produced as open source software by a small number of employees who were globally distributed in more than 20 countries, along with millions of global volunteers (called "contributors") who built, tested, promoted, and

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supported Mozilla's products on their own time—all together referred to as "Mozillians."

By the end of 2011, Mozilla had revenues of $163 million, up 33 percent from $123 million in 2010. And by 2013, Mozilla had nine physical offices in Mountain View, San Francisco, London, Paris, Auckland, Beijing, Tokyo, Vancouver, and Toronto, along with several internet-related products such as Firefox (free internet browser), Firefox OS (an open operating system for mobile devices), Marketplace (a creation and distribution platform for apps), Persona (a decentralized and secure authentication system for the web), Thunderbird (a free, open source, cross-platform e-mail and news client), and Webmaker (tools and education to help people move from using the web to making the web).

In fact, Firefox, Mozilla's flagship product had over 20 percent of worldwide usage share of web browsers (around 450 million users), making it one of the top-used web browsers around the world.[2] Since its founding, Firefox has continued to garner praise from users and developers alike, while gradually stealing market share away from Microsoft's Internet Explorer and holding its own against Google's heavily-marketed Chrome which launched in 2008. By 2013, Mozilla had developed Firefox OS; Firefox for Windows, Mac, and Linux; and Firefox for Android.

By the time Cohen arrived in April 2011, the organization had grown significantly. In fact, that year, Mozilla doubled in size in terms of paid staff from 257 to 537 employees. By 2013, that number had jumped to nearly 1,000. And by then, Cohen had not only developed an innovative, yet tailored people strategy for Mozilla, but also implemented a series of people initiatives related to compensation, onboarding, and development.

Chris Beard, Chief Marketing Officer reflected: "Mozilla started out as this one bedroom house and the opportunity and our family started growing and we just kept on adding rooms. Some things like plumbing or electrical didn't work right and the foundation wasn't strong enough to support a second or third story that we started to envision. Debbie came in and put in place a much stronger, solid foundation with a lot of opportunity to grow, and developed the plan on how to scale it—how to bring people in, orient them, get them effective faster, and unlock their potential."

As Cohen prepared for her meeting with Kovacs, she reflected on her hectic two years working at such a unique and "cultish" organization. She wondered how the People function would continue to support and scale a constantly growing and changing Mozilla, while maintaining and improving the quality of Mozilla's team and products, remaining competitive in the marketplace, and most importantly, staying true to Mozilla's core values and mission.

History: Netscape Roots

Mozilla's history began on February 23, 1998, when Netscape Communications (who launched the Netscape Navigator web browser in 1994)[3] created a project called Mozilla (which was the original code name of the Netscape Navigator

browser or an abbreviation of "Mosaic Killer"[4]). Netscape created the Mozilla Project to coordinate the development of the Mozilla Application Suite, the open source version of Netscape's internet software, Netscape Communicator.[5] This act enabled anyone to discuss, test, fix, and add to the program.

The intent of the Mozilla Project was to create a global open community of internet programmers to fuel innovation in the browser market. According to Mozilla's website in 2013: "Mozilla's vision of the internet is a place where anyone can access information, a place where everyone can hack and tinker; one that has openness, freedom and transparency; where users have control over their personal data and where all minds have the freedom to create and to consume without walls or tight restrictions.... Mozilla is mobilized to ensure the protection of the Web and to empower tomorrow's webmakers and Web users. Today, Mozilla is growing— with more employees, contributors, products, and locations—to ensure that the Web remains an open, vibrant ecosystem. Because the Web is the platform for building the world we want."[6]

Within a year of Mozilla's birth, contributors such as volunteer coders, testers, community builders, marketers, teachers, and evangelizers were actively engaged in the creation of features and new functionality, along with new tools and even new browsers. They lived all over the world and some of the fastest growing communities were in places such as the Middle East, Africa, and Southeast Asia.

In 1998, AOL purchased Netscape, continuing to run Netscape and invest in Mozilla, but by late 2001, AOL began reducing Mozilla's paid staff to focus on other projects. In 2002, Mozilla launched Mozilla 1.0 or a suite of products called the Mozilla Application Suite that included improvements to the browser, an email client, and other applications included in the suite, but they had difficulty garnering users who were still mostly using Microsoft's Internet Explorer. Mozilla 1.0 only acquired around one to two million users.

Around this time, some Mozillians started a separate project called Phoenix, the goal of which was to build a standalone web browser to compete directly with Internet Explorer. But because a company named Phoenix Technologies had developed their own open-source browser and owned the trademark for the name, Mozilla renamed the project Firebird.

On April 3, 2003, Mozilla announced the plan to shift focus from the Mozilla Suite to independent applications for each function (Firebird for the web browser and Thunderbird for email). Originally, Mozilla was created to be a technology provider for companies (such as Netscape) to battle against Internet Explorer that Microsoft was giving away for free. However plans changed as AOL ended support for the Mozilla Project in 2003. As a result, the Mozilla Foundation, an independent nonprofit organization, was launched to focus on its own projects based on Mozilla's technology platform.

As Mozilla prepared for its browser's public release, the team discovered that an open source relational database project also had the same name of Firebird. For the last time, on February 2004, the browser's name was changed to Firefox after the Asian red panda.

Firefox 1.0 was released in the fall of 2004 for the Mac, Windows, and Linux, in around 12 languages. Within a year, the browser became a great success, downloaded over 100 million times. In fact, it only took five days for Firefox to pass the one million download mark and one month to reach the 10 million mark. Within 16 months, Firefox 1.0 had captured 10 percent of the worldwide browser market.[7] Since then, Mozilla has continually released new versions with new features such as malware and phishing protection, private browsing, and HTML5 support.

The appeal of Firefox was that it downloaded web pages more rapidly compared to other browsers. Firefox also gained a reputation for being more secure from viruses that could attack a user's computer. And many liked using Firefox due to its open mission.

Firefox generated revenue from browser-based search through major search partners such as Google and Yahoo, as well as corporate donations and grants. As a result of revenue generation, in 2005, the Mozilla Foundation created a wholly owned taxable subsidiary called the Mozilla Corporation. The Foundation owned the intellectual property and the Corporation focused on building Firefox and other products. By then, there were 39 employees, with three of those working at the Foundation.[8]

By 2008, Firefox reached 20 percent worldwide market share and 25 percent by 2009, its five-year anniversary (in the meantime, Microsoft's Internet Explorer had decreased from 70.5 percent in 2008 to 63.3 percent in 2009). By then, Firefox was available in more than 70 languages with much usage outside of North America (with Europe at 34 percent).[9]

By December 2012, Firefox was one of the top three browsers, along with Internet Explorer and Google's Chrome. According to Net Market Share, Explorer was first with 55 percent, with Firefox leading Chrome 20 to 18 percent. However, StatCounter estimated Chrome to be the top browser at 36 percent and Explorer to be second at 31 percent, and Firefox at 22 percent. Ultimately, they were measuring different things—Net Market Share focused on unique visitors' web browser hits, while StatCounter focused on raw browser hits.[10]

A Humanity-Based Philosophy

Cohen arrived at Mozilla armed with her decades of training in child and human development, having started her career in early education at Stanford University where she had spent her time thinking deeply about her impact on small children and their families, as well as on people interactions and influence.

Later, she worked at the Department of the Interior developing an early childhood program. "I further developed and refined my thinking about human potential from its earliest stages," she said. "We created environments for learning based on our belief that everyone is self-motivated to move and act in the world in ways that give them meaning, and our jobs were to facilitate and encourage that initiative, not get in the way…. And then I became more and more interested in work environments for adults."

Cohen's professional journey led her to human resources, often consulting to organizations. She had entered the field because she felt that traditional HR approaches and processes didn't add enough value to organizations. She began working at companies such as Time Warner and Razorfish. "I became interested in how to create an environment that allows for one's humanity to be present," she said. "And then I began doing work at Mozilla, in particular, looking at how we unlock what is possible for individuals and what could happen for an organization where we don't have unnecessary boxes around people."

She emphasized: "I wanted to make sure that we had humanity in the workplace, especially in a technology organization where people might not be as socially comfortable interacting face-to-face. I wanted to help create an organization that honored the humanity of each person and the potential that we each have. And to create an environment where people feel like they are championed to bring their best full self to the organization."

The State of Mozilla

Mozilla was unlike many other organizations because of its open source environment and its commitment to open community participation. In fact, 30 to 40 percent of its code was created by contributors. Kovacs said: "There's a fundamental assumption that a workforce is a staff working for a company. Here at Mozilla, our talent base is a diverse collection of paid staff and volunteers contributing towards a common objective."

Kovacs also said that a fundamental assumption at most other organizations was that contribution to an organization started and stopped based on a traditional employment equation. "I hire you, and your contribution starts and when you leave, are fired, or laid off, your contribution stops. That assumption doesn't hold true at Mozilla," he said. "Many of our paid staff started by volunteering, take a paid position, and then might decide to volunteer again after that. That took me a while to get used to. I later began to understand that just the nature of their relationship with Mozilla had changed, not whether they were still committed and would continue to contribute."

Because of these unique assumptions about Mozilla's talent base, Cohen didn't have the typical HR role where she was tasked to structure HR for a staff that was compensated and rewarded by an organization. Instead, "she has to build a community and culture from the outside in," said Kovacs. "That's very different from a traditional culture of, 'here's who we are, and project that out.'"

When Cohen arrived, Mozilla was still at an early developmental stage in terms of HR (named the "People organization" by Kovacs). Mozilla was one-fifth the size as it was by 2013 in terms of paid staff and one quarter the size in terms of contributors. Patrick Finch, the Director of Product Marketing Strategy who was based in Sweden and who managed people all over the world in places like Vancouver, Seattle, and Berlin, said: "When I joined Mozilla in 2008, there were only 100 employees and we knew everyone and most communication happened asynchronously."

Very few traditional HR structures and processes existed at that time. Cohen said: "Moreover, there were people at Mozilla that didn't believe that they needed anything. There was a very casual and personal feel to the organization." She added: "We had a rudimentary structure in place that included recruiting and some basic operations so people could get paid, but we didn't have people who were HR specialists, although they were well-intended and smart people. When you start scaling for the long-term, you have to do things differently. This is typical for a company that is coming out of its startup phase."

Cohen's overall strategy was to put into place "infrastructure" that allowed the organization to grow and scale without a lot of "false starts." However, she added: "The tension was, how do you stay true to your roots, who you want to be in the world, and what you stand for? What I found upon arrival was a tendency to put in a more traditional hierarchical structure. You could feel the tension within the Project. Additionally, we were growing and people were very suspicious of the People team, believing we would function like a more traditional HR group, like the police, and focus on compliance, control, and process. Words like 'process' made people very nervous and uncomfortable."

Mozilla was also composed mostly of technology areas and engineering employees. Because of the predominance of engineering employees, Cohen said engineers tended to be a part of a "club" and those entering the organization as non-technologists were "alien" to people there. "The way we thought, our language, and our interactions were foreign to them," said Cohen.

Organizationally, Mozilla's geo-distributed structure also led to a unique set of challenges and opportunities, according to Beard: "Although there is likely an organizational overhead cost to being a distributed organization and it makes it harder for us to respond holistically, once we turn, we're able to bring a lot more force in a distributed way to our efforts." Beard provided the example of marketing campaigns: "We have hundreds and thousands of people doing different marketing campaigns around the world in a local way and sharing back the results compared to our competitors who are structured more traditionally. So we have a massive incubator and when it's working, we can put some juice behind it and scale it."

From a business perspective, the organization was buzzing from the recent launch of Firefox 4, its first re-launch of Firefox in over two years. "Change was happening everywhere," said Cohen. "We were working to stay relevant as a product and signaling the shift into the mobile ecosystem. And we were growing quickly which began to strain the peer-to-peer relationships between our contributors and our paid staff. In our organization, credibility is gained by solving someone's problem. I knew I had to move quickly for the People function to gain credibility."

The First Year: "Assess, Build, Then Execute"

Even though Cohen knew that there were "big needs" such as infrastructures for compensation, she eased her way into those issues by first trying to "really understand" what the business was, how it worked, how it was organized, what mattered to the organization, and how people worked.

Importantly, Cohen didn't believe in "repurposing" or "rinsing and repeating" what she or other members of the People team had used elsewhere. Instead of taking a one-size-fits-all mentality, she believed in "asking powerful questions and then deciding what the infrastructure should look like to best support the organization."

She also believed in a "less is more" philosophy when implementing People-related programs and initiatives. "I see so many HR functions adding more and more to show their value, impact, and ROI, but I believe that your organization will tell you what it needs through repeat customers. Repeat customers show that you are offering them something that has value to them."

Initially, Mozilla employees were apprehensive to talk to Cohen and Mihca Degele, Cohen's first People team hire, but gradually, they began to respond. Cohen said: "As trained coaches, our beliefs were that they themselves actually had the answers. We asked powerful questions, guided them, and let them find their way." Degele added: "They began seeing us not as scary HR or the police, but people that they could come ask for help."

As Cohen began to understand Mozilla, her strategy was to find the "greatest leverage point" in order to make the biggest impact. And during implementation, her plan was to "put in a layering piece at the greatest point of need, in the simplest way possible." She added: "I don't need to roll out an entire system. I can roll out the piece that, in the moment, helps people to have the necessary conversation. And then we can roll out the other pieces when they are most helpful to the organization, individual, or group. This means that although adoption might be slower, the saturation and value might actually be higher."

Employee Development: Talent Assessments

Early on, one of the most frequently asked questions to Cohen was, "Where is my career going and how am I going to get there?" Cohen didn't have the answer since Mozilla hadn't provided any focused development for its people, and in particular manager training or development to those in designated leadership roles.

Cohen took the opportunity to conduct a workforce planning exercise, rebranded as "Talent Assessments." "We couldn't call it 'workforce planning' because no one would have talked to us," she said. The Talent Assessment initiative allowed Cohen and managers to have a "very refined conversation about the organization and its needs." "We learned that we have a high value in this organization of thought leadership and distributed knowledge; mentoring and managing; and that we were promoting people who didn't necessarily want to be managers," said Cohen.

Cohen and Degele conducted over 200 interviews of managers and directors over a period of six weeks. The exercise allowed them to learn about the different functions and people needs over the next 18 months, as well as to translate those needs into skills, knowledge, and characteristics of the people who were needed going forward. The goal was to create a non-threatening way for managers to get to know the People team as a business partner.

After that, they homed in on individuals and discussed their talents and development areas and whether individuals were meeting the needs of the organization. "We gave people a framework in which to have a conversation with us," said Cohen. "It wasn't just, 'Let's talk about Tim.' By asking people what they needed first, we provided some structure for the conversation."

At the end of the Talent Assessment process, the team asked hiring managers to use a 9-box grid typically used for talent succession (where performance was on one axis and leadership potential on the other axis) and they asked managers to plot their people. The intent was not to use the grid for succession planning, but rather as a framework for Cohen and Degele to help managers see how the aggregate of their people contributed to the team, and where gaps existed.

She then sent out a memo to the organization stating that every employee and every manager needed to have a performance conversation. Employees didn't receive ratings or evaluations; Cohen just wanted them to have a conversation to get direction and to grow. The memo purposefully went to everyone beyond managers to create a sense of shared accountability.

The four things that Cohen wanted discussed were: 1) Where do you feel you have made the most significant impact to Mozilla over the last six months; 2) Where is it that you have felt most challenged and what could you have done differently; 3) Where do you want to grow; and 4) Where are you the most satisfied and dissatisfied? For many employees, this was the first time that they had had this type of conversation with their managers at Mozilla.

One of the biggest challenges related to Talent Assessments and employee development was coaching people to leave the organization. Cohen said: "It was difficult for our people to reconcile the fact that we were an open and inclusive company, but then asking someone to move on. We got to the point where people understood that you can be passionate about our purpose but not be constructively moving us forward. We believe everyone has the potential to be successful, but that not everyone is the right fit at the right time for that full potential to be realized and people seemed to accept and understand that."

Part of employee development too was finding a tool that would provide performance feedback and support the alignment of paid and volunteer activities. It also needed, over time, to support the annual merit review process and the organization's bonus program.

"I spent the first year talking with different vendors about their tools and really wanted to rule out a lot of traditional, process-heavy tools where employees would just roll their eyes and reject the tools," said Cohen. After narrowing the tools down to two options, Cohen invited members of Mozilla to evaluate the options, ultimately choosing a tool that had both the capabilities of goal alignment and performance feedback. The tool also had a strong social component for recognition and iterative interaction, such as instant feedback from peer groups or the ability to issue badges for accomplishing tasks or lending a hand.

During the first round of implementation, 100 percent of the organization activated their accounts and 98 percent completed their self-assessments. Instead of using traditional ratings like numbers, they created descriptive phrases like

"All over it", "Getting it", or "Not getting it". The goal was to create conversations around performance and improvement opportunities.

While the tool had the capabilities to be open to the volunteer community, as of 2013, Cohen had not provided access for this subset of Mozilla. Cohen and the team were working with the tool partner to limit access within the tool to goal alignment and the social networking components. There was a need to mitigate the legal sensitivities of having paid and volunteer contributors in the same performance feedback tool.

A Tailored Compensation Program

At the time, Mozilla had very little compensation infrastructure in place. The infrastructure consisted of six levels of progression, but they were vaguely defined, and there were two compensation structures—one for technology (engineers) and the other for non-engineers (very few).

Cohen's goal was to leverage some of the information garnered from the Talent Assessments to shape a compensation conversation and infrastructure. "We didn't want to use an off-the-shelf compensation program that was just dropped into the organization to absorb and use," she said. "I also didn't want to break anything that might be working and needed to figure out how to scale the compensation program."

One of the most challenging aspects of compensation in an open source culture such as Mozilla was striking the balance between being open about as much as possible and keeping some things, such as individual salaries, private. "We tried really hard to be open where we could and we are still trying to be consciously open," said Cohen. "It's not conventional in HR to do things in the open and we are still learning."

The team launched a compensation review and learned more about Mozilla's culture. They learned that very few people asked for salary increases and in some cases, people had gone years without an increase. All the while, annual turnover remained less than five percent. The team learned through limited exit interviews of a culture that was very "self-deprecating". People didn't ask for more because they were surrounded by amazingly smart people who were committed to Mozilla's purpose—people often were willing to set aside their personal needs for the good of the Project. "An unintended consequence of this culture, however, is that we left people ripe for a smart recruiter to pick them off," said Cohen.

She summarized her team's efforts up to that point: "We did the performance feedback, we did a compensation review and this gave us an inventory of where we needed to strengthen our management layer." The process began to help Cohen create a dual career path—an individual contributor track and a more traditional manager track.

This dual career path allowed people to progress in the Mozilla organization without having to default into management. Cohen's theory was that the management team would be even stronger since people would self-select into management. The team implemented KPMTL or how they assessed proficiency required at each job level, where K stood for knowledge, P for proficiency, M for mentorship and management, and TL for thought leadership and leadership. What this meant

was that people could navigate their professional progressions with a deep understanding for what each level represented, as well as grow in their capabilities and impact without moving into the management track.

Cohen's team then worked with managers to create job families. Sylvie Brossard, director of Total Rewards said: "We gave our managers a list of classic job families on the market but we used way more than the classic members. And the way they are written and the way they read is definitely not the same thing that you will find with many other companies. They are more tailored and fun." Next came the more typical compensation work related to building a compensation matrix and infrastructure based on marketplace analysis.

"We were pretty transparent about levels and jobs," said Cohen. "Our approach was again a little different. Although a lot of the tools and construct of thinking was the same as what the industry uses, how we went about building it with the organization so they both understood it and would rapidly adopt it, was very different."

After the exercise, Cohen's group was flooded with people contacting them, asking for help and asking questions because a relationship of trust had developed. "This experience showed our people that they had been heard and that there were things that we were acting on," said Cohen.

A Global, Scalable, Needs-Based Onboarding Program

Given that Mozilla was hiring hundreds of paid staff and had a growing community of contributors around the world, Cohen felt there was a huge need for an onboarding program. "As a company, how do we want people to feel about joining us? A candidate goes through a very intense job interview period, gets the offer, and is excited, but their connective tissue is with the recruiter who hired them or with the hiring manager," she said. "And then once a signed offer is received, that person is dangling out there for weeks or months, appears all excited on day one, only to be put into a three hour benefits orientation. Why on the first day does HR have to pin you into a room for three hours and talk about benefits? Write it down and give it to me ahead of time. On my first day, I want to meet my team, get to my desk, start getting productive, and meet other people."

Beard too emphasized the importance of onboarding: "I think onboarding is something that can be undervalued, but given the complexity of our organization and the scale we're operating at now, we need to move faster. And in order to move faster, people have to understand the whole system, all the moving parts, and how to affect them. It's not good enough anymore to just hand someone a laptop and say, 'go figure it out.'"

Although Cohen began working on a comprehensive onboarding system early on, it wasn't until January 2013 that the system was rolled out. "This was a beast of a project," laughed Cohen. "It took us a long time to build and we had a lot of false starts."

When designing a new onboarding program, Cohen found inspiration from her own experiences when she first arrived. "Everyone knows how things are done but you can't find it out and no one's going to tell you," she recalled. "Everyone had

strong relationships with each other and the assumption of the core was, 'Well of course that's the way that happens here,' without offering explicit context." Her own experience had left her feeling "alien" in a somewhat "cultish" culture. Degele described her onboarding experience too: "I had a two-hour HR orientation about things that I wasn't going to remember. It wasn't organized in a very helpful way, and then I was given equipment and an IT orientation that was geared towards engineers."

Cohen and her team set out to develop a global, scalable onboarding program that had core content to support any Mozillian including staff of the Corporation or Foundation, and volunteer contributors so that "all of us had the same baseline of information and acclimated and assimilated into the organization in a similar kind of way," said Cohen.

One main goal of the onboarding program was to develop a relationship with people before they even arrived at Mozilla. Cohen said: "Part of the excitement of my job was that this wasn't just about paid staff—it was an opportunity to touch volunteer contributors too. The other part was that we had to scale this thing—we couldn't have people flying in from around the world to Mountain View for onboarding."

How the Onboarding System Worked

Once a new hire returned their signed offer letter, core employee data was entered into the HRIS database. This repository was the source of all employee data. It then pushed relevant information, such as the person's work location, hire date, and level, to the onboarding system. Within days, the new hire received access to the onboarding system along with a welcome that "introduces them to the tribe."

Along with their "warm welcome," the system supported workflow, provided the new hire with employment forms and paperwork relevant to a particular geography and to their new role that they needed to complete and return to the organization in a timely fashion. The goal was to front-load as much administrative business as possible at a time when new hires were most excited, as well as to give them information in bite-sized chunks.

This information flow went from T-14 all the way through 60 days after the employee started working. In some cases, such as students where the lead time could be longer, the onboarding interaction system went back farther to T-30 to get new hires excited.

New hires even received a funny session about Mozilla's "ism's" or quirky Mozilla-specific vocabulary since these were a part of Mozilla's unspoken cultural norm. New hires were also informed of online chat rooms and forums where they could start filing bugs as a way to get their feet wet before they arrived. They could also view a Mozilla history video that discussed governance and the organization so they could feel like they were "part of the tribe" before they began.

Beyond administration, another key goal was to provide emotional support during different points of the onboarding experience. For example, on an employee's first day, a "Go" button lit up, they received another type of welcome message, and three additional learning tabs that resembled folders automatically appeared on the system—Learn, Grow, and Mastery.

Those tabs were targeted to help new hires at various stages after they arrived at Mozilla. On the Learn page, a scavenger hunt-type of game was presented while providing new relevant information. New hires were encouraged to find three people in the directory and send them an email, for example.

The Grow button lit up in the fifth week and was designed to help employees feel empowered and confident when they might not yet be feeling that way. The Mastery button was about giving back and lit up on the 60th day. After the 60th day, employees were formally onboarded. Each new hire was asked to fill out an exit survey so Cohen and the team could continually improve the experience, and each new hire was asked to share their learning to other employees through Capture Mozilla, a video format where people could distribute knowledge back into the organization.

The automated tool also fed to a new hire's managers, prompting them to engage with their new hire so that they acclimated and assimilated easily. Moreover, the tool prompted relationships with the new hire's HR business partner, so that the pair could engage in different ways.

Cohen and her team worked with a third-party software company to tailor and implement its onboarding program. "We pushed this vendor far beyond their comfort level," said Cohen. "They had never seen a company do this involved of an onboarding integration." Cohen's team worked with the vendor team to develop the content, the workflow, and the technology interface. She added: "We worked together to design a different kind of experience—one where the experience was supported by a system based on the new hire's needs, not HR's needs."

Onboarding for Contributors

In 2013, Cohen brought a demo of the new onboarding tool to a MozCamp in Latin America (MozCamp was where contributors and paid staff convened to train other contributors, celebrate their work, and strengthen the community). The regional leadership told Cohen that there was too much information for their contributors, especially at the beginning phases of their engagement. "They told me that perhaps six months after a volunteer had been contributing and wanted to deepen their involvement might be a better time to provide them with onboarding content," said Cohen. "This was an example where we thought we knew what might be helpful, but we discovered we were wrong when we asked community leadership."

Thus Cohen's team focused on re-designing the onboarding tool for contributors. The tool had larger issues related to language since many of the contributors didn't speak English. Degele said: "How do we give them something that is actually helpful in their native language? It is one of the barriers we are still trying to navigate and while our business language is English, that makes sense for our paid staff and not necessarily for the contributor community." Moreover, every contributor community needed something different. Some had their own portal for onboarding already and others had their own processes. "How do we provide a customized experience for each community to make it their own?" asked Degele. At the time of the case study, Cohen's team was working with the community to address these concerns.

Learning and Development in a Culture of Distributed Knowledge

As Cohen settled into her job, she began to think about employee learning and development. She investigated hiring an organizational development expert but changed her mind when she realized that this would bring a lot of "old school thinking" into Mozilla. Instead, she hired someone with a training background who also had a history of deploying training through technology. After more than a year of false starts, Cohen decided it was time to take another approach.

Since Mozilla had a culture that valued distributed knowledge, many people were already sharing knowledge and developing each other informally through brown bag lunches and informal mentoring. Instead of using a more traditional construct of a learning and development department, she paused and observed what was already in place. "What we began to notice was that Mozilla has a very strong culture of distributed knowledge," she said. "We have wickedly smart people who want very much to show others what they know and to help others be their best."

Capture Mozilla

At the end of 2012, Cohen and her team launched the Capture Mozilla Project as a pilot program, a project that used video to capture and share knowledge (from know-how to cultural) across the Mozilla community. Rodino Anderson and Dia Bondi were responsible for the Capture Mozilla project. Bondi summarized: "The Capture Mozilla Project was born to try to scale knowledge across the organization making implicit knowledge explicit through the use of short video and storytelling."

Specifically, the goal of Capture Mozilla was: "To generate brief interactive videos that give the know-how Mozillians need to act quickly; to collect existing and new video from the community that shares knowledge; to use a self-serve model that gives Mozillians easy access to relevant knowledge at whatever level of contribution they engage in; and to make video fun, interactive, and easy to share."[11]

Contributors to the Capture Mozilla project could take and submit videos in four categories—How-to-Videos; Grow Yourself; Grow the Project; and Culture and Context. For example, in the How to category, there were technical videos such as "How to File a Bug" alongside videos like "How to Use the Espresso Machine in Toronto." The Capture Mozilla project had over 20 videos by 2013, some of which were created by the Capture Mozilla staff, such as showing Mozillians how to make videos.

"The Capture Mozilla Project is a beautiful example of how we are a knowledge-based company and that we have a lot of knowledge already inside the organization," said Cohen. "So rather than thinking about adding to it, what if we create a condition for our people to share knowledge that fits our values and our internal motivation to continuously improve and expand?"

Importantly, the Capture Mozilla Project was designed to be scalable in a distributed organization: "I also wanted our contributors to both participate and consume because then they are going to become stronger components of the Mozilla Project as well," said Cohen. "Why would we only develop our paid staff when

we have this army of people committed to our mission? And how do we embolden and enable them to be at their best too?"

Peer-to-Peer Leadership: The LEAD Program

The culture at Mozilla was also one where everyone could be a self-generated leader. Beard said: "Because we can't have a traditional organization where decision-making is centralized, we need leaders that are empowered to go and change the world."

But before Cohen had arrived, leaders had not received any development training. "Our managers were doing the best that they could because they are good-hearted fabulous people who really care," said Cohen. "However, people in designated leadership roles had never been given any help in thinking about how they were going to lead and who they wanted to be as leaders."

After her first year at Mozilla, Cohen wanted to create a leadership development initiative, but she wanted to be careful about how she approached it—again, not desiring to do the "same-old, same-old." Cohen recruited Athena Katsaros and Kate Roeske to co-create the development program. She had met the pair while at the Coaches Training Institute in San Rafael, California and felt that they had similar values around coaching and helping people reach their full potential. The team set out to create a leadership program that they hoped to test and possibly roll out as a larger initiative if it was successful.

Katsaros added: "We fit with Mozilla really well because we are very peer-to-peer too. We're trained in 'coactive' coaching which involves a complete respect for who is sitting in front of us and not having a fixed idea of what they need, as well as the idea that there's nothing to fix."

The team wanted to avoid using an approach where a list of leadership competencies would be handed to people but wanted to create a transformational program, not a transactional program. They didn't want the program to be limited to giving leaders skills or building on strengths, but rather to be focused on self-reflection and deep connection with the people they work with, and to create an environment where people could change the way they think and behave in a positive and authentic way.

Cohen added: "I believe giving people competencies limits their potentials because it locks people into a particular mold of what a leader should look like. What happens if there is an M&A, leadership change, or the markets take a left-hand turn? Do you then have the robust level of skills at the leadership level to give you the agility to bend your knees and ride with the wave?"

Instead of a specific leadership paradigm, they set out to create an exploratory leadership model that allowed people to uncover who they really are, as well as who they want to be. "If we created a condition that let people be vulnerable enough in a work environment with their peers to do that, what would be possible for them?" asked Cohen. "And if we got our leaders to awareness of their full potential, then what is possible for Mozilla?"

They named the new leadership development program LEAD (Leadership, Exploration, and Discovery) and all Mozilla paid staff who were director-level or

above (50 people) were invited to pick from two LEAD cohorts (the cohorts averaged 25 participants each). The one ground rule was that participants could not miss a single of the four sessions (10 days total) that spanned across seven months. The idea was that learning happens intermittently, not over a fire drill five-day period. Participants were provided one-on-one coaching between sessions.

LEAD Sessions

The first session involved a 360-degree diagnostic called the "Leadership Circle Profile" and focused on the leaders, asking them who they wanted to be, what impact they wanted to make, and what gaps they saw in their skills. The team also brought in members of the Steering Committee to humanize leadership challenges at Mozilla, according to Katsaros and Roeske: "One of our objectives was to have the directors feel empowered rather than passive and to step up as leaders in the organization. By exposing them to the Steering Committee who shared what it was like to be a leader in Mozilla, the directors saw the humorous, lonely, and human side and the light bulbs just went off. The cohort saw that the Steering Committee was doing the best they could, that they don't have all the answers, and it was their job as directors to inform the Steering Committee if they thought something should be done differently."

The second session, called "Big Picture", focused on getting the leaders to lift their chins up and focus on the entire ecosystem, and to understand the meaning of strategy. A Berkeley-Haas professor conducted a mini-MBA session on strategy and many such as Finch and participant Jinghua Zhang felt that the session was very useful. A key value-add of that session was expanding the participants' breadth to think about strategy for Mozilla as a whole versus just their particular areas.

Between sessions two and three, participants were given the freedom and permission to identify an organizational problem they wanted to fix. When they returned to session three called "Leadership Presence", the coaches used a "yes, and skill drill" exercise which taught leaders how to move beyond what was wrong to what was possible. Dia Bondi of Capture Mozilla focused on teaching the leaders how to deliver the arc of their story so they would be ready by the third session to present to the cohort with true, authentic impact.

Also in session three, participants took part in the "I Am" typing exercise, borrowed from improvisation. The fun and crazy exercises allowed peers to type each other. "The premise is we are who we are and instead of spending a lot of time trying to be who we think we should be or a certain type of leader, we tell our leaders that they are most impactful when they show up as their authentic selves," said Cohen. The next day of the session, coaches led leaders to identify their "lids" and limiting beliefs and focus on what would happen if those limitations were lifted.

Finch, who participated in the LEAD program right after assuming a new leadership role, found the program incredibly useful: "Overall, the program changed my leadership style. It helped me to appreciate ways in which I might be different from other people and to focus on things that I bring and to lead from those strengths, rather than feel that you have to be perfect—of course none of us are perfect."

The fourth session was called, "You are an Agent of Change" where the coaches discussed the arc of the hero's journey. Participants also made a declaration at the end, of who they want to be, who they are, and what they are letting go of.

"It is one of the most moving closing sessions I have ever seen," said Cohen. "During our first cohort, I don't think we had a dry eye in the house. They became so committed and now have accountability groups, book groups, and all the connective tissue, which was exactly what we had hoped for."

Part of the sessions' success was that the coaches met each night to redesign for the next day based on what had happened that day. Even the cohorts differed from each other based on the different needs of the leaders. The result was anything but a cookie-cutter curriculum. "Our leadership program is transformative and unique and changes lives," said Cohen. "It created for the organization a common language and now the directors self-manage at their director's meetings and the executive team is able to pull back from the table more."

LEAD Across Mozilla

The LEAD team also invited contributor leaders to participate. Kovacs said: "Debbie designed the LEAD program from the outside in as well by inviting key contributors who had risen through the meritocracy." Three contributors chose to participate and "beautiful things happened," said Katsaros and Roeske. The contributors all had successful experiences and one was even promoted in her regular job during the time she was in one of the cohorts due to the impact of the leadership program on her development.

Viking Karwur, a contributor from Indonesia after session three said: "This is so incredible to be seen." Roeske added: "Here was this contributor who was incredibly humbled to be a part of this experience and something shifted in him by being typed and that this group saw him, which in turn gave him confidence that I don't think he would have had if he had not done the program."

During the first cohort, Cohen's executive team saw strong results and asked Cohen to implement something similar for them too. Purposely, Cohen didn't start LEAD with the senior management team and try to push the program down into the organization. Instead, she looked for the biggest leverage point where she could enter the organization and expect the largest scale change in the shortest amount of time. "These 50 people lead the rest of the organization and if I moved them forward, then we all move forward," she said.

The LEAD team implemented a full day off-site for the executive team and planned to develop a LEAD program for those leaders in the near future, along with a third cohort of directors who had been recently hired or promoted into those roles. And Cohen was in the process of implementing the TRIBE, which was a rework of the LEAD program for anyone at Mozilla, including all contributors.

Since Mozilla had a culture of distributed knowledge, some directors who graduated from the program also started their own groups. One was called Hacking Management, a meetup where anyone could join and talk about management ideas. Some directors also shared their knowledge on Capture Mozilla.

The Future

By 2013, Mozilla had existed for 15 years with humble roots as a side project within Netscape. But by then, the organization had many more people, both paid

and volunteer, more functions and products, with some products developed in partnership with other organizations, and an even more global organization. Mozilla was also moving from a very traditional horizontal functional organization to a very active R&D organization to support the continued growth and evolution of the web.

By that time, Cohen had transformed the People organization in a short two years in a way that honored and respected Mozilla's rich culture and history, and in a way that guided and motivated Mozilla's knowledge workers around the world.

She felt that the organization was embarking on a reflection period of, "who are we and who do we want to be?" She added: "What I am beginning to sense from the Project is strain because we haven't yet explicitly restructured to support each of the different product lines and ways of working. What will the structure of our Project look like in the next three to five years and how do we organize our people, both paid staff and contributors, to meet the needs of our products and our users, and to optimize how work happens to fit our business needs? And how do we scale in a meaningful and impactful way, while being true to the core mission and purpose of the Project?"

Up next for Cohen's team was to more fully develop her own People team, as well as to focus on "global connectedness" with the goal of expanding the capacity of the Mozilla Project through engagement of both paid and volunteer staff in partnership with Chris Beard and his engagement team. As Cohen reflected on her brief, but whirlwind experience at Mozilla, she wondered whether she and her team had done all the most optimal things and more importantly, whether her areas of focus for the future were the right ones.

EXHIBIT 1. Selected Mozilla Community Milestones

- **July 31, 2009**—1,000,000,000th Firefox download
- **March 31, 2008**—The Mozilla project celebrates its 10th anniversary
- **February 19, 2008**—Mozilla Messaging, the new mail focused subsidiary of the Mozilla Foundation, begins operations
- **December 28, 2007**—America Online announces that there will be no further releases of Netscape Navigator and recommends that Navigator users switch to Firefox
- **October 19, 2005**—Firefox surpasses 100 million downloads just before its 1st anniversary
- **August 3, 2005**—The Mozilla Corporation is created as a wholly owned subsidiary of the Mozilla Foundation
- **July 2, 2005**—The community-led SeaMonkey project takes over development of former Mozilla Application Suite code

- **March 4, 2005**—Mozilla China is founded to tap into China's thriving Firefox community

- **September 14, 2004**—Mozilla establishes the Bug Bounty program to reward contributors for discovering bugs and helping continually improve Mozilla's products

- **August 18, 2004**—Mozilla Japan is founded to create a foothold in Asia and foster the growing community in Japan

- **February 17, 2004**—Mozilla Europe is founded to spur Mozilla's community, mindshare and market share in Europe

- **July 15, 2003**—The Mozilla Foundation is born with a $2 million start-up support from America Online's Netscape division; Mitch Kapor pledges support and heads up the board of directors

- **April 2, 2003**—A new roadmap is posted that details the switch from developing an integrated suite to developing Firefox and Thunderbird as separate applications

- **September 19, 2001**—Mozilla relicensing begins, more than 6000 NPL files are relicensed under an MPL/GPL/LGPL tri-license

- **April 7, 2000**—First Mozilla Developer Day is hosted at Netscape

- **March 18, 1999**—America Online acquires Netscape Communications Corporation

- **October 26, 1998**—mozilla.org posts product roadmap that includes next browser release based on Gecko and a cross platform user interface

- **March 31, 1998**—Netscape Communicator source code is posted on the Internet via mozilla.org

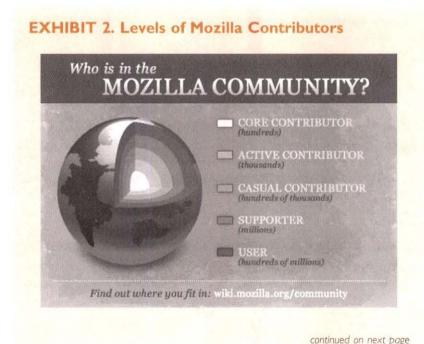- **February 23, 1998**—The mozilla.org project is launched by Netscape

Major Software Releases

- **June 30, 2009**—Firefox 3.5 released
- **June 17, 2008**—Firefox 3.0 is released
- **April 18, 2007**—Thunderbird 2.0 is released as a major update to the free, open source email client
- **January 18, 2007**—SeaMonkey 1.1 is made available
- **October 24, 2006**—Mozilla releases Firefox 2.0
- **January 30, 2006**—SeaMonkey 1.0 is released

- **January 12, 2006**—Thunderbird 1.5 is made available
- **November 29, 2005**—Mozilla releases Firefox 1.5
- **December 7, 2004**—Mozilla rolls out Thunderbird 1.0 providing users with an alternative, free email client
- **November 9, 2004**—Mozilla Firefox 1.0 goes live, allowing users to experience the Web in a whole new way
- **June 17, 2004**—Mozilla 1.7 is launched with many improvements to speed and standards support
- **June 30, 2003**—Mozilla 1.4 is released with popup blocking, junk mail filtering, and many improvements
- **September 23, 2002**—Phoenix 0.1 is released, the first official version of a stand-alone browser that will later be renamed to Firefox
- **June 5, 2002**—Mozilla 1.0 is released—the browser which is the precursor to today's wildly popular Firefox Web browser
- **November 14, 2000**—Netscape 6 is released and is the first official Netscape product based on open source code

Source: <http://www.mozilla.org/about/timeline.html>.

EXHIBIT 2. Levels of Mozilla Contributors

Who is in the
MOZILLA COMMUNITY?

- **CORE CONTRIBUTOR** *(hundreds)*
- **ACTIVE CONTRIBUTOR** *(thousands)*
- **CASUAL CONTRIBUTOR** *(hundreds of thousands)*
- **SUPPORTER** *(millions)*
- **USER** *(hundreds of millions)*

Find out where you fit in: **wiki.mozilla.org/community**

Core Contributor

A core contributor is someone who has a leadership position in one or more Mozilla project areas.

- Examples: The German l10n lead, a Mozilla Rep, a module owner or peer, a Mozilla employee
- Estimated size: hundreds of people
- Mission impact: Core contributors have made major contributions to support the mission through their contributions of time and skill. They give Mozilla reach in terms of scope, geography and influence far beyond what could be achieved through directly staffing an organization.

Active Contributor

An active contributor is someone who has volunteered substantial time to a Mozilla activity that involves interactions with others within the last 12 months.

- Examples: Someone who answers Firefox questions on SUMO, Mozilla's community-powered support site, helps an average of 10,000 Firefox users per week, someone who files bugs with Nightly builds, someone who localizes Mozilla websites, someone on the Credits page, etc.
- Estimated size: thousands of people
- Mission impact: Active contributors directly support the mission through their contributions of time and skill, and provide Mozilla with the ability to move forward with a wide range of programs and projects.

Casual Contributor

A casual contributor is someone who has volunteered small amounts of time in an activity that doesn't necessarily involve interactions with other community members.

- Examples: Someone who participates in Test Pilot studies, someone who has submitted feedback on input.mozilla.org, someone who has created a persona, someone who has submitted a crash report
- Estimated size: hundreds of thousands of people

- Mission impact: In aggregate, casual contributors create real value for the Mozilla, spreading the word, providing decision-informing data and more.

Supporter

A supporter is someone who has shown an interest in Mozilla without having made a substantial contribution back to the community yet.

- Examples: Someone who donates $5 through Join Mozilla, someone who has downloaded a Firefox beta, someone who has liked Firefox on Facebook
- Estimated size: millions of people
- Mission impact: Supporters advance the mission just like users, but they've taken the additional step to start educating themselves about Mozilla and by definition they are aware of some ways to get more involved.

User

A user is someone who uses Mozilla products but may not be aware of Mozilla's mission or that there are volunteer opportunities they could get involved with.

- Example: Someone who uses Firefox as his or her primary browser.
- Estimated size: hundreds of millions of people
- Mission impact: Users help advance our mission indirectly, although the people using our products may not be aware of how they are helping or that there even is a mission.

Source: Quoted directly from, <https://wiki.mozilla.org/Community>.

Notes

1. Open source meant that anyone could use the software, access the code, and modify, improve, and redistribute the modified software.
2. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Firefox>.
3. Netscape was the first commercially successful graphical browser, working on all operating systems (such as Apple and Microsoft).
4. Mosaic was the first popular web browser in 1993.
5. Netscape went public in 1995 but, shortly thereafter, was dominated by Microsoft who had introduced its own browser, Internet Explorer, for free and bundled into its Windows operating system. Thus in January 1998, Netscape offered Navigator for free.
6. <www.mozilla.org/en-US/foundation/annualreport/2011/>.

7. Hayagreeva Rao, Robert I. Sutton, and David W. Hoyt, "Mozilla: Scaling Through a Community of Volunteers," Stanford Graduate School of Business, Prod. #: HR35-PDF-ENG, December 12, 2009, p. 5.

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid.

10. <www.zdnet.com/the-web-browser-wars-continue-and-1-is-well-that-depends-on-whom-you-ask-7000009305/>.

11. <https://air.mozilla.org/pages/capture-mozilla>.