

AN INSTANT PERSPECTIVE

How In-N-Out Burger Created a Culture of Engagement



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In-N-Out currently has a **4.4** rating on [glassdoor.com](https://www.glassdoor.com) and **4.5** on [indeed.com](https://www.indeed.com)



Branding Culture

Their website states that ‘as far back as 1948, In-N-Out has been the cool place to be.’ Many things have changed since 1948; going to the movies no longer costs 60 cents for one, but some things remain the same. The uniforms, crisp white pants and shirts, red aprons and iconic paper hats are similar and In-N-Out Burger is still a cool place to work. More than just cool, the company is now recognized as a leading employer and one of the most highly engaged workplaces in the United States. In-N-Out currently has a 4.4 rating on [glassdoor.com](https://www.glassdoor.com) and 4.5 on [indeed.com](https://www.indeed.com), [making it the top fast food company to work for in the United States last year](#). A fourth place rating on Glassdoor’s Best Places to

Work list puts the company ahead of Lululemon and Google, both known for engaged employee culture.

Lynsi Snyder, the president of In-N-Out, and granddaughter of founders Harry and Esther Snyder, credits finding the right people for the company’s achievements. In an interview with Glassdoor Snyder said, “they [employees] are the reason for our success, and they deserve to enjoy coming to work, to feel appreciated, and to be treated like family, which is what I consider them.”

“Company culture affects your brand today more than ever before,” shares Lorie Corcuera, Co-Founder and CEO at SPARK Creations. “Traditionally brand

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was about marketing your company, telling the world who you are and what you stood for. Culture was internal, how you work together and what the company values were. Over time brand and culture have blended and are inseparable. When a company isn’t taking care of their people and living their values, we hear about it, and there’s a transfer to the customer as well as the employees. Brand used to be about products and service, now it’s about everything that happens within a company. Your culture is your brand and that attracts both employees and customers.”

SPARK Creations is a training and development organization that inspires people and companies to create meaningful cultures and workplaces. They haven’t worked with In-N-Out but have coached businesses of all sizes and structures to develop engaged workplaces and happy employees.

Quality Culture

Fast food joints don't have the best reputations as being engaging, fulfilling places to work. Disgruntled employees at the ordering counter are a staple in popular movies and music videos. In-N-Out has proven that a desire to be different and providing perks well above the industry average puts smiles on employees faces. They aspire to be a fun place to work.

In-N-Out owns and operates approximately 250 fast-food style burger restaurants located primarily in California. The chain famously does not use microwaves, heat lamps, or freezers, and is privately owned with no franchise operators. The menu offers four classic items: hamburgers, cheeseburgers, the Double-Double and french fries. The offering

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is simple, high quality and traditional; the same formula as their company culture.

"Creating and maintaining a positive and enthusiastic work environment where our Associates are treated like family is very important to us at In-N-Out," explains Denny Warnick, Vice President of Operations

at In-N-Out. "Each of our restaurant managers started as an entry-level Associate, this allows us to continue the culture inspired by our founders. We place an intense focus on training and development for all Associates and believe these things combined with a higher pay structure and flexible scheduling provide some of the best ways to take great care of our Associates. We have high standards in quality and service and it's only because of our people that we can deliver on that."

In an industry struggling to recruit and retain staff, benefits, flexibility and opportunity to advance are keys to a sustainable business model. AZ Central

reports that employee turnover in the fast food industry is around 150%, and this rate appears to be increasing. At this volume, retention is a crucial cost savings strategy and it's no secret engaged and valued employees are more likely to stick around than those feeling like a number on a spreadsheet. Just as powerful as retention, is referral. Glassdoor statistics show that 94% of In-N-Out employees would recommend working there to a friend.

The In-N-Out website's employment page describes the business as 'a diverse, fast-paced environment, where everyone is united in their pride in being part of the In-N-Out family and their dedication to cooperating towards the same purpose, mission, and goals.' The idea of family is a recurring theme. In their 'Behind the Sign' video, employees share that comradery amongst various levels of management is a draw to the company. Synder says, [in her interview with Glassdoor](#), "the simple answer to keeping Associates with us is to treat them the right way. To us this means creating a positive, fun atmosphere, allowing them to grow with us, paying them well for their hard work and remembering to thank them for what they do for our company every day."

Opportunities to complete training and earn seniority make employees feel supported and driven throughout their career. The restaurant's programs include interactive learning and one-on-one, hands-on training. Managers participate in on-site classroom sessions at In-N-Out University.

In addition to continued learning and development, comprehensive benefits packages, attractive salaries and flexible work hours, In-N-Out Associates are invited to participate in company events such as summer picnics, store achievement parties, holiday celebrations, and athletic tournaments hosted throughout the year. Snyder even mentions trips to her parent's ranch, an activity proving the family mentality Synder speaks of.

Connecting Culture

Corcuera recognizes the challenge for the restaurant industry, with various locations, shifts and levels of management to stay connected. She's confident though, that connection must come from the top down. "It's important for leaders to stay connected with hourly employees and salary employees, despite structure or role to ensure everyone knows they're an important part of the team. It takes a certain type of leader to be present and connected across all levels of employees," she explains. "When head office is passionate about being connected to regional managers who stay connected to store managers they'll relay that same energy to the rest of the team. That's utopia though, it doesn't happen all the time especially when there's turnover and staff aren't there all the time in a shift-based industry."

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Snyder tells Glassdoor, "I prefer that our leaders adopt a servant leadership style and I try to lead by example. It's hard to argue with the approach that puts your people and their well-being first." One of her tactics is to recruit from within, resulting in experience staff throughout various levels of the business. Many of In-N-Out's managers started at entry-level positions in the chain she tells Glassdoor. The website entices employees to 'grow with the company, to become part of our success story.' Employees are obviously embracing the success of the culture, wanting to share the company's success online.

"We were delighted to hear of our 4th place ranking on Glassdoor's list of Best Places to Work," says Warnick "This result is especially meaningful since it comes directly from our Associates. It was important to our founders, Harry and Esther Snyder,

that we take great care of our customers and that we also take great care of our Associates, and that vision lives on in our company today under the leadership of Lynsi Snyder, our President."

Reviews on Glassdoor list reoccurring pros to working with In-N-Out like: great pay, flexible scheduling, a complimentary meal per shift, Christmas gifts, family picnics and room for advancement. Employees are not shy about sharing what they love about their employer whether they are previously or currently employed at In-N-Out.

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This pride in company culture fuels a brand to thrive. When employees are proud of the brand they represent, they become advocates. Customers

visiting the restaurant quickly pick up on the vibe of the employee and this interaction dictates their

brand experience. In an age where social media has no filters, employees and customers visit online profiles to connect and share experiences with the brand. The In-N-Out instagram account shows bright images with a clear community focus nestled amongst images of delicious looking burgers. When a positive culture is the consistent message throughout online platforms and in-person in the restaurant, everyone involved feels loyal and will continue to perpetuate the desired brand identity. It also doesn't hurt that In-N-Out burgers tickle the tastebuds and their fries hit the spot.

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