Fair is more than a company name. It is a mission statement and a core value. The Fair app allows people to shop for cars by choosing monthly payments they can afford. Customers sign for the vehicle they want with their finger and return it when they wish, without having to take out a loan or fill out paperwork. Often, customers can get a Fair car even if they have less-than-perfect, or even non-existent credit. As the moniker suggests, Fair strives to do right by everyone—its customers, its partners, and its employees.

Founder and CEO Scott Painter says Fair is the result of a career-long crusade to make buying and owning a car better. His past ventures have all been leading up to this. When he founded Fair three years ago, he knew he had the necessary technology and capital. But he also knew that wasn’t enough. To succeed would take a culture that could attract incredible people, and retain them, too. So, he brought in Lisa Russell, co-founder and EVP of People and Culture, to create it. Together, they built a workplace where people feel valued.

Shepherding a culture
Writing your values on a blackboard is one thing. Bringing them to life is another. Both vision and execution earned Fair its spot on the Inc. Best Workplaces list. HR roles often report to the COO, but from the beginning, Russell has reported to Painter, which sends a signal: people matter. She takes part in all executive leadership meetings, so she can advise on how every decision will affect employee well-being.

Russell admits that shepherding a culture is hard, ongoing work—especially since the company is growing so fast. Fair has 500 employees and offices in Santa Monica, Calif. and Phoenix, Ariz. Russell leads a team of 18. When hiring for her group, she uses the same approach she enacts for the company at large: she considers cultural fit, not just skills. Fair employees are smart and high-performing, but, more important, they are kind and compassionate. They care about the human condition, and the company mission. To find these gems, the People team uses assessment testing, multiple rounds of interviews, and instinct—a tool that should not be overlooked. Painter admits that anytime he has gone against Russell’s advice on a hire, he has regretted it.

Treat your people well
Fair’s emphasis on transparency also reflects its high regard for its people. It regularly runs Fair Family Lunches, where team members, including Painter, share freely. He talks openly about raising capital and says employees often comment on how refreshing they find his honesty. Fair’s culture of openness benefits the business because people feel comfortable giving feedback. Their honesty helps to improve the technology, operations, and the culture itself. It also curbs office politics.

The people focus has paid off. Fair’s reputation as a great place to do your best work attracts “amazing humans.” This is critical, since Fair will double in employee size over the next 12 months. Its 96 percent retention rate is another testament to the caliber of the workplace it has created.

By valuing its people, Fair has built a culture that is worthy of its name. And Painter has found his fellow crusaders—people, like him, who are ready to change the future of car ownership by making it fairer.