

# The Benefits of a Positive Firm Culture

Culture is part of every aspect of our lives. It's part of our personality and the communities we belong to. It's part of the homes we live in, the people we socialize with and, yes, even the places we work. That means it goes without saying that the more positive the workplace culture, the more benefits it can bring to a firm and its underlying bottom line.

## What Is Corporate Culture?

Culture is behavior – how we act and what is accepted within the firm. Behavior is communicated and set by example. Establishing a workplace culture may require a formal policy that defines acceptable ways for members to conduct themselves, accompanied by consistent procedures. The daily practice of culture may be less formal than a written policy, but the culture still should guide everyday interactions in the firm and influence how things are done from one day to the next.

## Why Is Firm Culture Important?

Having a healthy, respectful, inspiring firm culture brings many rewards. Internally, it encourages the people in your firm to feel motivated and supportive of one another throughout their daily interactions. Externally, it will attract people with the same values to work at your firm, making recruiting easier and reinforcing the workplace culture. It will also attract the kinds of clients you want to work with.

## Where Does Culture Start?

No one person is responsible for **corporate culture**. It's not the director of HR, firm leadership, firm partners, department heads or team leaders. Ultimately, the people who make up the firm make culture happen.

**Building a firm culture** can be likened to building a family, in that the task takes a village. This is not a one-person job; it is a community job. However, if the leader(s) at the top of the organization do not project the importance of culture, then the whole process will fall apart. Building a firm with positive people will result in a positive environment. Inversely, hiring people who have a negative attitude will result in a toxic environment.

Maintaining a positive work culture takes time and guidance. People who are patient and generous with their knowledge and skills set the tone for how the firm or team functions. Making people feel like part of the team in a friendly, welcoming environment builds a healthy culture.



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## How Do You Build on a Good Firm Culture?

Maintaining and building on the [culture at your firm](#) starts with the hiring process. This can happen during the first interview, which you should keep simple and low key. Discuss the job, how it is aligned with the candidate and how their personal values match up with the firm's. Find out what the interviewee is passionate about. Do those passions fit with the firm culture? Discussing culture and fit should continue throughout the interview process as you narrow down the candidates.

How you onboard a new hire can be just as important to firm culture as the hiring process itself. Consider building a team to design a memorable first day for new hires that includes HR, marketing, IT and possibly an outside consultant who specializes in events. Set up the new person's office or workspace, and provide a welcome package that includes some branded firm materials and tschochkes. Create some fanfare, such as a welcome banner or balloons to let everyone on the floor know a new hire is starting, to encourage people to stop by and introduce themselves.

Some other options to consider would be to have your IT department create a welcome message or splash page when the new hire first launches their computer. Consider having the office managing partner stop by and introduce themselves for a more-personal touch. Plan on a team lunch, onsite or offsite, that will allow people to get to know one another and talk about their interests and passions. This will help build friendships and make the new hire feel like part of the family. It's nice to walk into the office or take a Zoom call and have a friendly conversation about a mutual interest.

## What Are the Benefits of a Positive Company Culture?

Having a positive work environment means you have happy people with high office morale. This in turn usually results in healthier people, less use of sick time and a reduction in healthcare costs. You will see less staff turnover, resulting in more continuity for teams and less attrition of knowledge and skills, which can give your firm a competitive advantage.

Culture is hard to replicate or change; it is your own secret recipe. If your firm culture needs a reboot, it may take some time to shift the direction, depending on how large your firm is and what (or who) needs to change. Working toward having an attractive culture allows for people, and in turn the firm, to succeed, giving you a competitive advantage in recruiting and keeping quality talent.

How have you tackled cultural issues in your firm? Leave a comment or email me, Alan E. Singles, at [asingles@jaffepr.com](mailto:asingles@jaffepr.com).