

10 Tangible Actions That Will Transform Your Law Firm Culture



Culture is not something that is written in the employee manual. Culture consists of the subtle norms, assumptions, beliefs and informal practices that collectively guide and influence how attorneys and staff think, feel, behave and communicate within the firm.

Here are 10 tangible steps you can take to develop a healthier, happier and more vibrant culture.

Completing just five of these actions will lead to significant positive transformation of your firm's culture.

2 Integrate well-being into the recruiting process.

- Include systematized questions about well-being and resiliency and the relationship to professional performance in each interview.
- Every single interview should contain at least one. This issue should be one overt factor in every Hiring Committee decision.

4 Create partner well-being upward assessments.

- Create a 5–10 question survey to allow associates and professional staff to report on the role various partners are playing in the emotional well-being and cultural health of the firm.
- Create accountability measures or rewards for partners at each end of the spectrum.

6 Perform well-being mining during exit interviews.

- Ask five multiple choice questions to gather critical information about the firm's culture, strengths, weaknesses, areas of improvement and contributors to the attorney's voluntary departure.
- Compile all responses from the entire year into an annual aggregated report, review the trends and create a 3-step action plan.

8 Set an annual keystone well-being goal.

- Establish a single keystone goal for the firm to accomplish relating to something more than just earning money (e.g., associate turnover rate, well-being programming average attendance rate, etc.).
- It will start to trickle down throughout the culture and influence countless micro-actions.

10 Include well-being in annual performance review.

- Include as one evaluative factor (however small) in every performance review the individual's stress resiliency and emotional well-being, as they relate to professional performance or likelihood of long-term success at the firm.
- If well-being is absent from the performance review, the firm is functionally proclaiming its irrelevance.

1 Implement top partner well-being proclamations.

- Identify your office managing partner and 5–10 most influential partners in each office.
- Have them participate in an office-wide "Partner Well-Being Series" addressing structured well-being topics and their own experiences and feelings.

3 Include well-being in billable hours.

- Provide well-being credits toward the billable requirement. 25–50 hours per year.
- All firm-sponsored well-being programs qualify for billable credit.

5 Institute systematized well-being check-ins by partners.

- Create a written partner recommendation (e.g., check-in once per month with each direct report and request monthly confirmation by each partner).
- Have an open conversation asking specifically about stress levels and emotional well-being.

7 Develop well-being core values.

- Establish 4–5 written core values for the firm relating to culture and how we treat people.
- Schedule monthly announcements, events and/or contests to reinforce and animate those core values.

9 Establish an anonymous well-being feedback e-box.

- Set up an anonymous inbox where attorneys and professional staff can submit thoughts, opinions, complaints about well-being, culture, inclusion, how people are treated, etc.
- Hold monthly/quarterly webinar reporting on the most common issues and any changes that will be implemented.

Content conceived of by Jarrett Green and presented in Major, Lindsey & Africa's February 23, 2021, webinar: "Humanity, Appreciation, Benefits: How Law Firms Can Create a Culture That Attracts and Retains Talent."