

Workplace Culture

Questioning the assumption “that’s just how we do things” can bring change to ways of thinking and doing and, ultimately, to systems that advantage some individuals and groups while disadvantaging others.

WHY IT MATTERS

Workplace culture—a firm or profession’s values, traditions, and ways of working, presenting, and interacting—has a profound impact on employee recruitment and engagement, as well as the communities we serve. Awareness of dominant cultural patterns, typically invisible to those in power, helps pave the way to more equitable and inclusive workplaces.

WORKPLACE CULTURE IS STRONG AND HEALTHY WHEN...

- the values and goals of the business align with workplace culture
- leaders and employees work together to assess, contribute to, and improve culture
- leaders are models of empathy, compassion, and justice
- challenging situations are met with curiosity, not blame or punishment
- time for developing relationships and collaborations is built into project schedules

ACT

Evaluate and lead your culture

- Analyze how your firm’s culture aligns—or doesn’t—with its mission, values, and goals.
- Examine behaviors: “We say that we’re committed to ____, but when we ____ or when we don’t ____, we’re conveying ____ instead.”
- Discover employee perceptions and areas for improvement via surveys, exit interviews, and conversation.
- Educate yourself about histories, social movements, and points of view that are unfamiliar or uncomfortable.
- Think holistically about how every strategy, decision, or communication relates to your culture. Consider the impact on different groups.

- Audit messaging regularly to ensure that bias-free and inclusive language is used.
- Hold leaders accountable for progress.

Focus on engagement

- Consider ownership, management, team structures and processes, and delivery models and how they support—or could better support—employee engagement.
- Provide a structured onboarding program to integrate new employees into the firm.
- Provide the resources employees need to do their work.
- Offer ongoing feedback, mentorship, and professional-development opportunities.