



# Lead the Way

A QUICK-START GUIDE TO  
TRANSFORMING LAW FIRM  
CULTURE & COMMUNICATION

Practical strategies to build a healthier culture, develop confident leaders, and strengthen how your team works.

**68%** of law firm employees say unclear communication is the **#1 reason** for team friction.

(Source: Thomson Reuters Institute, 2023)

Every firm has a culture—either you create it, or it creates itself. If you don't shape it with intention, it defaults to habit, hierarchy, and guesswork. Expectations feel fuzzy. Feedback gets personal. People do what's comfortable instead of what actually works. And as your firm grows, small breakdowns get bigger and harder to ignore.

Healthy culture and communication aren't about beanbag chairs or happy hours. They're about how your team works together. How you lead. How people treat each other. How decisions get made. How information gets shared.

This guide will help you get real about where things stand and give you a path toward stronger communication, healthier leadership, and a culture your team actually wants to be part of.

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*We've used Affinity to facilitate two attorney retreats and a C-team retreat, and to conduct DISC assessments across the firm. The strategic planning work continues to shape how we grow and prepare our next generation of leaders.”*

— Ken Koehn, Chief Operating Officer,  
Gould & Ratner LLP”



60% of attorneys under 35 would leave a firm if its culture feels outdated or non-inclusive.

(Source: Bloomberg Law, 2024)



# Self-Assessment Quiz:

## How Strong Is Your Culture—Really?

Rate each statement from 1–5  
(1 = Strongly Disagree | 5 = Strongly Agree):

SCORE	
1. Our team feels safe speaking up, sharing ideas, or raising concerns.	
2. We give (and receive) clear, honest feedback consistently.	
3. Leadership communicates openly and doesn't avoid tough topics.	
4. We have shared expectations for how we work and interact.	
5. Team members feel recognized, supported, and trusted.	
6. We address problems directly—instead of letting them simmer.	



# Your Score + *What to Do Next*

## 26–30:

Your culture is strong—build on it

You've laid a solid foundation. Keep reinforcing what works.

Your next moves:

- ◆ Ask your team where communication or leadership could still improve.
- ◆ Identify one part of your culture to celebrate—and one to strengthen.

## 15–19:

Culture is showing cracks

If communication is confusing and leadership is reactive, culture is suffering.

Your next moves:

- ◆ Commit to naming the issues and starting fresh.
- ◆ Equip your leaders to guide, not just manage.
- ◆ Create shared language around how your firm works and leads.

## 20–25:

Some healthy dynamics—but some real friction

There's openness and alignment—but also gaps.

Your next moves:

- ◆ Clarify communication expectations across your team.
- ◆ Give managers support to have hard conversations and lead proactively.

## Below 15:

Time to reset

The team might be walking on eggshells—or ignoring tension that needs attention.

Your next moves:

- ◆ Start surfacing where trust or clarity is missing.
- ◆ Introduce weekly leadership huddles or pulse check-ins.

**95%** of law firms and in-house legal departments consider workplace culture **'very important'** or **'important'** to business success.

(Source: MD Communications, 2023)



## Quick-Start Wins: *Improve Culture and Communication This Week*

- ◆ Ask your team: What's one thing we should start, stop, or continue doing?
- ◆ Clarify your meeting rhythm. (Too many? Too few? No purpose?)
- ◆ Have one real conversation this week—not just a check-in.
- ◆ Choose one norm to make explicit: how we share updates, give feedback, etc.
- ◆ Block 30 minutes for a walk-and-talk with a team member.
- ◆ Share one piece of praise in writing—not just in passing.

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*Affinity isn't just an outside consultant—they're worth their weight in gold. Everyone we've worked with has added value and insight, and they've become true partners in our success.”*

— Abby Rooney, Chief Operating Officer, Foley & Mansfield, PLLP

## *Pitfalls to Watch For*

### **“One and done” trainings that don’t stick**

Short-term sessions without reinforcement often fade fast. Without follow-up or system changes, people go back to business as usual.

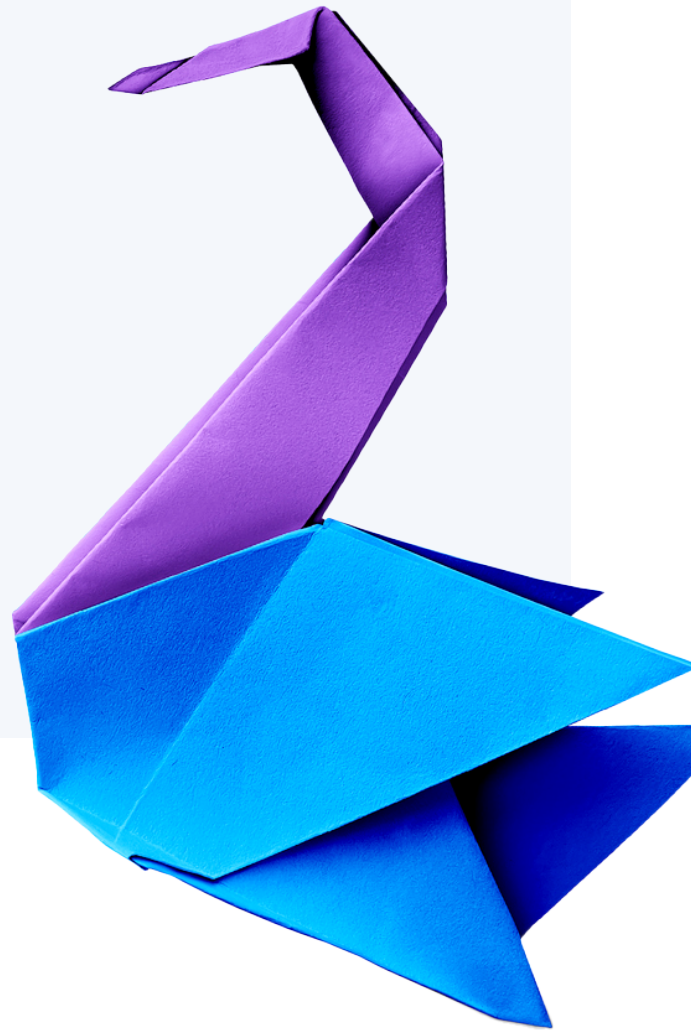
### **Confusing being nice with being clear**

Avoiding tough conversations to preserve harmony leads to resentment, confusion, and misaligned expectations. (Having a hard time with hard conversations? We recommend [\*“Radical Candor” by Kim Scott\*](#). It’s a great resource to learn how to give feedback that’s direct and respectful—so you can be kind without being unclear.)

### **Leadership that’s reactive vs. proactive**

When leadership only steps in to solve problems after they arise, it misses the opportunity to shape culture intentionally.

At *Affinity*, we align people strategy with operational excellence—ensuring culture isn’t fluff but fuels productivity and satisfaction.



# The Five-Part *Culture Reset Framework*

According to Gallup, only 1 in 3 employees strongly agree that they trust the leadership of their organization. This framework will help you build a stronger foundation for trust by clarifying what matters, equipping your leaders, and creating habits that make culture stick.

## 1

### Define What Matters

Start with 3–5 clear values that describe how your team should work together—not just words, but behaviors. Make sure they’re specific and actionable: think “own the outcome” or “assume positive intent.”

Use them in hiring, onboarding, team meetings, and recognition rituals. If your values aren’t showing up in day-to-day decisions, they’re just words on a wall.



#### Pro Tip:

**A facilitated firm retreat** gives your leadership team dedicated time and structure to define the values your firm actually lives by—not just what sounds good on paper. We’ll help guide the conversation, so you leave with clarity, alignment, and practical ways to turn values into action.

## 2

### Equip Your Leaders

Many law firm leaders were promoted because they’re great attorneys—not necessarily great people managers. That’s normal. Leadership is a skill set that can be learned.

Give your team practical tools: how to give feedback, run a one-on-one, resolve tension, and coach performance. Model clarity and empathy at the top.



#### Pro Tip:

Our upcoming **Next-Level Leader: The 4-Week Skills Accelerator** is a great opportunity to help your firm’s leaders grow their skills and connect with peers. We also offer self-paced and instructor-led leadership development programs focused on feedback, coaching, and emotional intelligence.

## 3

### Listen and Respond

Culture isn’t a one-way message—it’s a conversation. Build feedback loops that happen more than once a year: monthly 1:1s, pulse surveys, anonymous suggestion boxes, or quarterly team retrospectives.

And when people speak up? Act. Listening without change breeds cynicism. Even small improvements show your team they’re heard.



## 4

### Align Your Systems

Your systems shape behavior. If your hiring, reviews, rewards, or billing systems send a different message than your values, they'll undermine trust.

Say you value collaboration—but reward only individual billables. Or you want more transparency—but key decisions happen behind closed doors. Make sure the way you operate reflects what you say you care about.

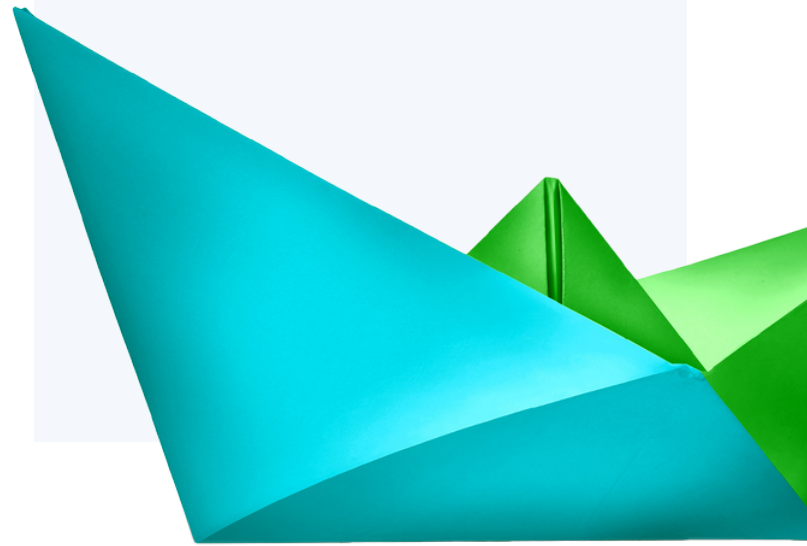


#### Pro Tip:

Uncover where your systems, tools, and processes may be undermining the culture you're trying to build—and align your operations with your values. [\*\*Affinity's Practice Analysis helps you find the disconnects\*\*](#) and design smarter systems that support the way you want your team to work.

Firms with strong internal communication are **3.5x more** likely to retain top talent.

(Source: Gallup + Legal Management Survey, 2023)



## 5

### Sustain the Shift

Culture isn't a one-time project—it's a rhythm. Reinforce what matters with rituals like weekly team wins, monthly culture check-ins, and shared reflections on how values show up in real life.

When things drift (because they will), name it, reset, and recommit. That's how you make culture resilient.



# What Lasting *Success* *Looks Like*

## Psychological safety

People feel safe speaking up, asking questions, and sharing ideas without fear of embarrassment or retaliation.

## Shared language and norms

There's a consistent understanding of how the team communicates, makes decisions, and lives out its values.

## Leaders who coach, not control

Supervisors empower team members through mentorship, accountability, and support instead of micromanagement.

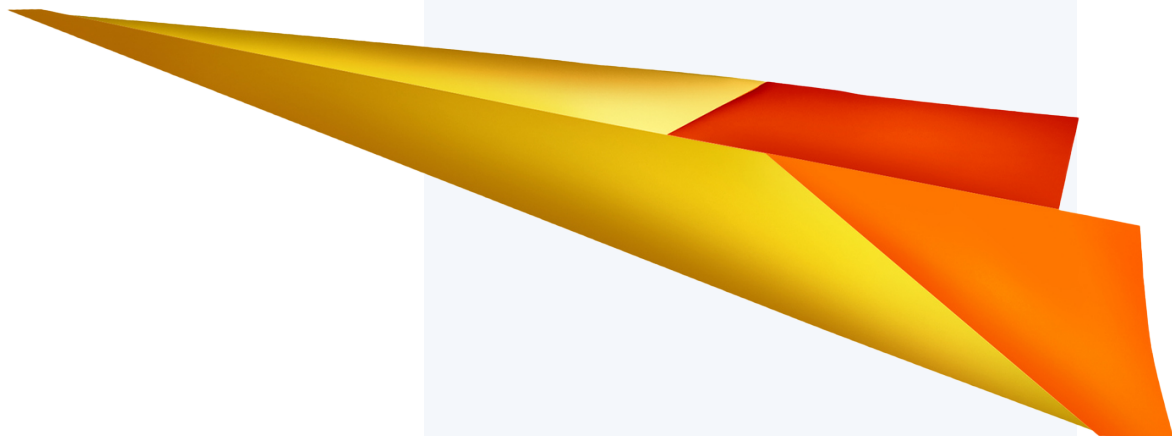
## Real alignment

People are rowing in the same direction—and showing up with clarity, trust, and shared purpose.

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*Affinity always has the answers I need to solve my practice technology problems. They have dramatically improved our efficiency and productivity.”*

— Jennifer G., Gilk Legacy Law PLLC





# Lead Boldly—Shape the *Culture You Want*

Strong teams don't just emerge. They're built by leaders willing to do the real work of alignment, clarity, and growth. If your culture isn't helping your firm thrive, it's time to reset with purpose.

Book a Discovery Call with Affinity

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We'll help you *align your people, systems, and strategy*—so your culture actually supports your growth.

SCAN TO SCHEDULE

