



**WSSFC 2024**

**Practice Management Track – Session 3**

**The Power of Culture in Law Firms:  
Why it Matters, Building It  
Intentionally, and Its Effects  
on the Bottom Line**

***Presenters:***

*Ryan Behrands, No Bull Consulting, Madison*

*Emily Smit, The Perk, Madison*

*Mary C. Turk, Turke & Steil LLP, Madison*

## About the Presenters...

**Ryan Behrends** founded No Bull Financial Consulting in 2018 to help small business owners make better financial decisions. Knowing that many fellow small business owners didn't keep up with routine accounting tasks, Ryan leaned on his experience as a QuickBooks ProAdvisor and grew NBFC into a small business accounting firm. NBFC now has a six-person team and provides services including bookkeeping, managerial reporting, and consulting. In his free time, Ryan enjoys long walks with his dog, Ellie, playing strategic board games with his friends, and getting into mosh pits at heavy metal concerts.

**Emily Smit** is a Leadership Coach, Culture Consultant & Organizational Trust Expert. As a coach, she loves working with emerging leaders to help them grow in their leadership skills, discover their leadership brand, & indulge in their culture journey. She is passionate about advocating for people to see themselves as a leader at any level in their career & truly helping The Perk live out their just cause, to build a world in which everyone wakes up inspired & excited about life!

**Mary C. Turke** is a Partner at Turke & Steil LLP and helps clients with business-related matters including sales and purchase contracts, entity formation, software and SaaS agreements, construction-related agreements and commercial terms and conditions of sale, among other things. Due to her extensive civil litigation experience, her advice includes best practices to avoid disputes and contractual provisions that are essential in the event of litigation. Over her career, she has handled mediation, litigation and arbitration matters involving contracting parties (buyer-seller, licensor-licensee, landlord-tenant), business owners (shareholders, members, partners) and even family members (trust and probate claimants). Since 2020, she has served as an arbitrator on the American Arbitration Association ("AAA") commercial dispute resolution panel.

# The Power of Culture in Law Firms: Why It Matters, Building It Intentionally, and its Effects on the Bottom Line

## Panelists:

- Emily Smit – Leadership Coach & Culture Consultant at The Perk
- Ryan Behrends – Owner of No Bull Financial Consulting
- Mary Turke – Managing Partner at Turke & Steil LLP

## 1. Introduction to Culture & What it is

- Definition of Culture: Culture is your company's values and beliefs manifested in behavior of everyone at your organization.
- Culture is built on the foundation of Trust, Communication, Alignment.
- Impact of Culture on Business Performance: Statistics around recruitment, retention, & engagement.
- Culture starts with you & your behaviors.
  - Self-Reflection on personal firm's behaviors. What actions do we need to keep, start, & stop doing to hit our goals for 2025?

## 2. Measuring Cultural Impact

- Establishing Key Metrics for Success (CPIs - Cultural Performance Indicators) that you can measure for your culture.
  - Example: Hiring metrics: Number of applicants, interviewees, time to fill positions, and survey data.
  - Example: Customer satisfaction metrics: Survey client feedback and correlate with revenue and employee satisfaction.
  - Example: Employee satisfaction metrics: Using a rating scale alongside open feedback & correlating survey results with PNL outcomes.
- Why CPIs are crucial to measure these elements & understand culture's effect on the business.

## 3. Putting Culture into Practice

- Real-world examples from Turke & Steil LLP
  - The Why of their firm
  - How the Why drove what behaviors they use on a daily basis to create their culture.
  - Examples of how they live out their culture.

#### 4. Key Takeaways

- Culture isn't just a feel-good effort; it has measurable business impact.
- Trust, communication, and alignment are the core of a strong culture.
- Culture is built by the daily behaviors of you & your team.
- Be intentional in how you build and measure culture to drive long-term success.
- Looking at a real life example of how getting clear on your why & your daily behaviors can drive a firm culture.

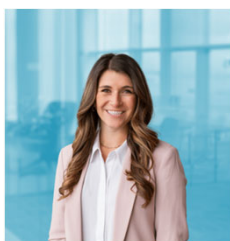
# The Power of Culture in Law Firms:

Why it Matters, Building it Intentionally, and Its Effects on the Bottom Line



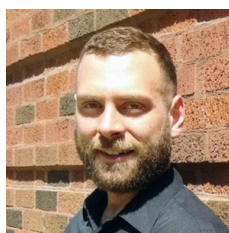
October 2024

## Panelists



**Emily Smit**

Leadership Coach &  
Culture Consultant at The  
Perk



**Ryan Behrends**

Owner of No Bull  
Financial Consulting



**Mary Turke**

Managing Partner at  
Turke & Steil LLP

## What is Culture, really?



THE  
**PERK**  
LIFE & BUSINESS  
OPTIMIZERS

3

## Culture defined

- Culture is your company's values & beliefs manifested in the **behavior** of *everyone* at your organization.
- Your culture is built by the daily behavior of you & your team.



THE  
**PERK**  
LIFE & BUSINESS  
OPTIMIZERS

4

## Culture defined

- Culture is your company's values & beliefs manifested in the **behavior** of *everyone* at your organization.
- Your culture is built by the daily **behavior** of you & your team.



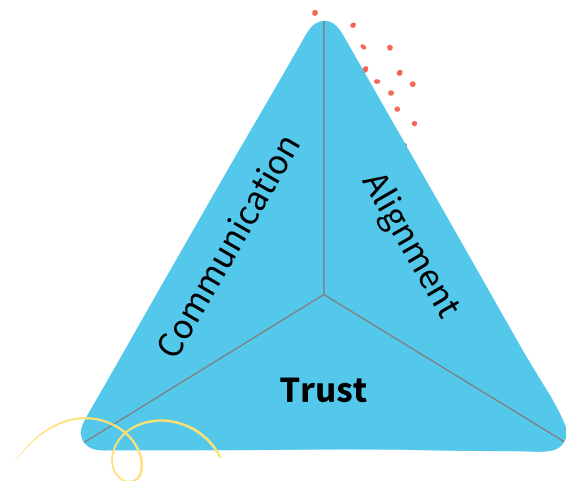
5

## Foundation of a Great Culture

- Strong organizational cultures are built on a foundation of:
  - Trust
  - Communication
  - Alignment

If I have a culture problem, it's one of these 3 things (or multiple of them!).

90% of the time, it's a trust issue.



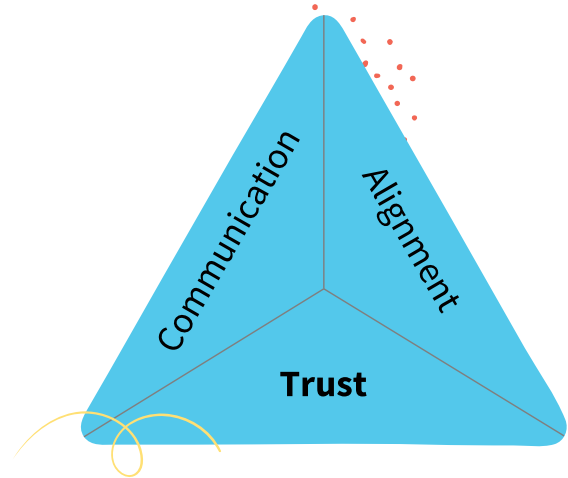
6

## Foundation of a Great Culture

- Strong organizational cultures are built on a foundation of:
  - Trust
  - Communication
  - Alignment

If I have a culture problem, it's one of these 3 things (or multiple of them!).

90% of the time, it's a trust issue.



7

## Co-Ownership



- Culture has to be owned & actively built by every single person at your company.
- It's like an orchestra - everyone has to play the same song, & their own instrument, in unison.
- No one is sitting in the audience.



8



## Co-Ownership



- Culture has to be owned & actively built by every single person at your company.
- It's like an orchestra - everyone has to play the same song, & their own instrument, in unison.
- No one is sitting in the audience.



9

## Co-Ownership



- Culture has to be owned & actively built by every single person at your company.
- It's like an orchestra - everyone has to play the same song, & their own instrument, in unison.
- No one is sitting in the audience.



10



## Culture happens

- Culture exists no matter what.
- It has an enormous impact on every single aspect of your business.



11



## Culture happens

- Culture exists no matter what.
- It has an enormous impact on every single aspect of your business.



12

# Culture – what’s the impact on your business?



13

## The Impact of Culture:



**Recruitment:**  
Can we get people?

**88%**

Of job seekers say a healthy work culture is vital for success.

**86%**

Of job seekers avoid companies with a bad reputation.

**82%**

Of people believe that culture is a competitive advantage.

Source: Forbes | Gallup | Harvard Business Review | Deloitte

[www.choosetheperk.com](http://www.choosetheperk.com)

14

# The Impact of Culture:



**Retention:**  
Can we keep people?

**63%**

Of US companies find it harder to retain than to hire employees.

**\$50bn/year**

Cost of employee turnover triggered by a toxic culture.

**~1.5x**

Annual salary cost of losing an employee.

Source: Forbes | Gallup | Harvard Business Review | Deloitte

[www.choosetheperk.com](http://www.choosetheperk.com)

# The Impact of Culture:



**Engagement:**  
Can we maximize people?

**\$7.8tn**

2022 lost productivity worldwide due to disengaged employees.

**\$550bn**

Annual losses from US companies due to lost productivity from low morale & disengaged employees.

**43%**  
Turnover

**23%**  
Profitability

From teams with engaged employees.

Source: Forbes | Gallup | Harvard Business Review | Deloitte

[www.choosetheperk.com](http://www.choosetheperk.com)



## Culture

Building culture intentionally is a **choice.**



17



## Culture

Building culture intentionally is a **choice.**

“Perfect culture” does **not** exist.



18



## Culture

Building culture intentionally is a **choice**.

“Perfect culture” does **not** exist.

Focus on growth & continuous **improvement**.

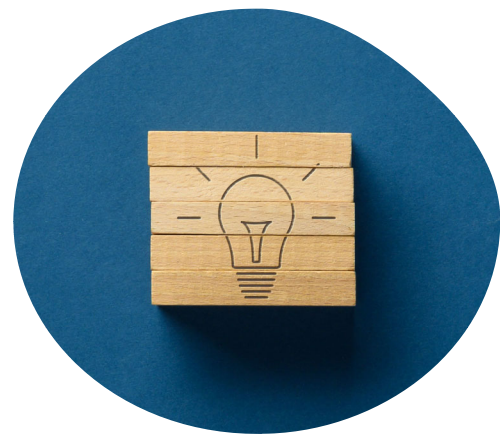


19



## Is Culture Important?

Why do you believe culture is important?



20



## Culture is OUT THERE, right?

- When we talk about or think about company culture, we look outside of ourselves.
- Focus on “we” & not “me”.
  - Which makes sense, because culture exists between people.
- However, we forget to look inside!



21



## Culture is OUT THERE, right?

- When we talk about or think about company culture, we look outside of ourselves.
- Focus on “we” & not “me”.
  - Which makes sense, because culture exists between people.
- However, we forget to look inside!



22





## Culture is OUT THERE, right?

- When we talk about or think about company culture, we look outside of ourselves.
- Focus on “we” & not “me”.
  - Which makes sense, because culture exists between people.
- However, we forget to look inside!



23



## Culture starts with YOU!



As individuals, we play a HUGE role in the culture of an organization!



24





## Remember:

A company's culture is built by the daily behavior of YOU & your team.



25



## Culture is built by BEHAVIOR

Let's deepen our relationship with our Core Behaviors



26

## Core Behaviors



- The **behaviors** that, when practiced on a daily basis by everyone on the team:
  - Bring your values to life & drive your success.
  - Build your culture in an effective, sustainable, & high-impact way.
  - Help you become a high-performing, truly unstoppable team.



27

## Core Behaviors



- The **behaviors** that, when practiced on a daily basis by everyone on the team:
  - Bring your values to life & drive your success.
  - Build your culture in an effective, sustainable, & high-impact way.
  - Help you become a high-performing, truly unstoppable team.



28

## Core Behaviors



- The **behaviors** that, when practiced on a daily basis by everyone on the team:
  - Bring your values to life & drive your **success**.
  - Build your culture in an effective, **sustainable**, & high-impact way.
  - Help you become a **high-performing**, truly **unstoppable team**.



29

## Core Behaviors



- The **behaviors** that, when practiced on a daily basis by everyone on the team:
  - Bring your values to life & drive your **success**.
  - Build your culture in an effective, **sustainable**, & high-impact way.
  - Help you become a **high-performing**, truly **unstoppable team**.



30

## Reflective Exercise



- **Imagine:** you wake up tomorrow and everything at the firm is perfect - rocking & rolling - the energy is high, the employees are engaged, clients are ecstatic, you feel amazing. What is happening? What behaviors do you see everyone doing?



31

## HOW do we want to work together?

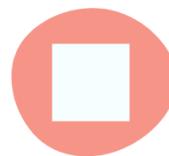
To achieve our goals in 2025, what should we should:



**Keep Doing**



**Start Doing**



**Stop Doing**



32



## Culture is in your Control

- Remember: the things you do everyday, & how you show up are in your control.
- The small things you do every day are making a difference.
- And those are the things that are building your culture.



33



## Culture is in your Control

- Remember: the things you do everyday, & how you show up are in your control.
- The small things you do every day are making a difference.
- And those are the things that are building your culture.



34



## Culture is in your Control

- Remember: the things you do everyday, & how you show up are in your control.
- The small things you do every day are making a difference.
- And those are the things that are building your culture.



35



## Measuring Cultural Impact

- No Bull Financial Consulting
- Founded in 2018
- Now has a team of six
- Providing bookkeeping, reporting, and data analytics
- Cultural values:
  - Integrity
  - Professionalism
  - Practicality



36



## Measuring Cultural Impact

- Company culture isn't just a "feel good" effort
- Strong, engaging company culture can and should have a meaningful impact on the bottom line
- Culture may be difficult to quantify and measure, but it isn't impossible



37



## Measuring Cultural Impact

- Start with the basics: you can't measure the impact on the bottom line if you don't measure the bottom line
- Bookkeeping should be updated at least monthly
- Financial statements and KPIs should be reviewed by management at least monthly



38



## Measuring Cultural Impact

- Establish "CPIs" - Cultural Performance Indicators
- Will vary from firm to firm based on goals
- Start with topics impacted by culture such as:
  - Hiring
  - Customer Satisfaction
  - Employee Satisfaction
- Then seek metrics in these categories to measure



39



## Measuring Cultural Impact - Hiring

- Example metrics for Hiring:
  - Number of total applicants
  - Number of qualified applicants
  - Number of interviewees
  - Duration from posting job to filling position
  - Survey qualified candidates who do not interview or accept an offer
    - Why did they stop pursuing your firm?
    - What would have changed their mind?
  - Survey new hires – why did they choose to interview and take the offer?



40





## Measuring Cultural Impact - Hiring

- Track Labor Efficiency Ratio - \$ revenue per \$ of payroll
  - Have a target, but be conscious of differing roles
  - Measure impact of new hires on LER and profitability
  - Also measure impact of team members leaving – turnover is expensive!
- Beware of lagging metrics – it might take a few months for the impact of a team change to be seen on the PNL, and that's okay!



41



## Measuring Cultural Impact - Customer Satisfaction

- You should be asking clients for feedback at the end of each engagement anyway!
- Your current clients should be representative of your future clients
- Their experience and feedback is a direct reflection of how your company culture is seen and interpreted by your most important audience



42



## Measuring Cultural Impact - Customer Satisfaction

- Consider weighting responses based on revenue, engagement duration, repeat business, etc.
- Compare responses to financial reports and KPIs at least quarterly
  - Are revenues up when customer ratings are up?
  - Do profits correlate to feedback scores?
  - Does customer feedback correlate to employee satisfaction also?



43



## Measuring Cultural Impact - Employee Satisfaction

- Culture "theory" often differs from practice and actual results
- No one will understand the impact of your culture better than your own team
- Regular requests for team feedback are crucial
- Use a rating scale alongside open feedback



44



## Measuring Cultural Impact - Employee Satisfaction

- Correlate survey results with PNL outcomes
- Consider comparing results with both same quarter and next quarter data
- Consider weighting by tenure, position, etc.
- Do not take results and feedback personally!



45



## Measuring Cultural Impact

- Take note of dates that affect culture
  - Start of new cultural initiatives
  - New staff start dates
  - Staff departure dates
- Put financial outcomes in context of these cultural impacts
- DO use subjective survey data
- DO NOT rely on "gut feelings"



46



## Culture: Putting Ideas into Practice

- Turke & Steil LLP
  - Founded in 2016
  - Grew from 2 to 30 FTE
  - Vision for firm culture

Turke & Steil LLP  
turkelaw.com

47



## Culture: Putting Ideas into Practice

- Our "Why"
  - Work hard but have fun
  - Respect
  - Honor personal time
  - Honor family
  - Share the success
  - Laugh often

Turke & Steil LLP  
turkelaw.com

48



## Culture: Putting Ideas into Practice

- The Why influenced What we do:
  - Hiring/terminating decisions
  - Flexible work, staff & attorneys
  - Flexible PTO
  - Health insurance/paternity leave
  - Profit sharing

Turke & Steil LLP  
turkelaw.com

49



## Culture: Putting Ideas into Practice

- The Why influenced What we do:
  - Generous holidays
  - Traditions
    - Happy hours
    - Firm retreat
    - Tacos
    - Friday memes
    - Summer social

Turke & Steil LLP  
turkelaw.com

50

# Thank you!



Connect with us on  [LinkedIn](#)