



GAMAFUNDATION
FOR EDUCATION + RESEARCH

BUILDING A HIGH-PERFORMANCE BUSINESS

RESEARCH IN ACTION

A collection of strategies and ideas for creating a high-performance culture for finding, building and keeping the right people.

BUILDING A HIGH-PERFORMANCE BUSINESS

RESEARCH IN ACTION

A COLLECTION OF STRATEGIES AND IDEAS FOR BUILDING AND
SUSTAINING A CULTURE THAT ENHANCES THE PERFORMANCE OF
YOUR AGENCY, FIRM OR COMPANY

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THE KEY TO CREATING A MAGNETIC CULTURE? FAMILY.

Before I founded Asset-Map®, I was an advisor for 15 years. I took the technology that I built in that role, and now it is used by more than 3,500 advisors around the world with their clients. Asset-Map employs 16 people, and we aim to double our team in the next year.

When I helped build a financial services firm, only three of us were in production. We had a shared appreciation for being kind to each other and never haggling over the small stuff. We wanted to be in business with each other over the long-run. We genuinely liked each other. My two mentors who had just started a partnership before I joined were adamant about two things: doing the right thing and prioritizing family. Organically, as we added employees, they saw that we were always mindful of being at all our family events — every recital, ball game or emergency. We would run at the drop of a hat for our families, and we would take any call regardless of what was going on in the day.

The most important reason most of us work in the first place is to take care of our family's goals and values and to be supportive. That's why we believe in putting family first. If anything important happens with your family or is a concern, we tell our teammates they should leave the office and take care of them. "We will cover for you."

That has become a cultural mantra for us. One of the things that happened, as a result, is that employees felt comfortable that we cared about their priorities too. They didn't have to miss the things that were important in their lives due to being stuck at work. Even if something happened in the middle of the day, they knew they could take care of their family matters.

That is the precedent we have set at Asset-Map as well.

If you want to double an organization and grow, you have to get everybody inspired to be magnets and attract people into it. That's the best way to build an organization: Create something so appealing that people want to be part of it.

That is evident most often in our culture. When people are working in their circles — either socially or with family and friends, and even on social media — if they're not promoting the organization, then we're missing out on the opportunity to grow with like-minded people. An organization that focuses on culture is going to try to bring in people that are like the ones who are already on the team. The only way to find those people is not just through outbound searching but rather by creating attraction strategies that inspire people to join.

People will self-select to your group and say, "I want that, too. I want to make a difference. I want to connect like a family. I want to feel empowered by a clear vision. And I don't want to have constant oversight; I want to take ownership and make decisions and contribute to an organization that appreciates me, and I can love my work product. I want to work for an organization that trusts me and allows me to put my family first." That happens only if people who are a part of your culture are saying, "That's my world. Wouldn't you like to be a part of it?"

I think it's uncommon to consider love and trust as fundamental business values, but these are values we embody as people. So, when we wanted to build our own business, these values permeated through the culture and created a dynamic work environment. In many cases, it doesn't feel like work; it feels like our work family. We look out for each other, support what matters in our personal lives, and we just happen to be physically at the office, working and generating income.

Another important element of our culture is that we trust everyone here enough to solve problems on their own. We recognize that people are not always going to answer them the way leadership would, but if we empower them to act, then productivity increases. It gives people ownership over their projects and the decisions they're making, as opposed to feeling dictated to, like they are just implementing somebody else's vision.

If you want to promote innovation as a culture, you have to allow people to bring ideas that might be utterly disruptive to your process. You have to be willing to accept that there may be a better way to do something. Sometimes, new ideas might fail. Question the way you do everything and be open to trying new ways — not just with the big stuff, but also at the smallest details because that's where incremental change happens.

Finally, because we view each other as family, we always have to have a good attitude and treat each other well. Just like in a family, even if you have problems, or there are aggravations within the organization or on the team, eventually you're going to forgive each other. We encourage open communication, and we always expect our leaders to set the example. Leadership has to be a constant example of the culture you want to create. And that's not always easy.

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