

# It's not just the delivery—it's the culture

What clients really buy when they hire a professional services firm



When a company signs a contract for professional services, they're not just buying expertise. They're buying trust, continuity, and judgment under pressure. And whether they realize it or not, all three are products of talent and culture working in lockstep at the consulting organization.

In highly-skilled advisory work, outcomes are inseparable from the people delivering them. The best methodologies in the industry will fall apart when teams don't collaborate well, don't listen clearly, or don't feel safe raising concerns early on. As a client, you feel these impacts right away: projects slow down; communication lines falter; nuance gets lost. Risk descends on the project—or quietly creeps in.

Strong culture is your best hedge against these negative outcomes. And that culture both informs and draws on the quality of the talent you hire to be part of it.



Companies choosing a professional services firm to work with can do the math: the best talent + the strongest culture = the best work. They might pay a slight premium for it, but it's worth it if they want results.

Conal O'Doherty, ZBeta Chief Growth Officer



## Culture: The system behind the work

Culture is the shared set of behaviors, expectations, norms, and values that shape how a group of people actually work together when no one is hovering over them. Culture is how decisions get made organically during a project. It's how work gets done, and it's how people treat one another day to day. Culture is the operating system that determines whether talent and projects thrive or stall.

Think of your consultant's culture as:

- + The performance network transforming their individual expertise into collective results.
- + The infrastructure that allows their highly capable people to consistently do great work.
- + Their lived experience of work—and whether it feels purposeful, safe, and worth investing in.

At ZBeta, we've learned over two decades that culture isn't a "nice to have" operating principle. It's the catalyst that drives how consistently we show up for clients, how we solve problems together, and how quickly we adapt when conditions change. Culture is what makes our expertise usable and real.

"When a company erodes its culture by not making it a priority, they're not going to deliver the best product," says Anna Yates, ZBeta VP of Talent & Culture. "But when your people feel valued, challenged, and able to contribute—all of that makes for great work, and the client is the key beneficiary."



## Continuity and confidence are the main ingredients

One of the clearest client-facing benefits of a strong culture is continuity. Meaningful cultural bonds lead to lower turnover, and low turnover means fewer handoffs, less institutional knowledge loss, and smarter momentum from one engagement to the next. Clients don't have to re-explain context or rebuild trust with an ever-changing roster of consultants. The team they start with on a project is generally the same team they have at the end.

Hand in hand with continuity is the pace at which the people on the team are encouraged to build their skills. "We had a recent managed services client hire us from an RFP," says Conal O'Doherty, ZBeta Chief Growth Officer. "During our early discussions, which really impressed me, they wanted to know: How are you investing in your culture at ZBeta? How do you attract and retain your talent? How do you help them develop? Because they knew it mattered—that the people we send to work for them are progressing in their careers, and there wouldn't be just this revolving door of new faces and names."



Another key contributor to a healthy culture is the psychological safety team members feel, which also has a direct impact on client outcomes. When consultants feel comfortable surfacing risks, questioning assumptions, and offering input, clients benefit from earlier course corrections and can make better-informed decisions. Good ideas get traction. Feedback travels fast, even if it's scary. And the capacity for intuition and initiative is the stuff that paves the path.

This safety factor is based on a simple truth: Teams benefit when each player brings just the right amount of ego. Too little, and you have an unhelpful squad of yes-people who eagerly capitulate to the consultant's lullaby or the client's de facto dream. Too much, and the egoists start shutting down the coworkers who would otherwise speak up with important insights or questions.

## What culture-aligned teams make possible

In an optimized consulting environment, collaboration replaces territorial behavior. Peacocking is devalued, letting discourse thrive. Feedback improves the work instead of protecting egos. The result is higher-quality thinking and more resilient execution, especially in complex or high-stakes environments.

At ZBeta, we've observed this and made it central to our growth for the entirety of our existence. Our clients see positive outcomes—excellent work driven by people who share and contribute honestly, often in novel ways. These clients describe this work style to us and to each other as “the ZBeta way,” even if they can't quite put their finger on what's behind it—they just know it gets them the best results.

What they're noticing is cultural alignment. Teams where members trust one another move faster, communicate more clearly, and stay focused on solutions rather than internal or circumstantial friction.



## As usual, it's all about risk

Importantly—and in a way that suits the everyday parlance of physical security—an evolved culture also acts as risk mitigation for the clients it serves. Stable teams reduce blind spots. Clear expectations reduce ambiguity. The open exchange of ideas based on shared values reduces unwanted surprises. When consultants think beyond what's written in the contract and consider foremost what matters to clients, integrity becomes operational, not aspirational.

These interactions elevate professional services, where reputation is built one engagement at a time. Culture determines whether the interactions compound positively or not. That's why ZBeta treats talent and culture not just as internal concerns, but also as client-facing assets. By honing these assets in every part of our business, we deliver the best outcomes for our clients as well as for our own business growth.

In other words: Clients come to us for expertise; they stay because of how that expertise shows up in practice.

So if you want to understand how a firm will perform under pressure, don't just look at their slide decks. Look at how they hire, how they grow people, and how those people work and interact together. Ask: Are they showing up in the ways that matter most?

Culture leaves fingerprints on everything. Do the forensics up front to find a security consultant who understands this and has made the right investments to produce the results you're paying for.



For a deeper dive into the specific ways culture is a performance multiplier in professional services, read our white paper, [Talent + culture: The competitive advantage you can't fake](#).

### Our office:

700 Larkspur Landing Circle, Suite 150  
Larkspur, CA 94939

### Email and web:

info@zbeta.com  
www.zbeta.com

### Phone:

(855) 559 2382

