

Optimizing for top talent through a culture lens

In professional services, purpose and belonging attract true performers

Hiring in professional services is too often treated as a transactional exercise: Fill the role. Match the resume. Onboard the new resources and get them billable as soon as you can.

But the best people you hire don't think in this transactional way about their careers, and so the organizations that do tend to lose them before long. The better strategy is not "fill the role"—it's "fit the culture ... and leave your mark on it as well." For the people you employ, culture isn't an abstract concept. It's a central day-to-day reality that determines for them whether work feels sustainable, effort feels meaningful, and growth in their career and life feels possible to attain.

"People have to feel a connection to their work, and to their co-workers," says Anna Yates, VP of Talent & Culture at ZBeta. "Because if that connection is missing, then it's just a job."



At ZBeta, we've learned that strong culture begins with a simple premise: hire highly capable adults, then design an environment where they can excel. That means clarity, trust, and accountability, not micromanagement or performative busyness. "We attract some talent based on our compensation and benefits," says Conal O'Doherty, ZBeta Chief Growth Officer. "But honestly I think we attract excellent people more consistently because they come here for our reputation—as a place where they can do the best work of their careers."

Designing careers, not just roles

Clear role expectations and career paths don't constrain ambition. They unlock it. When people understand the terrain and feel energized, they navigate it with confidence.

Talented professionals need a baseline for excellence they can ascribe to their work. That baseline is affirmed every day when the culture around them is vibrant and supportive. They want to see and know what "great" looks like so they can work hard to measure up. This achievement in turn depends on visibility into how they can grow, where they can stretch, and how the company measures their success.

Taking this principle to heart, the 5-person (and growing) Talent & Culture team at ZBeta includes a full-time learning and development manager focused on growth opportunities for all employees. The team also uses a self-built toolset of career maps and role matrices that help guide and shape each employee's personal growth in their role.

Mentorship likewise has a real impact. We pair new hires with mentors to supplement their ongoing education. Treating growth as a shared responsibility signals something important about us to the people we hire: our company is invested in long-term growth, not just short-term output.





When you cultivate a low-ego culture, the people you hire are much more apt to raise their hands and ask questions if they're unclear or uncertain about something. This willingness—and how others accept it—is the essence of bringing your whole self to the client challenges we're here to address.

Anna Yates, ZBeta VP of Talent & Culture



Low ego, high performance

Culture also shapes how feedback is given and received. Nothing kills ambition faster than feeling inferior because you asked a clarifying question. In low-ego environments, feedback improves the work instead of threatening the individual. Initiative is nourished, not suppressed. People feel safe asking for explanations, offering alternatives, and learning out loud in front of colleagues and the client. That kind of safety accelerates an employee's development far more effectively than any formal training alone.

Remote work has amplified these dynamics. In distributed environments, culture does more of the heavy lifting. Without physical proximity, the elements of a strong (or weak) team become even more visible, including trust, communication norms, and leadership behavior. When done well, remote work expands opportunity and autonomy. When done poorly, it exposes cultural decay.

“In a workplace where people are unenthused about showing up in the first place, and then suddenly they're working remotely, it can all go downhill quickly,” says O'Doherty. “We don't have that problem, because we've always been remote. We invest in people, not buildings—it's one of our main strategies for getting the best talent.”



Why great people choose to stay

Strong culture answers a question many great employees quietly ask: “Why should I remain at this company?” Compensation matters, but it rarely sustains loyalty on its own. People stay where they’re challenged, supported, and respected—and where their work connects to something larger than themselves.

That’s why “boomerang” employees are often the clearest signal of cultural strength. In our experience, when people leave, gain perspective elsewhere, and then return to ZBeta, it’s rarely because of a title or paycheck. It’s because they remember how it felt to work in an environment that trusted them and helped them grow. As one of our returning consultants put it: “I came back to ZBeta because no other firm treats people and professionalism like two sides of the same coin.”



Culture as force multiplier

In professional services, your people aren't just executing the work—they are the work. Culture determines whether that work becomes a source of energy or a source of conflict. With the right focus on building and nurturing a meaningful culture for your people, you establish your consultancy as a place where great professionals unite to solve challenges and grow together.

When organizations invest seriously in talent and culture, they don't just attract better people. They attract values-driven individuals who are there to build their careers, not spangle their resumes. Of the many ways you strive every day to make your professional services company the best it can be, hiring employees who thrive in your culture and embrace your values is a smart first step.



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

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