

# 3 Organizational Leadership Strategies For Your Firm





It's 2015.

Scott Barshay, an M&A lawyer with the very prestigious Cravath, Swaine & Moore has just had his best year. He's just generated \$100 million in fees for his firm.

Four months later he quit his job.

Barshay left Cravath, the *only* firm he had ever worked with, to join a rival in New York. His reason? He was fed up with Cravath's outdated system that rewarded seniority and longevity over performance. He used his book of business to negotiate a \$10 million dollar payday, becoming a partner at Paul, Weiss.

## **You have a tough choice to make**

It's the same tough choice *every* leader in *every* organization has to make. It's not an extraordinarily difficult decision. But it *is* an important one that *will* be made.

I'm talking about leadership strategy.

Leadership strategy requires a significant amount of self-control. It requires facing some harsh realities and bad news. That's not all that enjoyable, so average firms

opt for the next best thing.

### **Coercive control of those around them.**

These firms micromanage their employees. They harass their vendors and suppliers. All because they fear change. Fear is the motivator, the impetus driving their behavior.

## **Are these firms fading away?**

Sadly, yes.

They're being replaced by savvy firms that are willing to shift with the cultural climate. Cravath tried to downplay Barshay's move, but it sent a shockwave through the M&A world.

It's spreading.

Want to stay ahead of the curve? To win and maintain a competitive advantage for decades to come? Set your own leadership strategy. Do it yourself or others will set it for you.

Okay, how?

Which leadership strategies should you choose and why?

### **Strategy #1: Create your beliefs hierarchy**

A beliefs hierarchy gives your firm stability. It enables you to create a self sustaining culture, to create the motivators that drive your team to exceed expectations.

**Everything** begins at this level.

Your hierarchy is foundational. Anything you build, any strategy you use from here on out will be measured against the hierarchy *you* create.

Let's take a look.

- **Beliefs:** These are root-level assumptions about the world. It's assessing, at a fundamental level, what's real to you. It's your view of human nature (e.g. good or evil), your schema of the world, your reality. These assumptions about the world are internalized and they control everything you say or do.

- **Values:** Which beliefs are more important than others? Deeply held beliefs about your principles or standards of behavior, decency, honor, etc. These values are buried in our subconscious and deeply ingrained. These values aren't communicated so much as they're "*caught*."
- **Morals:** Your sense of right or wrong. The gut-level intuitions and clear distinctions made about details that are acceptable or unacceptable.
- **Ethics:** The rules you operate by, your morals and values distilled down and codified into words, rules and behavior.

Your beliefs hierarchy is fundamental.

But it's also the part firm leaders are quick to discount. It seems as if this doesn't matter, but it does.

Here's why.

If those around you – employees, partners, vendors – are allowed to define your hierarchy they have everything they need to control the performance and direction of your firm.

## **Strategy #2: Focus on people or performance**

Which one will you choose?

It's tough to decide, but it really comes down to two specific details. What do you want your firm to be focused on internally? People or performance?

You **can** have both.

But one of will be your **primary**, the other *secondary*; These are dictated by your beliefs hierarchy. Okay then. So what's the difference between the two?

### **Firms focused on people...**

- Believe people matter most
- Prioritize good relationships, over performance
- Value relationship hallmarks (e.g. trust, loyalty, empathy, connection) over performance
- Have a long list of friends and allies and an "enemies" blind spot
- Are drawn to connection and support
- Are the glue that holds industries, organizations and groups together
- Are connected to anyone and everyone

- Have an easier time attracting top tier talent

### **Firms focused on performance...**

- Are practical and [utilitarian](#)
- Believe results matter most. “Good enough” is good enough
- Act as a revolving door of people and relationships
- Have a long list of enemies and allies, but a short list of friends
- Are ambitious and driven.
- Achieve the impossible, pushing the industry forward
- Are drawn to data and truth
- Attracts top tier talent but struggles to keep them

Both approaches have value.

These details occur naturally. But the firms that choose between these *intentionally* are far more effective. They know who they’re looking for. As Jim Collins, author of Good to Great [says](#), “*they’re able to get the right people on the bus.*”

### **Strategy #3: Give them their deepest desires**

No firm is an island.

You’ll need *people* to get the outcomes you want. Meet the [deep desires of the heart](#) and you’ll have the resources you need to outperform *everyone*.

1. Certainty/Comfort
2. Uncertainty/Variety
3. Significance
4. Love and Connection
5. Growth
6. Contribution

Everyone on your team needs this. Which is where firms get it wrong. They assume these details aren’t *their* problem. When these needs aren’t met they *become* your problem.

You can choose.

### **The old ways are fading fast**

Scott Barshay's unmet needs became a \$100 million dollar problem.

It's no different with your firm.

Firms that are unwilling to change are being replaced by those who see the cultural climate for what it is. The shockwave continues to spread.

Want to stay ahead of the curve?

Set your own leadership strategy yourself – or others will set it for you. Leadership strategies require courage, self control, discipline and honesty. Play to win and you'll create a dynasty that endures, no controlling micromanagers needed.

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