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strengthen your firm's culture by implementing the following 5 strategies in your firm.

Sandra Wiley • Sep. 12, 2012

We are in the final 4 months of 2012. I'm issuing a challenge to everyone out there to strengthen your firm's culture by implementing the following 5 strategies in your firm.

1. **Don't criticize the team.** It is super easy to walk around and see things that you would like to change and believe that you have all of the answers that will solve the issues within your firm. Stop criticizing and blaming and start looking for ideas and solutions. There are likely things that need to change but if you choose the path of criticism, you will come off as rude and the team will feel compelled to defend themselves.
2. **Ask "Name one thing that we should stop doing immediately to make us more effective?"** Your staff does not want more work — and "give me your ideas!" always seems to result in someone having to do more work. This question will get people talking and the ideas flying. You'll also find out a lot about what individuals are probably saying anyway, you just may not have heard the ideas directly.
3. **Listen.** Duh. Of course you're planning to listen. But I mean actually listen. If you're in a staff meeting and someone actually is brave enough to flout cultural norms and give an idea, listen to it. Take notes on it. Ask non-threatening follow-up questions, questions that don't require the person to do extra work or implies in any way that the idea is a bad one. Thank the person profusely. Then actually look into the suggestion.

4. Respond to all ideas. The quality of the ideas don't matter at first — your staff may

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