

19 Does your value system exist as words or in everyday actions?

Think carefully of things you take for granted, which may actually be damaging or discriminatory

Words vs Actions

Ensuring that interns understand why FIRMSconsulting is unique, why our value system and culture is the source of our strength and why the work we do matters, is critical.

I do this in several ways:

- (1) Every intern gets a moleskin notebook in white. Inside the book is a personal note from myself explaining our values. It surprises clients when they sometimes pick up the book and see this list of values on the very first page.
- (2) I expect the interns to use these books for note taking during the study.
- (3) We never place our logo on the moleskin books, pens, screensavers etc. Why? Because, by not doing this, we imply that FIRMSconsulting as a brand is too important to place on another lower value item. We are strict about this. Even the client is not allowed to replicate our brand without our permission.
- (4) We forbid sexist images. Lots of companies use male symbols like ties and male suits to denote business. We do not allow this anywhere.
- (5) I do not like apologies. When someone apologizes / makes excuses it implies they have stopped fixing the problem. It is more important to fix the problem. If you fix the problem, an apology is unnecessary.

We also maintain excessive client confidentiality:

- (1) Within the firm, a partner not working on a study will not have access to the study. They will have access to a sanitized version only.
- (2) We air gap laptops with sensitive data – that means they have **never** been connected to the Internet and will not be connected to the Internet.
- (3) We are forbidden from disclosing the name of a former client, even if the client gives us permission to do so.
- (4) We do not use past client details in proposals.
- (5) We do not offer testimonials and referrals since this would mean disclosing client details.
- (6) Interns and employees sign an extensive and wide-reaching NDA and confidentiality agreement. Similar to the one Rumpelstiltskin had mothers sign.

We teach business strategy in compelling and creative ways.
Our clients solve mankind's toughest problems.

(7) We never solicit work – it must be referred to us.

This extreme focus on client confidentiality is one reason we can do these kinds of sensitive studies. The client knows we disclose nothing – ever.

The on boarding for the interns will take place between 11 and 13 June. I wanted to do it over 4 days but since the interns are returning from many far-flung lands after the MBA travels, some downtime seemed wise.

I do not want jet-lagged interns in on-boarding session. That would be unkind to them.

QUESTION(S) OF THE DAY: How do you feel when a firm’s values do not match its actions?

We answer this question, additional reader questions and discuss more issues raised in this article on the accompanying episode on the *Strategy Skills* podcast channel on [iTunes](#), [Google Android Podcasts](#), [Libsyn](#), Spotify, [Acast](#), [Podbay](#), [Podbean](#) and [Listen Notes](#). This is the world’s #1 ranked business strategy podcast channel.

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