



WHEN WHAT MATTERS CHANGES

By Meghan Koransky

Employees are rethinking what makes a career satisfying. Compensation still matters, but it is no longer the only measure. Flexibility, autonomy, meaningful work, and professional growth increasingly shape where—and how—employees want to work.

As priorities evolve, so can the reasons employees stay. What first attracts an employee to a firm may not be what keeps them there. The question is whether the firm and employee remain aligned—whether the experience the firm provides continues to reflect what the employee values.

When that alignment begins to erode, an employee may ask, ***“Is it time to go?”*** For leaders, the more important question may be, ***“What happens when an employee who once saw a future here begins to envision that future somewhere else?”***

What Matters Most Now

Sometimes work loses meaning, leadership feels less inspiring, or the firm falls out of sync with what initially made it appealing. Other times, an employee’s goals evolve, creating a desire for something new—exposure to different practice areas, fresh challenges, or a new path forward.

For employees, the question is ***“Do my current role and workload support what matters most to me now?”*** For employers: ***“Does the day-to-day experience reflect what we say we value?”***

From Misalignment to Action

Working late one night, taking on a challenging project, or adapting to a new responsibility does not mean you are living outside your core values. The issue arises when those trade-offs become the norm—and your work and life no longer align with what matters most.

Sometimes the disconnect is cultural. A firm may develop new expectations around availability, hierarchy, or how work gets done. Over time, employees may feel seen without feeling heard—or feel pressure to become the version of themselves they believe the firm wants.

The key is to recognize the difference between a temporary challenge and a pattern that no longer works. Alignment is an ongoing process, not something established on the first day. Regular conversations about priorities, workload, responsibilities, and career goals can help both sides recognize when priorities change. For leaders, the answer may be to listen differently, create new opportunities, or adjust expectations. For employees, the responsibility is to communicate what has changed.

The Better Question

Not every misalignment can be fixed. An employee’s goals may have outgrown what a firm can provide, or the firm may have evolved in a different direction. Sometimes the best decision for both sides is to move on.

The better question for employees is: ***“What do I need from my professional life now, and can my current environment realistically provide it?”*** For leaders: ***“Are we creating an environment where employees see their values, goals, and future reflected in the way we work?”***

Alignment is not about making the firm fit every employee—or asking employees to fit the firm at all costs. It is about creating enough common ground for both sides to have a meaningful reason to continue choosing one another.