

Lauren Izaks of All Points Public Relations on How to Build a Purpose-Driven Culture That Attracts Top Talent

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Thank you so much for joining us in this interview series. Before we dive into our discussion, our readers would love to “get to know you” a bit better. Can you share with us the backstory about what brought you to your specific career path?



My journey has been a series of unexpected yet rewarding twists. Looking back, I never imagined I'd be where I am today, leading a thriving public relations agency with my husband, Jamie. When we first started All Points Public Relations, our roles naturally aligned with what each of us excelled at. For me, it was organization, technology, and a vision to create a company culture that was rooted in purpose and shared mission. I realized early on that my knack for systematizing processes, managing the details, and establishing strategic growth pathways would be vital to the agency's success. Over time, my position evolved into a leadership role, guiding the company with a balance of precision and creativity, especially as we

expanded and developed new departments and services.

My background in education has always influenced the way I approach leadership, with a focus on building strong foundations for long-term success. Prior to starting All Points PR, my career path was grounded in education, teaching in the Chicago Public School system. I loved the direct impact I could make in the classroom, but I've found just as much fulfillment in creating opportunities for growth and development at All Points. In addition to my undergraduate degree from Indiana University, I earned two Master's degrees—one in Communication Sciences & Disorders and another in Information Design & Strategy—from Northwestern University, where I now teach a class in brand management.

I try to lead the agency by example, and as I encourage lifelong learning, innovation, and curiosity, I ensure I chase these values in my own life as well. I always find time to indulge my love of technology, news, and reading by leading three book clubs, two of which include our All Points team.

Can you share the most interesting story that happened to you since you began working in leadership, culture building, or purpose-driven organizations?

One moment that sticks with me happened during an employee's three-month review during the early years of our agency. At the time, this employee didn't know what an "update report" was (These are monthly client-facing decks we send that summarize our work and are fundamental to how we operate as an agency). I remember feeling frustrated at first—how could she not know? This was a key part of our agency work and how we demonstrated our efforts to clients! I couldn't believe she was oblivious to this core process in our agency—I nearly fired her on the spot. But then I had a moment of realization: we'd never actually taught her what an update report was. That experience humbled me and showed me how important it is for leadership to take accountability and ensure systems are in place to set people up for success. From that moment on, we created a more robust onboarding and training system for All Points, starting with a master orientation deck that walked new hires through our foundational practices. That employee is now our Vice President of Sales & Strategy and has been with us for over 11 years. That moment proved to me that a successful organization with a strong culture and systems and processes is a result of intentional actions that lead your team toward a shared goal.

You are a successful leader. Which three character traits do you think were most instrumental to your success? Can you please share a story or example for each?

First, organization. I was raised by a very organized mother, and that structure became second nature to me. I've learned that being organized helps everyone around me and is essential to creating clarity, efficiency, and trust, especially in a fast-paced agency setting.

Second, I'm a lifelong learner. I truly believe that staying curious and open to learning is a superpower. Whether it's enrolling in a class, reading up on trends, or even being the first person to introduce our team to tools like ChatGPT, I'm always seeking ways to grow. I want to lead a modern, evolving agency, so I need to evolve too. I can't expect my employees to be motivated to improve without doing it myself.

And third, persistence. I don't take "no" for an answer—and not because I'm difficult, but because I believe there's always a way to reach a result. I want to hear a new idea, not a roadblock. Persistence is actually our agency's one-word mission. It's baked into how we show up for each other and our clients, and it's how we continue to grow, improve, and lead with purpose.

Let's now jump into the focus of our interview. What does a "purpose-driven culture" mean to you personally, and why do you think it's critical for attracting top talent?

To me, a purpose-driven culture means living and working with integrity. This is an essential function of our work at All Points. We believe in doing meaningful work, treating people well, and working toward something greater than ourselves. While yes, this attitude can help attract top talent, I believe it's just as important for retaining that talent. When people feel connected to a shared vision, they're happier, more motivated,

and more invested in the long-term success of the organization and of each other. Purpose brings joy to the work.

How did you identify and define the mission or purpose for your organization? Was it inspired by a particular event, challenge, or insight?

Our agency's mission really developed organically. It's a reflection of our values, the mentors who shaped us, and the kind of environment we wanted to create for ourselves and our team. There wasn't one big moment that sparked it, but it was a collection of small, consistent decisions made with intention. The values we built our business on—like persistence, fearlessness, and integrity—have remained steady since day one.

What are the key steps leaders can take to embed purpose into the day-to-day operations and decision-making of their companies?

You have to write it down and be intentional. You must know who you are as a company and what you're working toward. That clarity becomes your compass. From there, it's about making intentional decisions that align with that purpose, every single day. You don't get a culture that cares about the work by accident—it takes intention. And you can't expect your team to understand or buy into that purpose if it hasn't been clearly communicated and modeled at every level of the organization.

What role does leadership play in championing and modeling a purpose-driven culture? Can you share an example of how you or another leader helped reinforce your organization's purpose?

You can't expect your team to be all-in if you're not modeling that commitment yourself.

For me personally, showing up for the team is non-negotiable. I make it a point to attend every single employee review, every year. It's a small action with a big message: everyone's development matters. I also believe that leading by example means stepping out of your comfort zone. I'm naturally more introverted, but I've pushed myself to take on roles that challenge me, like speaking at agency-wide seminars and teaching as an adjunct professor. I often talk about the importance of lifelong learning, so it's important to me that I walk that talk.

At All Points, we also reinforce our organization's purpose through mentorship. Based on recommendations from our team, we developed a staff-requested mentorship program called *Point Pals*, which pairs team members across different departments and experience levels to support one another's growth. It's one of the many ways we ensure our values are shared and lived throughout the agency.

When your team sees consistency between what you say and what you do, that's when your purpose can become a mindset.

How do you handle skepticism or resistance from team members or stakeholders who may not immediately understand the value of focusing on purpose?

By staying true to who I am. I've found that when you lead with consistency, people come to trust your intentions. You don't need to convince everyone on day one. Just keep showing up with purpose, keep living your values, and over time, people see the difference and want to be part of it.

Ok, let's talk strategy. Based on your experience, can you share "5 Steps to Build a Purpose-Driven Culture That Attracts Top Talent"? If possible, please include examples or stories for each.

1. Know who you are.

You can't build a purpose-driven culture if you haven't clearly defined your purpose. We spent time thinking about our values and what we wanted All Points to stand for. It wasn't a one-day process, but a steady reflection that helped us shape who we are.

2. Be able to share your purpose with others.

Once you know your purpose, you need to communicate it clearly and often. We bake our purpose into our onboarding, our internal meetings, our reviews, even our proposals to clients.

3. Surround yourself with people who share those values.

We're proud that every member of our senior staff started as an associate. They've grown with us, bought into our purpose, and helped carry it forward. That alignment of values is what fuels our culture and drives retention.

4. Stay consistent.

Consistency builds trust with your team, with clients, and with yourself. Purpose doesn't mean much if you only reference it during the good times. We stay grounded in our values even when things get hard.

5. Be persistent.

Persistence is our agency's one-word mission statement. It reminds us that setbacks happen, but the goal is always to keep pushing forward together. We often say, "all arrows point up at All Points PR," and that positive momentum is what keeps us going.

Can you share a specific example of how embracing a purpose-driven culture helped your company attract exceptional talent or achieve a significant business goal?

Honestly, our senior leadership team is the best example. Every person on that team started here as an associate. They grew with us because we built an environment where people are encouraged to grow. Our purpose-driven culture creates space for people to do meaningful work and feel supported while working to achieve a shared vision of professional growth and development.

What advice would you give to leaders of smaller companies or startups who want to build a purpose-driven culture but don't know where to start?

Start with yourself. You have to know your own purpose before you can lead others toward one. Once that's clear, everything else becomes a little easier because you'll be leading with intention.

What are some common mistakes leaders make when trying to create a purpose-driven culture, and how can they avoid them?

One of the biggest mistakes is trying to follow trends instead of being authentic. If you don't know who you are as a leader or a company, people will notice.

Don't chase every new trend just because it's popular. Build something that's true to you and stick with it. One example that comes to mind is the rise of open-concept workspaces. While that setup gained popularity, when we designed our office, we chose not to follow that trend blindly. Instead, we focused on what would support our culture and team dynamics. Assigned desks may not sound flashy, but they create structure and consistency—two things that help our teams collaborate effectively and stay grounded in a fast-paced agency environment. A purpose-driven culture isn't built by following fads, it's built by understanding what truly helps your people thrive.

How do you ensure that your organization's purpose evolves and remains relevant as your company grows and the world changes?

We're constantly analyzing and reevaluating our goals, our systems, and our people. I set goals for the agency and share them transparently with the team. We reflect on whether we met them, why or why not, and what that tells us about where we're headed. Listening to our employees, watching industry shifts, and staying open to growth keeps us grounded and relevant at the same time.

What trends or shifts are you seeing in the workplace regarding purpose, and how do you think these will shape the future of business?

The workplace is always shifting. What's become clear is that purpose and flexibility can—and should—coexist alongside current employee priorities. For example, I personally love being in the office five days a week, but that doesn't work for everyone. So, we implemented a hybrid model where team members work in the office four days a week and have the flexibility to work from home one day. This was a deliberate decision that aligns with our values of encouraging face-to-face collaboration while offering flexibility. It's a structure that supports both individual needs and our broader vision for agency growth. The future will belong to organizations that can hold purpose steady while adapting thoughtfully to change.

In your opinion, how does having a purpose-driven culture impact not just employees, but customers, clients, and the broader community?

At All Points, a purpose-driven culture is a way of working. Our team-first, all-in attitude extends beyond client work and into the communities we serve. One of the most meaningful ways we bring this to life is through our *Positive Impact* program, which I launched to give every team member an opportunity to participate in volunteer efforts and charitable giving throughout Chicagoland. It's become a cornerstone of our culture, with quarterly service events that bring our team together around causes that matter.

One initiative we're especially proud of is our *PRo Community Project*—an idea sparked by one of our senior team members—through which we provide pro bono marketing and PR support to nonprofits making a difference. Last year, we deepened this commitment by forming a long-term partnership with the Chicago Coalition for Family Building. The Coalition is a powerful example of what happens when people use their platforms for good—leveraging influence in healthcare to create real change.

These experiences remind us that when businesses invest their skills and resources back into the community, they can create real change. Our hope is that by sharing the work we do through our Positive Impact events and PRo Community partnerships, we can inspire other companies—big and small—to do the same. A purpose-driven culture has the power to spread your values outward, lifting up clients, communities, and causes in your community and beyond.

You are a person of great influence. If you could start a movement that would bring the most amount of good to the most amount of people by building purpose-driven workplaces, what would that be? You never know what your idea can trigger. :-)

Simply put, I would want to inspire others to lead their own Positive Impact program. Every company, regardless of size, has the capacity to make a difference. Whether it's giving time, offering complimentary services to those who need them, or partnering with local organizations, meaningful impact doesn't require a large budget.

If every leader, in every industry, committed to giving just a little more, we could create a huge wave of positive change beyond the four walls of our workplaces.

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