

Softway

Building a Culture of Love

Your personal growth, your business's success—
and everything you need to know about a crazy
little thing called love.



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The dreaded L-word

When we say “love”, HR folks typically head for the hills, or at least to grab the nearest lawyer and brace for impact. Let’s put those fears to rest right now—when we say “LOVE” we’re not talking romantic entanglements. We’re not even talking about feelings, per se. A culture of love isn’t a culture of making people FEEL loved, it’s a culture built on specific ACTS of love. Tangible, actionable approaches to building a place where people feel like they belong. Love is a verb, and we define it through our Six Pillars of Love.

More on that shortly.

No, we're not Cupid

We're Softway. And we practice what we call A "culture of love". Okay, don't delete this ebook just yet—we're here to deconstruct "love" in a tangible and actionable way, so you can see how this type of approach could work for you and your business (even if you've never muttered the word "love" at work).

This ebook will give you a peek into Softway's Secret Sauce for building and sustaining resilience (the ability to be adaptable, flexible, and nimble) within any sized organization. We'll dive into where love fits in your business's strategy in not only creating a diverse and inclusive culture, but one that is innovative without limits and successful.



Can we get real with you for a second? Our culture (and leadership) hasn't always been loving. Quite the opposite.

In the past, our leaders focused on performance over employee well-being, and profits over people. We were selfish, and our treatment of people at our company left us teetering on the brink of bankruptcy in 2016. Our leaders realized they needed to make a drastic change—starting with their behaviors.

From that day forward, we focused on building a culture of love. A culture that values vulnerability, courage—and embraces personal accountability and introspection over blaming others. One that thrives on and flourishes through connection, empathy, and understanding. A culture that honors the humanity of every employee, because when your business takes care of people, they take care of you.

It was our culture of love that fueled our resilience and growth through turbulent times, and it's what drives us today to help other businesses do the same.

**Want to know the
secret ingredient in
our Special Sauce?**



**Want to know the
secret ingredient in
our Special Sauce?
It's Behaviors.**

Think about it. Do you enjoy working with jerks?



Even jerks that are *really good* at their jobs but don't make work enjoyable (or even bearable). Sure, they get work done, but they don't create an environment where innovation can thrive. Where unique voices have a place to speak up and be heard. But are they aware of how their behaviors affect others? Are you aware of how your behaviors affect people around you?

How we treat each other CREATES culture. Good or bad, culture starts with how we're treated.

POWER
OF LOVE

PILLARS OF LOVE

BEHAVIORS

Everything begins with Behaviors

Have you ever heard Peter Drucker's famous quote? If not, here it is:

“Culture eats strategy for breakfast.”

Breakfast is after all the most important meal of the day, right?

However, before you can have a rich, blossoming culture, you have to have the right behaviors to SUPPORT a culture that can “eat strategy for breakfast”.

So at Softway, we say,

“If culture eats strategy for breakfast, then behaviors eat culture for lunch.”

Without the right behaviors, having a robust culture is impossible. That's where our journey starts. Not with a culture of love, but something that sets the stage to make a culture of love possible: behaviors that drive organizational success.

POWER
OF LOVE

PILLARS OF LOVE

BEHAVIORS

Introspection is the key

Behaviors are at the core of building resilience—and it starts at the individual level. In order to build a culture of love, each and every member of an organization should be working towards improving their own behaviors—for the betterment of themselves and others.

In order to understand one's own behavior, and how it creates or destroys culture, **introspection is the key.**

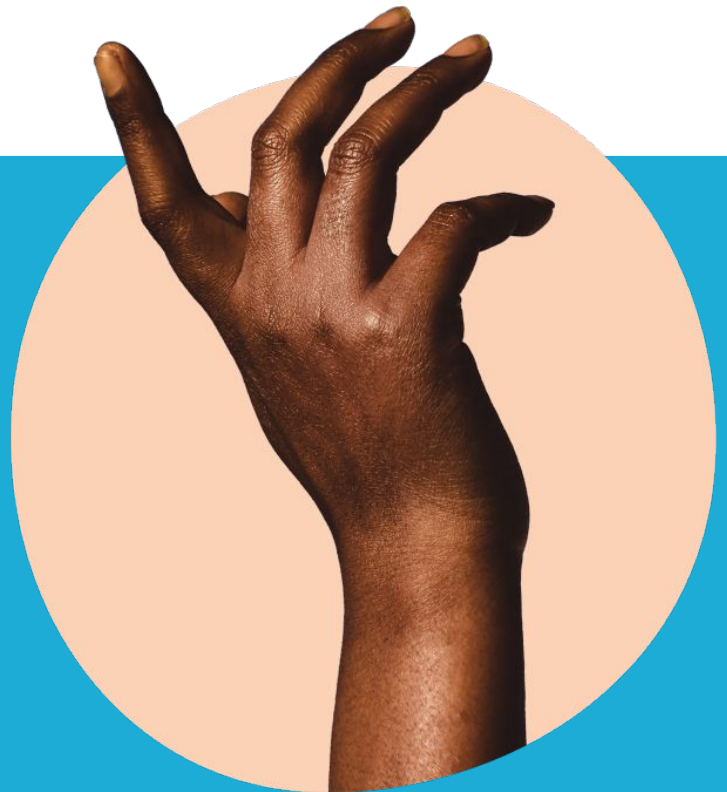
Introspection leads to self-awareness—a prerequisite for anyone seeking to understand how they behave and how their behaviors are perceived by others. That self-awareness is what enables us to make meaningful changes in our own behaviors.

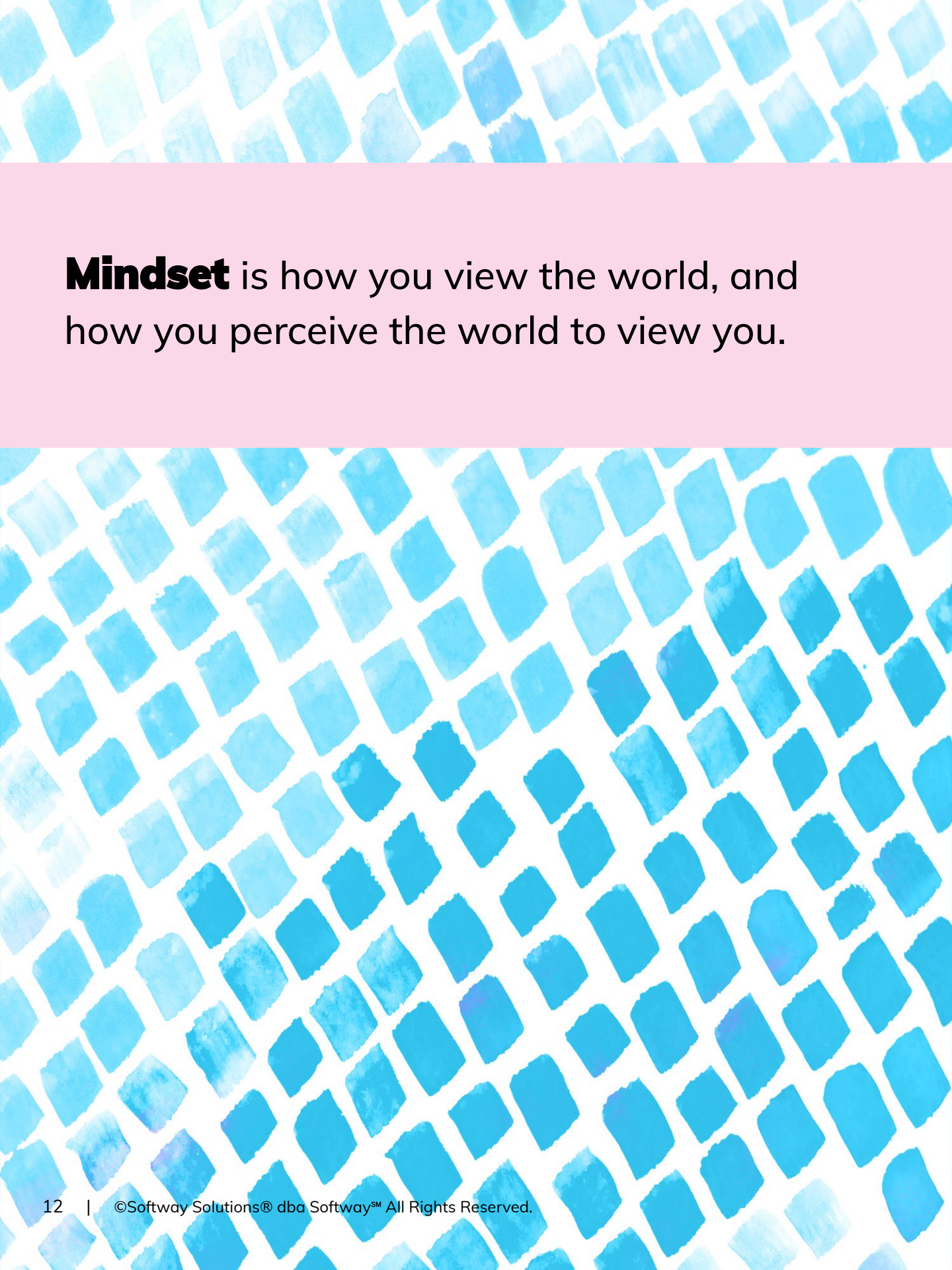
Behaviors of individuals are broken up into three main components, your:

Mindset

Attitude

Communication




The background of the slide is a repeating pattern of light blue, watercolor-style squares. These squares are arranged in a grid that is slightly offset from one row to the next, creating a staggered effect. The squares vary in intensity, with some being a vibrant cyan and others being a softer, more muted blue. The overall appearance is that of a textured, artistic pattern.

Mindset is how you view the world, and how you perceive the world to view you.



Attitude is the manifestation of your mindset; inclusive of your feelings, emotions, and beliefs.





Communication is the way in which your mindset and attitude are shared with others. That could be verbal, nonverbal, written communication—even how you choose to listen.

POWER
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PILLARS OF LOVE

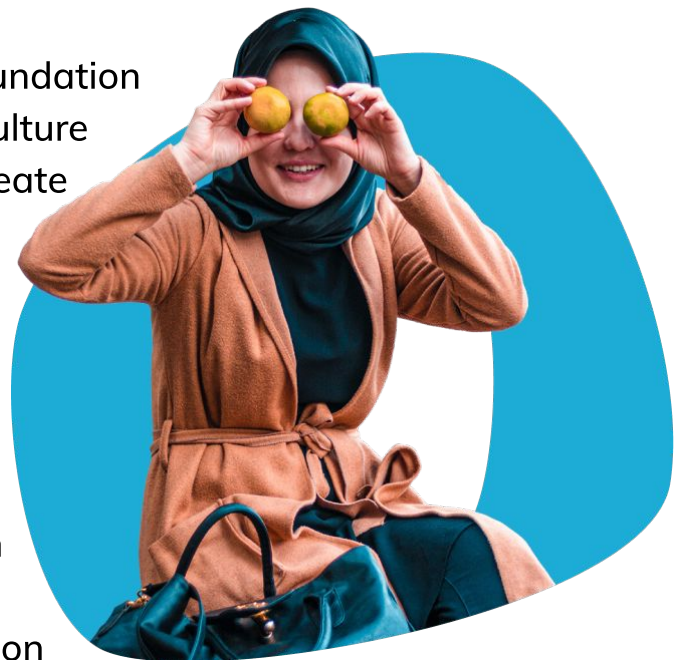
BEHAVIORS

If culture eats strategy for breakfast, then behaviors eat culture for lunch.

These three components form the foundation by which culture is created. A toxic culture begins from fixed mindsets, which create attitudes that act out of fear of not looking bad or feeling embarrassed. Resulting in communication that either deflects or demeans.

A healthy culture, on the other hand, is built from a growth mindset, which creates attitudes of humility and acceptance, resulting in communication that is inclusive, practical, and uplifting.

Now that we've laid the foundation, let's frame this metaphorical building with the Six Pillars of Love.



The Six Pillars of Love



POWER
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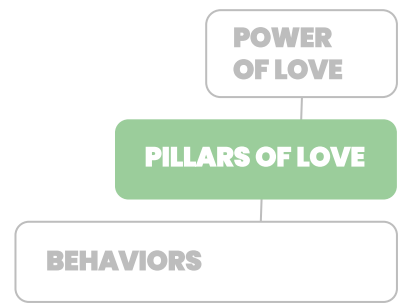
PILLARS OF LOVE

BEHAVIORS

The culture that we aspire to experience inside of Softway (and for our customers) is what we call the Culture of Love.

We aspire to create a culture that is felt by every team member inside of the organization, regardless of rank or tenure. This is not restricted to just one team or a few individuals—but must be felt throughout the organization. In order to achieve a culture of love, the following principles, or pillars, have to be practiced within the organization. Here's where the rubber meets the road, so to speak. The six pillars DEFINE love for us. They are tangible examples of how we put love to work.

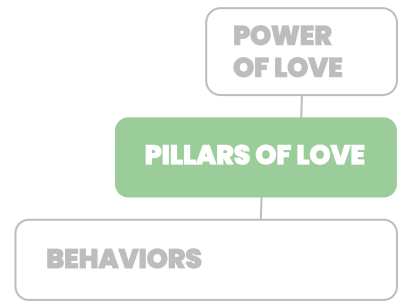




The Six Pillars of Love

Inclusion

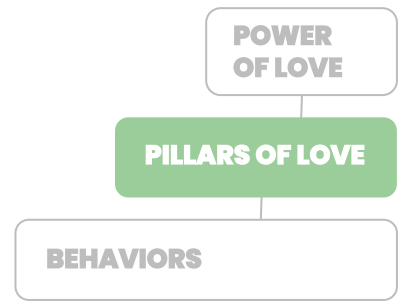
We start with inclusion because a culture of love cannot exist if people are not included. If their voices aren't heard, what's the point? It's not enough to just embrace diversity and offer a "seat at the table" but by giving people across all spectrums of diversity the ability to contribute and participate, we are able to bring practical inclusion to our place of work.



The Six Pillars of Love

Empathy

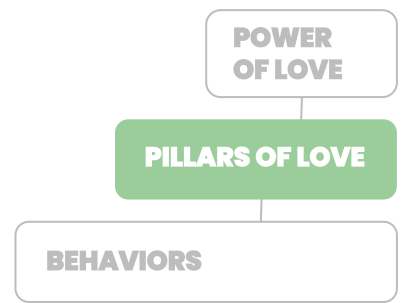
Being able to walk a mile in someone else’s shoes. Feeling what the person across the table feels because you’ve experienced something similar. Empathy is a skill, not a trait—one that can be improved over time through learning and listening. We aren’t able to truly practice empathy unless we care deeply about inclusion, which brings new and diverse voices to the table. In a culture of love, empathy should not be levied for a select few, but each and every individual when needed.



The Six Pillars of Love

Vulnerability

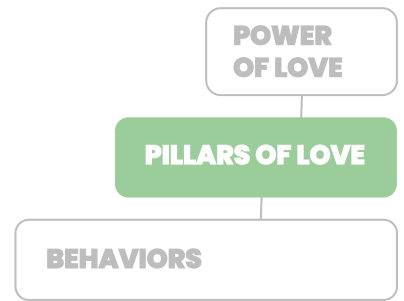
Uh oh. It's that word. This word is so scary to folks that feel like it means divulging our deepest, darkest secrets to a group of strangers. Not in the culture of love. Vulnerability is simply taking ownership, apologizing for a mistake—and showing humanity in failure. And as simple as that definition is, this is one of the hardest things for folks (especially leaders) to overcome. Turns out that swallowing your pride and being humble is tougher than it sounds.



The Six Pillars of Love

Trust

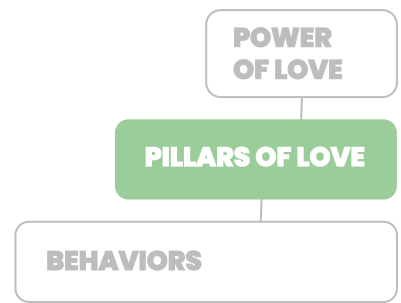
A culture of love starts with trust. Like a fully charged battery, we start with 100% trust from the get-go—and expect that same level of trust in return. This type of culture requires vulnerable trust, one forged out of relationships and care for the other person, and not just predictive trust built from historical trends. Through vulnerable trust, we're able to empower people to go beyond their skill sets and do more than they ever thought possible.



The Six Pillars of Love

Empowerment

This isn't our attempt of jumping on the "thou shalt empower" bandwagon. A culture of love is defined by leaders that empower their people by creating access to wisdom, tools, and processes necessary to succeed (or safely learn from mistakes). The result of real empowerment? Teams will do their best to not disappoint.



The Six Pillars of Love

Forgiveness

We are all human and we all make mistakes. At any given time, our feelings will be hurt, or we'll hurt others (intentionally or unintentionally). But we must learn to forgive. Unforgiveness (holding onto mistakes, misbehaviors, and the past failures of others) is the single most damaging thing to culture. Unforgiveness makes reconciliation impossible. It splits teams, destroys morale, and creates a toxic environment.

The Six Pillars of Love:

Inclusion, empathy, vulnerability, trust, empowerment, and forgiveness.

These six words are how we define love. Think for a moment—how would your organization perform if everyone embraced them? What would your organization look like?—how would it feel to be a part of an organization that not only upholds, but defends these pillars?

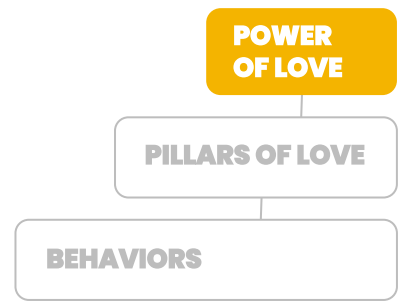
Important note: you cannot have the pillars à la carte. Each pillar fuels, builds, intermingles, and coexists together—a culture of love is an ecosystem, and if one element is missing the entire ecosystem collapses. Or, for those gear-heads out there, like a 6-cylinder engine—firing all the cylinders at the right time and moment to create the highest performance of that engine. If one cylinder doesn't perform well, the engine doesn't run.

...But that's not the end of the story. Let's talk about what these pillars UNLOCK as a result.



The Power of Love





The Power of Love

Can you feel it?

A culture of love creates an environment where everyone is able to bring their most authentic selves to work each and every day. This helps create a psychologically safe environment where people can share their ideas freely, give feedback with compassion, receive feedback with grace, truly support each other—and ultimately, unlock HIGH PERFORMANCE.

The Power of Love

High-performing teams

High-performing team members demonstrate the behaviors (mindsets, attitudes, and communication) that are needed to create a culture of love and support by practicing the Six Pillars of Love.

These high-performing teams are not able, but collectively motivated to create processes that unlock higher-efficiency instead of creating inefficiencies. Which is what usually happens when teams do not operate or uphold the Six Pillars of Love.

These same high-performing teams are responsible for developing, creating, and making technology decisions that unlock innovation and creativity.



The Power of Love

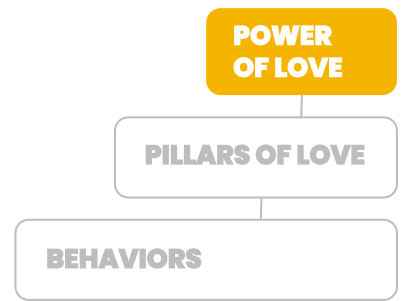
Resilience & belonging

A culture of love ultimately helps create an organization where teams are resilient and feel like they belong. The organization is able to perform at the highest possible levels. When your company unlocks the value of resilience and belonging—you begin to see something that everyone likes to see. Profit.

That's what happened to us. In 2016 we were hemorrhaging cash. We had -15% EBITDA. But as we began to change our behaviors, a funny thing happened. Our culture changed. People began bringing their full selves to work—they felt like they belonged, and our company began to thrive. Our clients noticed too, and gave us more work. In 2019, just three years later, we hit +29% EBITDA with 280% revenue growth.



When we set our focus on loving and supporting people first, the rest fell into place. Our reputation and brand matured, our client sheet expanded—and we generated profit, like a lot of profit. The formula: People > Profit.

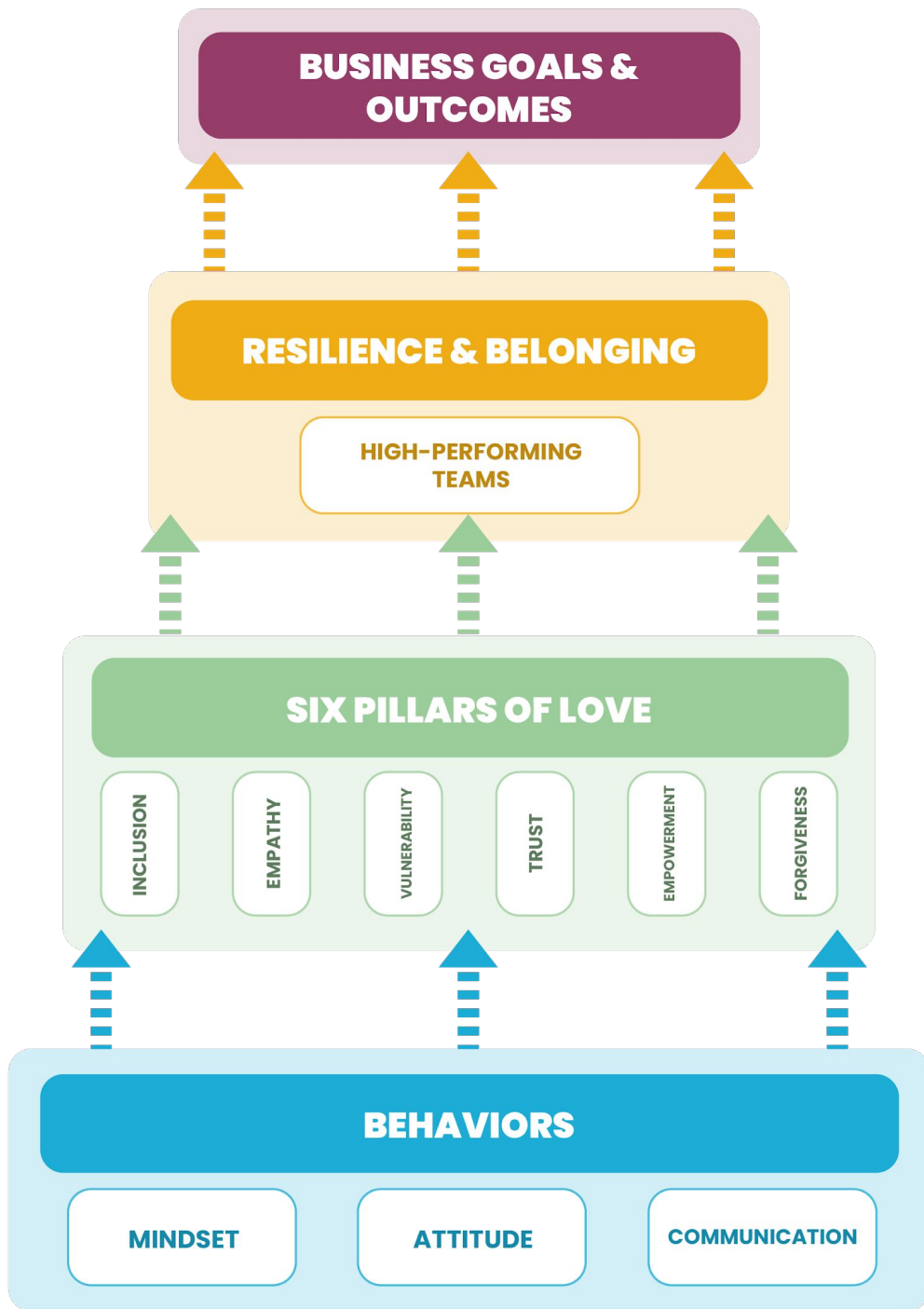


The Power of Love

Business goals & outcomes

Ultimately, when we have resilient, inclusive organizations that focus on people and have the right culture and behaviors to unlock higher-performing teams—we are able to achieve any business goals and see more successful business outcomes.

That's resilience in a nutshell. If you build the right kind of culture, with the right people displaying the right attitudes and behaviors, they will envision new products that need to be created. They will adjust to new market conditions. They will stay ahead of the curve, and embrace new ideas. And they will create long-term possibilities without sacrificing short-term revenue.



Our culture of love began as a philosophy, fueled by intangibles. However, its impact?—anything but intangible. What starts in the heart and mind manifests, supports, and ultimately determines your organization’s resilience and success. But it *all* has to be there.



One of the most important roles culture can play is in making the business sustainable. The old way of doing business was costly, rigid, and slow. A culture of love is resilient, adaptable, and innovative. It propels profit and long-term business outcomes. When you invest in your people, they do things you never could have imagined.

A culture of love isn't a fairytale

Having a blossoming culture *and* booming bottom line isn't a fairytale, and we're not your fairy godmother, we're Softway. And we're putting love to work.

We're experts, practitioners, and lifelong learners and re-learners. Through our rare blend of technology, storytelling, and humanity, we're empowering organizations with the ability to weather any storm, to bring new voices and ideas to the table, and to make work a place of innovation and excitement.

When it comes to your cultural and organizational transformation—our products, services, and experiences are unique, practical, and proven.



Make love work for you.

SENECA LEADERSSM

**A Culture of Love starts
with hearts & minds.
But it begins with **leaders.****

In this exclusive leadership event we:

- Guide new and experienced leaders to identify their own strengths and weaknesses.
- Uncover false stories we tell ourselves about leadership.
- Help you become the most effective force for your team.

Don't want to take our word for it?

Sign up for one of our free virtual Seneca Leaders mini-sessions.

[See Upcoming Dates](#)



Softway

SENECAHUESM

The Diversity & Inclusion learning platform for your bustling, remote workforce.

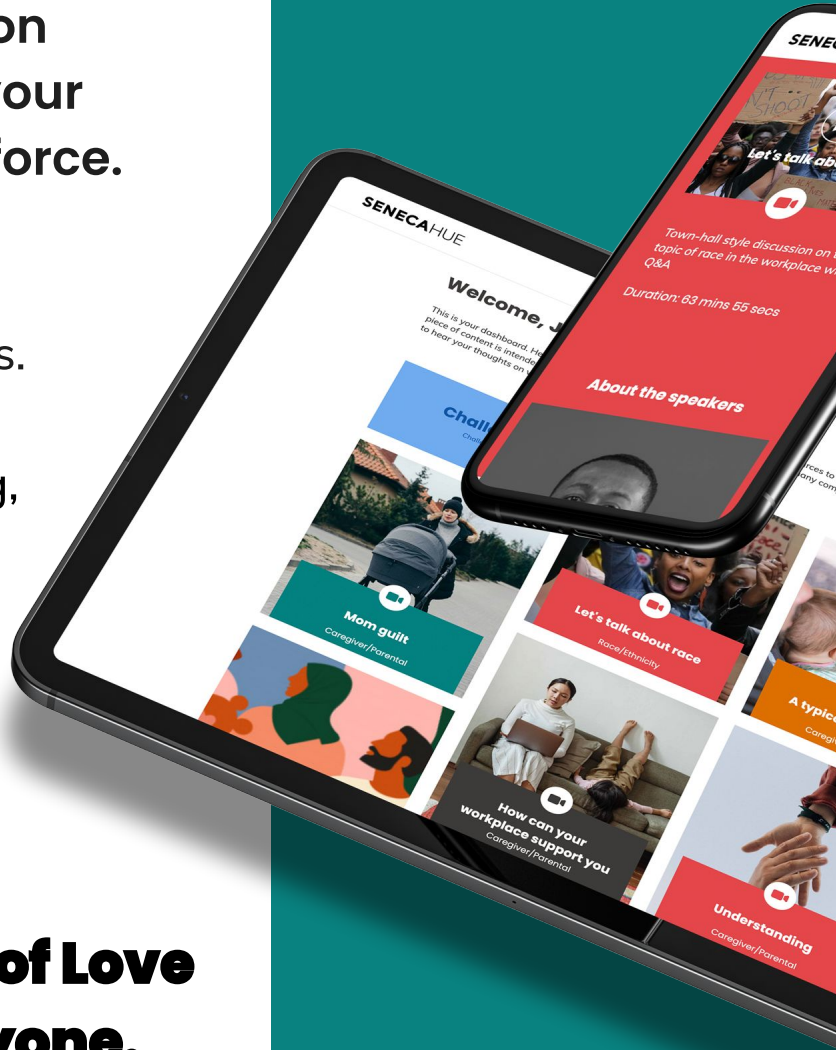
Accessible across all devices and platforms.

Approachable, engaging, and self-paced.

Updated regularly with honest, human conversations taking place in the real world.

Because a Culture of Love must include everyone.

[Book A Demo](#)



Softway

About us

Softway, a full-service digital transformation agency, is the proud creator of the Seneca Series. We've inspired change for teams of thousands across the globe, with new lessons in development to address diversity and inclusion (D&I) in our ever-growing, ever-woke world.

Want to know more about how our Seneca Series can help leaders and teams in your organization better navigate crisis? [Let's talk.](#)

More human-centered advice to help you manage uncertainty.

["It begins with behavior"](#)

A thought leadership article from our CEO. Culture cannot be bought or sold. And no amount of cultural quotas, HR campaigns, or third-party seminars are truly effective in changing or evolving workplace culture. *It* all begins with your behavior.

["Love as an Inclusion Strategy" podcast episode](#)

Only 7% of D&I initiatives are successful. In this episode we take a deeper dive into what's holding back so many D&I initiatives (93%) from creating lasting, meaningful change.

[Servant Leadership ebook](#)

Through compelling and vulnerable real-world examples, you'll see how servant leadership can strengthen business objectives, unlock innovation, and improve resiliency.

[Leadership Resilience ebook](#)

Strengthen productivity, find new ways to sell, and keep your business profitable through uncertainty. In this ebook, you'll find practical ways to lay a cultural foundation that can withstand any crisis.