

Amazing Grace Under Fire: When Legacy Meets Law

Team: #17

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**2026 SHRM
California
Student HR Case
Competition**

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Background

Critical Context



70-year-old family-owned business with **approximately 250** employees that relies on a **deeply ingrained culture of mutual respect, community investment, and servant leadership** under CEO Grace.



Management historically operated on trust and familiarity rather than formal command structures, adopting the motto "**if it's not broken, then don't break it**".



A **critical crisis** occurred during a routine, company-supported **community volunteer** event when plain clothes **ICE agents** suddenly arrived and **detained three long-term employees**.



These unexpected arrests triggered an immediate emergency, exposing that the company's informal, family-style operating model was entirely **unprepared for serious legal and regulatory enforcement**.

Major Problems

Risk. Exposure. Instability. Vulnerability.



Compliance Concerns Identified: There is an elevated regulatory and operational risk identified in key HR domains (OSHA, FLSA, and I-9).



Needs Formal Governance: Scaling the workforce without formalizing business policies created massive operational blind spots, turning the company's cultural strengths into a severe legal liability.



Limited Organizational Response to Workplace Risk: Leadership has no structured crisis response framework or legal risk preparedness, forcing leadership to react defensively rather than proactively mitigating external threats.



Misalignment Between Culture and Regulation Requirements: There is an unsustainable tension between maintaining old-school, relationship-based values and implementing the modern regulatory expectations required for a company of this size.

Minor Problems

Deteriorating Workplace Environment



Declining Psychological Climate: Heightened employee anxiety and unchecked rumors regarding immigration enforcement are rapidly eroding workplace morale, trust, and psychological safety



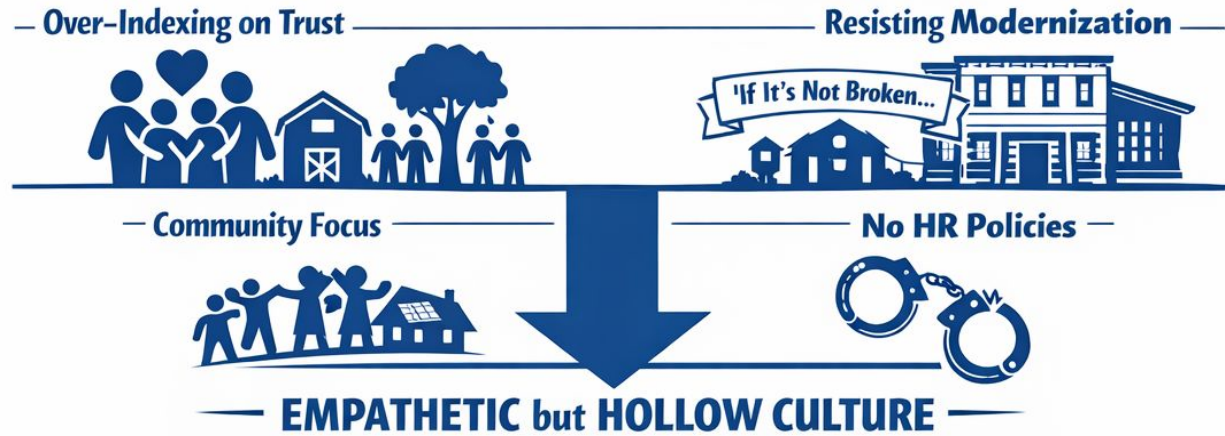
Absence of Succession Planning: Leadership continuity and long-term strategic roadmaps rely entirely on familial transitions without a documented talent pipeline.



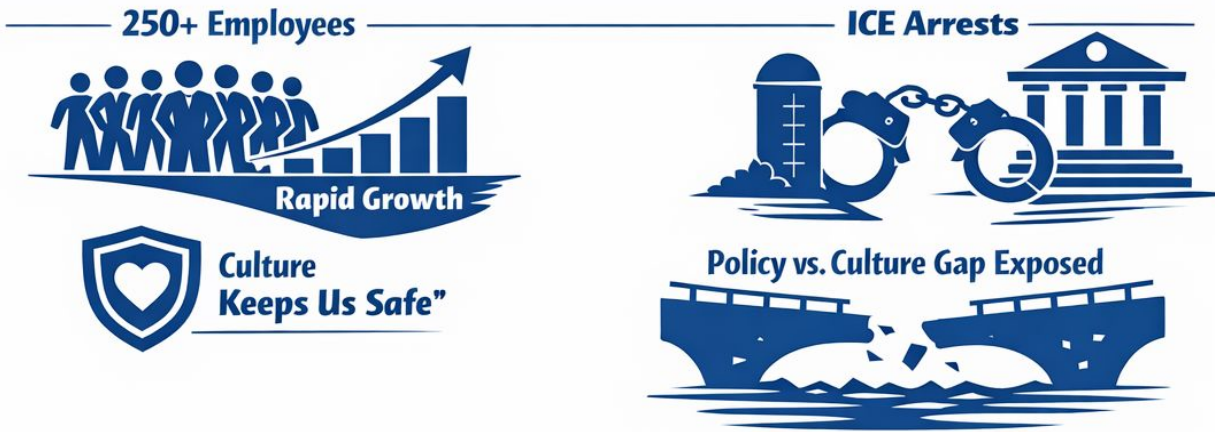
Outdated Administrative Infrastructure: The business lacks a Human Resources Information System (HRIS) or basic technological workflows to manage employee data, track compliance audits, and securely maintain records.

Analysis of Root Cause

How did the organization get here?



Why are the problems so prevalent now?



Alternative Solution 1

Solution One: The Amazing Grace Intervention

Compliance. Leadership. Stewardship. Protection.



Building a Compliant, Well-Led, and Protected Organization | *Led by Grace.*

Alternative Solution 2

Solution Two: Strong Together Initiative

Compliance. Community. Culture. Together.

1



ASSESS RISK

- Grace to review SHRM Multi-state Comparison Tool and understand employment requirements

2

LAUNCH THE STRONG TOGETHER INITIATIVE



Know Your Rights Huddles

Launch huddles with local immigration attorneys



Legal Support Partnership

Partner with local immigration attorneys and offer a voluntary stipend (EAP-style)



Community Captains

Implement employee-elected Captains to reinforce standards and compliance



Our Voice Workshops

Hold biweekly cross-departmental workshops to build company policies with Grace's sponsorship

3

CONDUCT A STRUCTURED I-9 AUDIT



Private Notifications

Privately inform employees with missing documentation



Corrective Timeline

Provide a timeline for employees to submit authorization documents



Dignity-First Approach

Apply a dignity-first, tenure-based severance approach (if required)

4

ESTABLISH A SIMPLE HRIS SYSTEM



Enable Compliance Tracking

Track and manage compliance requirements



Explore LMS Integration

Consider an LMS for employee development and upskilling

5

INVEST IN LEADERSHIP THROUGH MENTORSHIP



Monthly One-on-Ones with Grace

Captains receive guidance and support to grow as leaders



Build a Leadership Pipeline

Develop future leaders and strengthen succession planning



Building a Compliant, Supported, and Empowered Workplace— *Together.*

Justification

Our Initiative Comparisons

Criteria	The Amazing Grace Intervention	Strong Together Initiative
 Resolves Compliance Concern: OSHA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
 Resolves Compliance Concern: FLSA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
 Resolves Compliance Concern: I-9	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
 Establishes HRIS Framework for Tracking	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
 Provides Governance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
 Establishes Response to Risk Framework	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
 Alignment on Culture and Regulations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
 Utilization of Community	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
 Establishing Psychological Safety	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
 Establishes Leadership Continuity Plan	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
 Provides a Foundation for Growth	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Recommendation

Our Recommendation Solution Two: Strong Together Initiative



IMMEDIATE RISK MITIGATION

- A structured I-9 audit addresses urgent legal risk, while tenure-based severance (if required) demonstrates good faith and respect for employee contributions.



SUSTAINABLE COMPLIANCE STRUCTURE

- Establishing Community Captains and implementing an HRIS system enables consistent compliance enforcement while maintaining organizational agility.



EMPLOYEE-DRIVEN ADOPTION

- Our Voice Workshops build compliance competency while empowering employees to contribute to policies—resulting in stronger engagement and accountability.



SUPPORTS EMPLOYEE WELL-BEING

- Know Your Rights Huddles provide clarity, reduce uncertainty, and foster psychological safety during a time of external change.



DEMONSTRATED COMMITMENT TO EMPLOYEES

- Immigration attorney stipends reinforce our investment in our people and the communities we serve.



INVESTS IN FUTURE LEADERSHIP

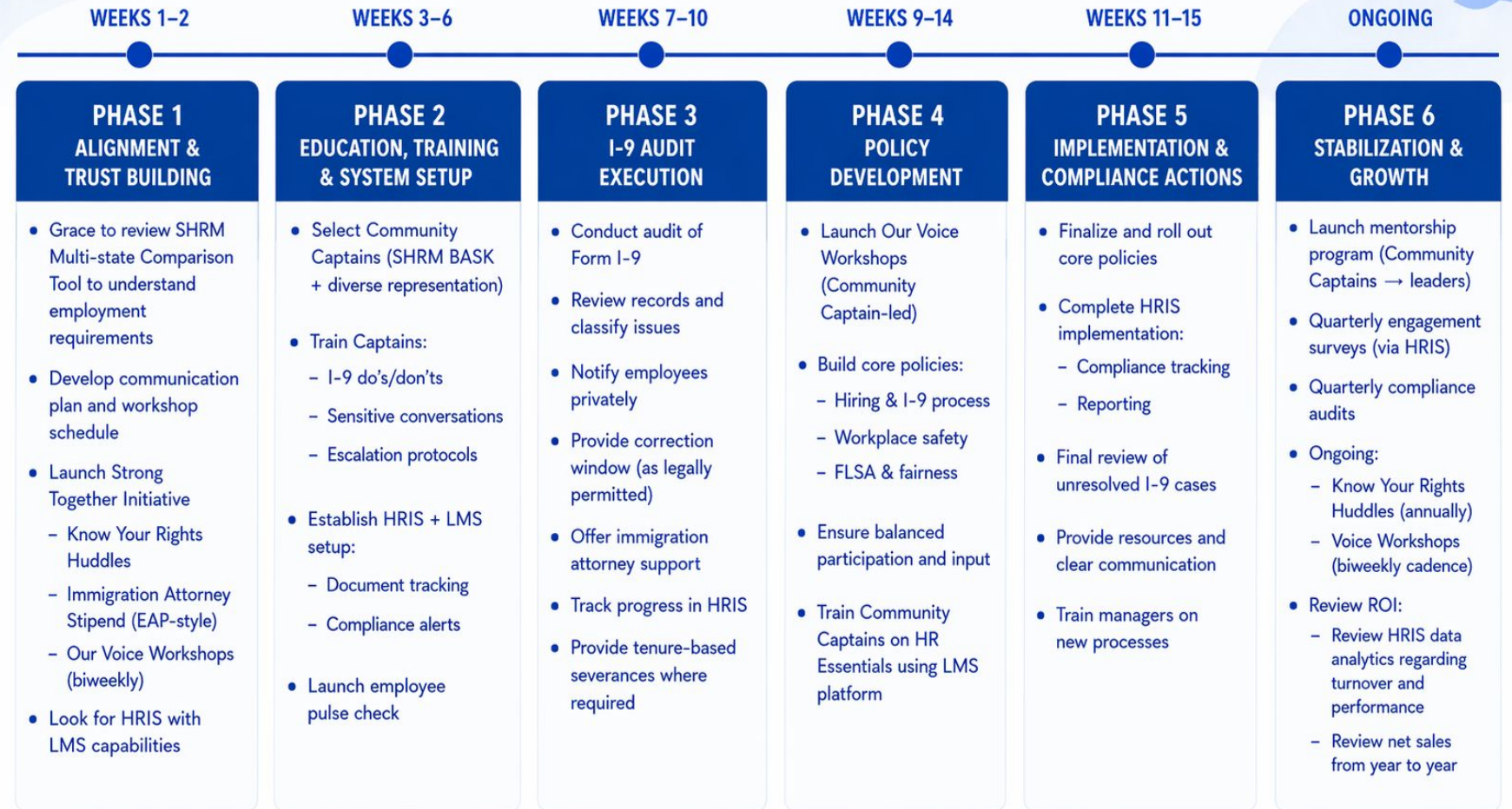
- A mentorship program for Community Captains builds internal capability and supports long-term succession planning.

“

If it's not broken, don't break it—make it stronger... together!

Implementation Strategy

STRONG TOGETHER INITIATIVE TIMELINE



Financial Cost

2026 BUDGET OVERVIEW








Strong Together Initiative

TOTAL 2026 INVESTMENT
\$112K – \$153K
Includes one-time + annual costs

ONE-TIME COST (2026)
\$1,458 – \$2,188
Initial setup and one-time implementation

ONGOING ANNUAL COST
\$110K – \$151K
Recurring annual investment (After 2026)

KEY TAKEAWAY
 The total investment in 2026 (Year 1) is **\$112K – \$153K**, including one-time setup costs of **\$1,458 – \$2,188**.

SOLUTION ITEM	NOTES	COST	RESOURCE USED
 I-9 Audit	According to O*NET, the average HR Specialist earns approximately \$35 per hour. For a workforce of 250 employees, if each I-9 audit takes an estimated 10-15 minutes per employee, the total cost can be calculated based on this hourly rate. This cost may vary depending on whether Grace utilizes external contractors or internal staff to conduct the audit.	\$1,458.33 – \$2,187.50 one time	ONET
 HRIS + LMS Implementation	We selected BambooHR as a simple HRIS example. The cost is typically based on a per-employee model, estimated at approximately \$8-\$15 per employee. BambooHR also integrates with TalentLMS, which has an estimated annual cost of \$4,188 for a workforce of 250 employees.	\$28,188 – \$49,188 annually	TalentLMS BambooHR
 Community Captain Incentive	Assuming 5-10 Community Captains are selected and receive a 5% pay increase for their additional responsibilities, and using California minimum wage (\$16.90/hour) as the baseline, we can estimate a rough annual budget for this role.	\$8,788 – \$17,576 annually	
 Trainings for Community Captain	Assuming Community Captains complete three one-hour training courses annually at an hourly rate of \$25.35, we can estimate the annual training cost per captain.	\$380.25 – \$760.50 annually	
 Our Voice Workshop Facilitation Cost	There will be 26 workshops conducted annually, with one employee participating per department. Assuming there are 5-10 departments, we can estimate the facilitation cost based on employee labor.	\$2,197 – \$4,394 annually	
 Know your Rights Huddles	All employees will attend the sessions. Assuming 30 employees per session, a total of 8 sessions would be required to cover the full workforce once or twice per year.	\$8,056 – \$16,112 annually	
 Immigration Attorney Stipend	If we allocate up to \$500 per employee annually for a stipend, we can establish a budget; however, actual costs will depend on utilization. This estimate assumes that approximately 50% of employees take advantage of the stipend.	\$62,500 annually	

 ONE-TIME COST (2026) **\$1,458 – \$2,188**
 +
  ONGOING ANNUAL COST (After 2026) **\$110K – \$151K**
 =
 TOTAL 2026 INVESTMENT \$112K – \$153K

Thank you!

References

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