

Phire  
group.

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This document is not a promise. It's a possibility.  
It will take all of us. And more of us.

**WE GIVE YOU THE  
PHIRE GROUP  
2030 VISION.**

PHIRE GROUP  
IS NOT A  
PLACE. IT'S A  
COLLECTIVE  
PURPOSE.

Phire Group 2030 started as a powerful idea: one that believed in a higher goal beyond goods and services. We define, create, activate, measure, and improve, building inspired communities around brands.

We did this by promoting authenticity over deception. By opting for clarity over spin. By surfacing meaning over merely screaming. And by embracing long-term vision over short-term success.

In 2030, we are the go-to agency for those looking to create sustainable, undeniable organizations with energetic and passionate fan bases along with fully engaged, inspired, and motivated cultures.

We are a collection of exceptionally talented people who are literally everywhere: at our HQ, in our homes, at our vacation houses, in an RV traveling the country, wherever, whenever. However, we're not a virtual company: we are a company that believes in work-life-passion integration — understanding that passion and balance spark inspiration and possibilities.

The beneficiaries? Our clients. Why? Because our purpose has always been to unleash the potential of organizations by unearthing and celebrating authenticity, inspiration, humanity, and purpose.

# 2030

## Our 2030 HQ

Despite the fact that we're a virtual company, we still hold a physical manifestation of the place, known as the Phire Station. Once you enter, you'll notice the place is abuzz with activity. We moved into the big, open, bright warehouse space a few years ago once we realized the physical limitations of the 111 Miller space. It served us well, but became too limiting for our live, physical process and our public-facing transparent culture.

In one open area, we see a client team, immersively working through an exercise led by Phire team members.

In another corner, we see designers working together, pointing at elements of a brand initiative.

In an auditorium area, members of the public are being led through our process/way of working.

All over, several visitors are "here" via screens/cameras. There seems to be no delineation between in person and on screen.

There are equal parts work, education, inspiration. It is difficult to tell the difference between the Phire team, client teams, and the community in the best of ways. This buzz and approach has garnered national attention for its combination of culture, transparency, purpose, and results.

The HQ was officially opened recently to a community celebration/open house event with clients, former team members, and those who Phire Group has helped throughout the years. Hundreds came. Hundreds more sent their well wishes. But it wasn't seen as an ending or culmination. Instead, it felt like a new beginning.

# 2030 HQ



## Reinventing the purpose of an agency

From the beginning, Phire always wanted to be the “anti-agency agency,” acting differently from others in powerful, meaningful, and inspirational ways. However, it was always a difficult message to sell amongst the world of traditional firms and up-and-coming (flash in the pan) digital agencies. This transactional way of thinking kept Phire largely in neutral through the late teens and early twenties, but they were finally able to get noticed through their unique approach and resulting impact. The secret? No secret. Just authenticity, creativity, and discipline over time waiting for the right situations. A 30-year overnight success.

The patience paid off. While others talked about clicks and short-term results, Phire continued to preach human, culture-centric brands, and brand-centric community-building strategies. We proved our work in Marketing Departments, but our impact was felt in the C-Suites of enlightened companies seeking more foundational change.

That is when we moved from a marketing firm to a transformation agency. Our promise?

*To unearth organizational purpose.*

*To inspire internal teams to greatness.*

*To motivate customers to want to be a part of brand communities.*

*To help organizations create value through culture, authenticity, and swagger.*

Over the last five years, our successes were well documented. And our proven model? Emulated, but not well repeated. Why not? Because this is not the simple work of an ad agency. It is the deep, difficult, foundational work of significance.

The result? National attention.

Introducing the  
Agency of the Future  
**Forbes**

**Inspiration Is the  
New Advertising**

**Bloomberg**

**The Most Remarkable  
Small Businesses in  
America**

**WIRED**

**The Agency That  
Finally Broke  
Advertising**

**ADWEEK**

## **Phire Group gained next-level traction due to a combination of things:**

A fearless attitude that led them to reinvent and embrace authenticity.

Game-changing success stories that helped redefine the industry.

A book written by our founder and subsequent publicity tour/TED Talk.

The location-agnostic transformation of the early '20s that collapsed geographic boundaries/place, and the premium value associated with the coasts.

The elevation of reputations of Phire Team members able to extend their expertise, their impact, and their personal power.

## **The industry needed revolutionary transformation due to:**

The subscription no-ad models that broke most agencies.

The community-driven reality of decentralized brands.

The demand of consumers/customers to want more from their brands (purpose, integrity, proof).

“Owned” messaging, a small percentage of brand. “Earned”

attention and following is now the premium.

The backlash over privacy/social media manipulation/antitrust.

The skeptical wave of new consumers who grew up in a “I don’t believe you” world.

## **The Phire Team**

How many people are on the Phire Team in 2030? Wrong question. The right question? How many people does it take to work with clients in meaningful, impactful, revolutionary ways before we become a system more than a collective passion?

Thanks to the attention received from the world and the curiosity created as a result, Phire is now coveted as a resource. There is a line out the door willing to wait.

Whereas in 2020, we were head-down doing the work, the team looks much more like a community — inspiring great work, pushing clients, unearthing their greatness.

## **The Phire Client Community**

Becoming a client doesn’t just give you access to Phire’s people, thinking, and time. That is fine and good, but not enough. It also provides access to our other clients, extended resources, and more. We developed a program that opens the door to an entire community.

- Access to Phire’s community of clients for thought leadership, sharing, conversation.
- Access to our ongoing events, both online and in person.
- Access to students (from high school to grad students) who are motivated to help – Phire acts as a conduit.
- Annual client events (Phire-hosted) combined with an annual event featuring ALL clients. It is starting to grow into a ticketed industry event as well.

## Success scorecard/algorithm

The creation of our dashboards in the 2010s was key to connecting our work with success. As we collected data, we realized that we were missing a bigger, more macro metric. Using a combination of each client’s internal engagement surveys, customer surveys, social listening, ratings/reputation analysis, etc., we were able to create an algorithm that allowed us to measure greatness within organizations. These numbers are monitored on a consistent basis to measure our impact.

A few years ago, we took this even further by measuring organizations (who are not yet clients) for comparative purposes. We created a scorecard based on all publicly available data, and then published the findings. It has become a significant report for comparative purposes, and an incredible resource for new business opportunities.

Our mission? To improve the score of every client we touch in deep, meaningful ways.

## New business

Thanks to well-publicized, high-profile successes, Phire was able to flip new business on its head. Once a reactive receiver of inbound requests and RFPs, Phire shifted this need in the mid-’20s. Now, Phire is able to qualify its clients through an application process. Clients’ desire to become part of the greater Phire Community (see above) has created its own momentum.

This took both courage and boldness from a historically humble mindset, and success as seen through the eyes of clients/ organizations.

## Strategy as culture. Culture as strategy.

In the early 2020s, Phire Group embraced a new philosophy: There is no delineation between creativity and strategy, tactics and strategy.

It’s all strategy.

Through Phire University, we created a strategy-first mentality. Ongoing classes to bring strategic thinking to everything we do.

There is no “Strategist.” Strategy belongs to all.

This unleashed an approach that started to break down walls and tap the potential of each and every team member. If we move, there’s a reason. If we suggest, there’s proof. If we experiment, there’s opportunity.

## Many voices. Many connections.

In order to elevate, Phire became a hive of outreach. Embracing the possibility and responsibility of growth, the team became known for our engagement — transforming the industry through speaking. Panel appearances. Knowledge sharing. Video.

On the flip side, each team member embraced the greater connection of community. Some joined leadership panels. Some embraced education of the next generation. Others used the Phire platform to build their personal brand, pointing back to the greater Phire universe. All are able to use Phire as a conduit for personal growth and exploration. Phire helps create the conditions for excellence.

## The Phire workplace

The world changed in 2020. The traditional workplace of the early 2000s was replaced by a new approach. Small, visionary organizations led this transformation. Phire was positively on the cutting edge of this change (even inspiring others in the process).

- Centralized headquarters
- Ideation/Collaboration zones
- Client “experiential” branding (physically walking through the process)
- Place for education, diverse perspectives, prospects, other input
- A gathering place for our team, for partners/makers/freelancers

- Blend of people/perspectives
- Variety of ages and experience
- Variety of work situations/hours/locations

Many Phire team members participate largely over video, but thanks to technology advances, this is seamless.

## The business of Phire

Success never changed the slow-and-steady approach. In fact, Phire had the opportunity to scale very quickly due to its success. Ultimately, it was our discipline that saved us from uncontrollable growth.

Instead, we focused on the following:

- Can we focus on fewer clients, but do it ever better?
- Can our engagements cost a premium, yet still provide an exceptional value to our clients?
- Can each additional team member make us better, not just bigger?

For that reason, the growth was moderated to around 5-10% growth a year, yet representing little change in the overall number of hours spent. Simply put, the model moved from a transactional, hours-based to an outcome-driven model demanding a premium.

10 great clients doing amazing things and changing the world in their unique ways. Some for years. Some are just beginning their journey.



## Compensation/growth/ownership

Once a succeed-and-reward model, Phire has formalized and fully connected the team to decisions and results.

Jim now is mostly a figurehead who comes in from time to time. He is still actively involved on high-level engagements, usually on screen from his lakehouse, his place in Mexico, or wherever. He transitioned responsibility and ownership over the last several years, and now acts as a spiritual leader (Yoda) of the organization, but mostly he's in the way (and knows it).

Phire transitioned from a top-down ownership model to an employee-owned community featuring a unique profit-sharing structure along with a system of vested and earned stock. Transparent macro financials transitioned into fully open book. This required next-level understanding of profit and loss statements, business planning, and micro analysis (profitability of individual relationships and projects, shared decision making in bonuses, raises, and growth decisions). Many were initially skeptical of this initiative, but knowledge became power. Decisions became institutionalized. And life became better.

## Continuous reinvention

How did we evolve so well? Follow-through and intent. Every two years, Phire undertakes a complete analysis of its own business. Consistent reinvention is a hallmark of these retreats. All activities are analyzed. All possibilities are advanced. And all responsibility is shared.

## Phire Foundation

Briefly known as BonPhire, this evolved approach provides work, counsel, and even dollars to organizations in need. All focused on impact. It is a major pride point, and accounts for many of the stories we share.

## Phire Starter

Phire embraced the entrepreneurial energy of Ann Arbor/Southeastern Michigan. But instead of simply working with startups, we started to invest in them.

Startup incubation services: housing, branding, connecting, funding (investment). It's a model of shared risk, ownership, and diversification, and is focused on companies that are purpose-driven, future-shaping, and/or helping the world advance/evolve.



Picture it.

Work toward it.

Embody it.

WE'LL SEE  
YOU THERE.

Phire  
group.

