

## Develop business values

It is essential to reach “value alignment” – where business values and employee personal values are aligned. This is a challenging process which requires individual and team reflection on how well personal values and behaviours match up with:

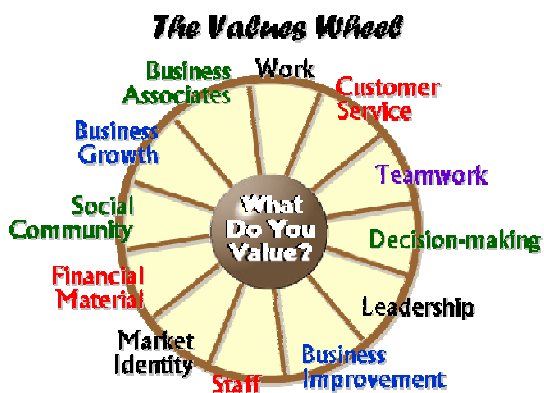
- The collective values of the team they work in.
- The values of leaders, supervisors and managers.
- The stated values of your business.

The trick is turning values into action, and ensuring values are consistent with your business systems, procedures, behaviours and rules consistent with them. This means:

- Team vision and values should line up with the overall business vision and values.
- Rules, systems and operating principles should line up with values.
- Everyone should know specifically what actions and behaviours are consistent with your values - at the individual, team and business level.

### 3 steps to identify values

#### 1. Map your personal principles, beliefs and values under each category on the wheel



The values wheel lists common values which can be added to or substituted for other values of your own. For each value, use the series of questions that follow to help clarify your thinking:

- What principles, priorities or beliefs come to mind when you think of each category?
- Why is each value you list important to you?
- What influence does it have on the way you approach or manage things?



## 2. Reflect on what you really mean by these values

Sometimes, we've lost contact with the words we use to express values - what they really mean for us. Don't just use single, 'big-ticket' words like respect, trust, care; delve deeper. Look behind the labels:

- What is this value about? What do you really mean by it? Is it understandable to your staff? Customers? This teases out the detail.
- What assumptions are behind this value? What other words, ideas or mental images do you associate with this value? This gets to what's really behind the value.

## 3. Translate your values into a set of guiding principles and explicitly stated standards of behaviour

This helps turn values into action. Here's an example:

| Value   | Principle   | Behaviour   |
|---------|---|---|
| Respect | I am open in my dealings with people and expect others to be open with me | We do not speak behind each other's back. If we have an issue with someone we try to sort it out directly with them |

You can now develop a draft values statement with your staff. When you do, keep it relevant and simple:

- 5 core values everyone knows and cares about are better than 25 that don't mean much to anyone.
- Core values are those few single words or short statements that act as central 'hooks' on which you hang the key behavioural guidelines that shape everyone's actions.

## How to implement values for your business

All organisations are values driven. The critical question is whether or not the values are conscious, shared and lived.

Sometimes, the values we like to think we say we hold are not the real values we have in action. Put simply, we're not always good at 'practising what we think we preach':

- On the one hand, staff may say to you they support your business values and claim to be able to see this in their own behaviour (this is their 'espoused' values).
- On the other hand, there are values and beliefs implied by their actual behaviour (this is their values-in-use).
- The two are very often at odds, but people tend not to be aware of this.
- This gap between the beliefs and values we say we hold and the actions we take tell us there are other, hidden, undisclosed values at play.

The values gap is the largest single source of cynicism and skepticism in most workplaces today. Values-gaps aren't just restricted to staff. In fact, it's managers who suffer most from this syndrome.



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When you say one thing and do another, staff notice this inconsistency keenly. They won't tell you - but trust and relationships suffer as a result. For example:

- As manager, you say: 'Mistakes are OK. So long as people don't cover up, they learn from them and help us improve.'
- If you react irrationally about a mistake, staff notice the gap between your words and action. They get the message: 'Mistakes get penalised. No-one's forgiven around here. Cover up or blame someone else'.

There are probably negative values floating around your business everyone knows about but can't name - usually for fear of alienation, recrimination or ridicule. These are what's known as 'undiscussables' and they're a big barrier to acting out good business values.

Undiscussables may be unspeakable but that doesn't mean they're 'unthinkable' or 'undoable'. And herein lays the problem... While people may not say them out loud, they still 'think' these things and act them out in various ways - the way they speak to a customer, how they handle a problem, what they tell the public about you or your business.

These 'real' values are deep-seated. They remain undisclosed and hidden away in your work culture because people know they differ from the things your organisation says it stands for (the espoused or surface values).

For example: Maybe your business values state how you 'care for customers' (surface value), but everyone knows the real attitude that prevails sees customers as 'complaining whingers, who should shut up and think themselves lucky for the service they do get!' (undiscussable).

You won't be able to use values to change or improve your business unless you can get staff to talk openly about these undiscussables. Left 'unsaid' - they'll keep eating away at your attempts to instil positive business values.

Some steps you can take every day to reinforce with staff the importance of acting out business values include:

1. Stand up for business values consistently.
2. Coach staff in values-based action and decision-making.
3. Encourage staff to speak out about breaches of values.
4. Challenge people when you see them do and say things that undermine values.
5. Raise values as part of your meetings and discussions when considering courses of actions or business decisions.
6. Make 'values fit' a key criterion in recruiting and promoting staff.
7. Encourage people to point out inconsistencies they see between values and actions.

## Values and leadership

Sound business values relate back to leaders having clear personal principles and values. As the manager, your business values are closely connected with your personal values, and employees will take more notice of your actions than your words.



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All great leaders are values-driven and:

- Have personal values that fit together with their personal vision.
- Act knowingly and ethically out of their personal principles and values.
- Make sure clear values and principles inform all aspects of their life and work.
- Use values to determine decisions and directions they take at work (and in life too).
- Constantly refer back to their values as a business compass.
- Confront and challenge behaviours that threaten to undermine or erode values.

Personal values have a huge impact on how leaders think and behave. Whether you're aware of what your personal values are or not, they determine what you give time, effort and priority to and what you judge other people by. When you model and make your values known in your workplace, this has a flow-on effect to staff. As a manager, you need to challenge yourself and staff consistently not just to understand the values, but to live them in day-to-day behaviour.

## Further information

The following fact sheets provide further information on these issues:

- Business planning
- Business values