



Trends

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Building an Organization Based on Values

Why Values, What Values?

"Our employees are our most important asset." You've heard these words before in the workplace; yet, how many organizations act as if they really believe them? Not many. These words are a clear expression of value, however, values are visible through the actions people take, and not the words they speak.

Values form the foundation for everything that happens in the workplace. If you are the manager of a department or division, the organizational values you portray will permeate the department or division you manage. You naturally will hire people who share your values and recognize those with values closely aligned to the organization.

Sample Workplace Value-based Actions

If you value integrity and experience a quality problem, you would inform customers of the nature of the problem and actions being taken to eliminate the problem. If integrity is not a fundamental value, you would make excuses to customers about the existence of a problem.

If you value the people in your department or division, you would communicate with them regularly, provide feedback on their performance and recognize their accomplishments. If you value equality in the workplace, you would wipe out the physical trappings of power and status such as executive parking places and oversized corner offices.

Whatever You Value Is What You Live in Your Organization

Most managers work for organizations that have been in existence for many years. The values, and the subsequent culture created by those values, are already in place--for better or worse. If you are generally happy with your work environment, you undoubtedly selected an organization with values congruent with your own. If you're not, you will likely see disconnects between what you value and the actions of others in your organization.

As a manager, you will want to identify your organizations core values and make them the foundation for interactions with employees, customers, and suppliers. You will want to work within your own organization to identify a strategic framework for serving customers that is firmly value-based.

Strategic Framework

Every organization has a [vision](#) or picture of what it desires for its future, what the organization wants to become. The vision should resonate with all members of the organization and help them feel proud,

excited, and part of something much bigger than themselves. The vision should stretch the organization's capabilities and image of itself to give shape and direction to the organization's future.

The **mission** or purpose of the organization is a precise description of what the organization does. It should describe the business the organization is in. It is a definition of "why" the organization exists today. Each member of the organization should be able to clearly express its mission.

Values are traits or qualities that are considered worthwhile; they represent an individual's highest priorities and deeply held convictions. Organizational values can include: ambition, competency, individuality, equality, integrity, service, responsibility, accuracy, respect, dedication, diversity, improvement, enjoyment, loyalty, credibility, honesty, innovation, teamwork, excellence, accountability, empowerment, quality, efficiency, dignity, collaboration, stewardship, empathy, accomplishment, courage, wisdom, independence, security, challenge, influence, learning, compassion, friendliness, discipline, order, generosity, persistence, optimism, dependability, and flexibility.

Value statements are grounded in values and define how employees interact with others in the organization. They are statements about how the organization values customers, suppliers, and the community. Value statements describe actions that are the living enactment of the fundamental values held by individuals within the organization. Values are manifest in daily decision making and goal setting.

Effective organizations identify and develop a clear, concise and shared meaning of values, priorities, and direction so that everyone understands them and can contribute. Once defined, values impact every aspect of the organization. To maximize their impact, the following must occur.

- All employees must demonstrate and model organizational values in their work behaviors, decision making, contribution, and interpersonal interaction.
- Organizational values must guide priority setting and decision making.
- Rewards and recognition must acknowledge employees whose work embodies the values of the organization.
- Organizational goals must be grounded in the identified values.
- Performance feedback must recognize adoption of values and resulting behaviors.
- Hiring and promotion must be congruent with organizational values.

Only the active participation of all members of the organization will ensure a truly organization-wide, value-based, shared culture.

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