

Is your value statement real?

“Honor your Values”

We all live our lives as per our own value system. With every one free to have his own value system, how does one manages the values it wants every one to share in the organization?

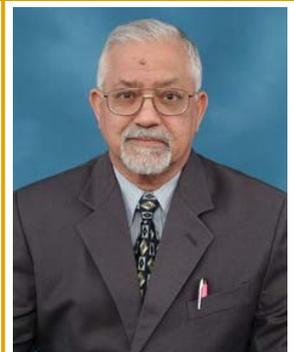
What are “Values”?

“Core values are the organization’s essential and enduring tenets—a small set of timeless guiding principles that require no external justification; they have intrinsic value and importance to those inside the organization”.— James Collins and Jerry Porras in —“Built to Last” (Page 226).

It is obvious from above that the values of an organization define its firmly entrenched culture. It is the hidden key to an organization’s success, since they define the “way we do things around here”! Obviously, if the value system is hollow and not followed in true sense, employees would follow different ways leading to a chaotic condition. The problem is that many owners / managements take them for granted. They do not stress the “values” they want their employees to follow. These remain on paper—because it is fashionable to have them! If these values are not discussed with employees—often enough, they get lost and loose the intended purpose for which these were written.

There is no dearth of typical value statements on the net and this facilitates organizations to adopt what suits them. Consultants can offer a suggested list to clients to choose from—but we also know that many of them do not debate these internally and just adopt them as suggested. This paper stresses the due importance which this concept deserves and urges the owners and managements to adopt only those that reflect their personal beliefs and which they can live upto!

By writing the “Values” explicitly and discussing them often, they become implicit part of the employees’ values and beliefs.



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Some typical values

Organizations some times refer to “values” they follow by names such as “Beliefs”, “Operating principles”, “Covenants”, “Aspirations Statement”, “The way we do things” and so on. The purpose of all these is to have a common understanding among all about the values we need to honor while doing work and interacting within the organization and with clients. The inset lists some values which various organizations round the world follow. Each organization decides for itself which of these values it holds to be core and would like the employees to follow.

Some thinkers recommended that organizations should distinguish between the “Core Values” which would stand the test of time and would not change with time and the “Operating Principles” which might undergo changes as we go along. This distinction, in my opinion, is more of a theory and in practice one need not restraint on-self with these distinctions. It is obvious that there is no right set which an organization should follow. As Collin and Poras describe in their book—“Built to Last” that “the key is not what core values an organization has, but that it has core values”.

Typical Values.

- Commit to excellence and high standards.
- Uncompromising integrity and honesty
- Stay close to customer
- Treat people fairly
- Value diversity, difference in opinion and views
- Communicate openly, honestly and directly
- Listen with an open mind.
- Learn from every thing.
- Take responsibility
- Lead by example
- Respect, trust and encourage others
- Encourage risk-taking and innovation
- Establish purpose before action
- Work as a team
- Deliver fair value to client.
- Work safely and Propagate Zero accidents philosophy.
- Plan and act for the long-term good of our company, clients and the world.
- Have fun

How to choose which values are right for you?

Self-honesty in choosing the core values for your organization is the key. If the top management or owner of the organization does not honor them or do not have regard for them, it is no point having them on your list. While explaining these values to your employees, one has to be clear about what exactly do they mean in terms of behavior. Top management and leadership should be clear and consis-

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tent in their understanding of the meaning and interpretation of the “Values” which are to be propagated in the organization. Examples of behavior which explain these values in detail help in explaining the real meaning of the “Values” organization wants to encourage. Obviously the “Values” you choose are those which you feel passionate about and can explain to the employees. These are the right values for your organization.

Not having a certain value listed in your “value’ statement does not mean that the organization does not value the so-called missed “Values”. They may be taking care of these by their operating procedures. Thus Collins and Porras describe in their book “Built to Last” that following are not included as “Core” values by the listed organizations:

<i>Value missed</i>	<i>Organization</i>
Customer Service	Sony
Respect for the individual	Disney
Quality	Wal-Mart
Market Responsiveness	Hewlett Packard
Teamwork	Nordstrom

Managing Values

Having decided on the values which organization wants to follow, the next step is to manage and ensure that these are known to all employees and actually followed on the ground. This step is not easy! In an organization which does not believe in open communication—i.e where there are no “safe” zones to discuss issues, it becomes more difficult. Employees would simply not share the actual experience with the management for fear of being penalized. External consultants come handy in such situations and can interview employees and give feed back to management and develop a change management strategy.

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Measuring the status of values

Values are best measured by developing a specific questionnaire for each of the values under analysis. The fact is that the values honored by an organization reflect in one of the five ways shown in the picture below.



Thus if an organization values “Open, honest and direct communication” following questions would help measure the level:

- **The way employees talk and write.**
 - Employees are free to send information to other departments who need this information and who should know it for managerial purposes.
 - Employees are able to attend meetings which concern their job and interact directly—rather than through the respective Head of Departments.
 - Employees are free to send internal communication to all levels of management as well as downwards.
- **.The way employees act**
 - Employees act with full knowledge about current and forthcoming projects.
 - Employees know about organization’s performance and goals.
 - Employees know about challenges being faced by the organization
 - Complete team is encouraged to attend kick-off meetings of new projects.
 - Senior management attends project monitoring meetings with the project

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team.

- **The way decisions are taken**

- All the data is made available at point of time the decision is taken.
- The data is shared and effected parties are informed of the decisions and why one particular choice was preferred.
- Employees performance and feed back system is transparent and employees fully understand why different employees get different raise / jumps.

- **The way behaviors are rewarded**

- Communication meetings of top management with employees are planned and monitored during annual appraisal.
- Departmental heads hold communication meetings with their staff and share the departmental information on a regular basis. This is again monitored during performance review.
- In-house magazines, web-pages etc. encourage employees to share information and best articles are recognized.
- Employees are encouraged to publish papers in magazines of repute and take part in associations and other bodies and have free communications. Such employees are rewarded and recognized.
- Lessons learnt on projects are shared and best lessons are recognized.

- **The physical environment.**

- Organization supports publication of in-house communication magazines, portal / virtual communities.
- Provides adequate resources like conference rooms, meeting rooms with LCD projectors.
- The organization has all employees connected through intra-net.
- Archives are well maintained and assessable to employees for reference and use.
- Document management systems are in place and distribution of information to all concerned is well developed through adequate processes and procedures.

Above is an example of how one can measure the status of “Open, honest and direct communication” value in an organizational culture. Each of the values can be measured by it’s own set of questions and regular surveys to analyze the current

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status would help organization to make the particular value “implicit” in the employees behavior.

“Values” survey provides useful information to management and leadership and helps in making specific change management plans. Many good organizations discuss the “Values” in monthly meetings with employees—taking one value at a time and encourage employees to express their understanding of what exactly is meant by that “Value”. Feed back from such meetings also helps in “corrections” wherever needed. Leadership meetings in an organization discuss these aspects and find ways to embed the values and transform the organization’s culture.

How can NiMble help

NiMble has employees who have worked in organizations which have strong “Value” systems and have hands on experience of propagating “Values”. NiMble can help you develop:

1. A good “Value” statement.
2. Prepare required presentation material to roll-out the “Value” statement to employees of your organization by the management.
3. Carry out surveys to “status” the “Values” which organization wants to honor.
4. Prepare Change management strategies and help you implement these in the organization.

Should you be interested in engaging NiMble, please feel free to contact Mr. Pawan Bhandari at pawan@nimble.in

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