

Articulating Values

Organisational values are not a new concept - a trawl through the research literature on the subject will reveal insightful papers going back to the 1970s – but they have come to the fore in the past decade. Today, many if not the majority of organisations have a formal statement of their values and many of these can be found on their corporate websites, though it may take a while to find them. For those that do not have a formal statement it is not the case that they have no values, it is simply the case that these have not yet been articulated.

Respected authors from Edgar H. Schein in the 1970s to Blessing & White in the 1990s have helped to define what values are and why they are important. Whether individual or organisational, a useful definition of values would generally include elements of the following:

Enduring underlying beliefs and principles concerned with what is good or desirable and what is right or wrong, that guide judgements, decisions and behaviour.

Values can be concerned both with *ends*, or states such as belonging that we want to achieve or maintain or they may be concerned with *means*, or the way in which we conduct ourselves, for example with integrity. In both cases they are things that matter to us and which we feel deeply about. Failure to act in accordance with espoused values results in feelings of regret, guilt or inadequacy. We cannot take credit for any of the following extracts from real organisations' values but, to us, they exemplify this notion of deeply held values that differentiate organisations from each-other. These were drawn from those of Ikea, Reuters, the US Army, Disney and Merck and we believe that their genuineness makes it obvious which values belong to which organisation.

1. Loyalty; duty; respect; selfless service; honour; integrity; personal courage
2. We expect profits but only from work that satisfies customer needs and benefits humanity
3. Constant desire for renewal; humbleness; cost consciousness; simplicity
4. Innovation, storytelling; optimism; decency
5. Immediacy (fast, direct, simplified, intuitive); Integrity (accuracy, freedom from bias, trust, reliability)

The extent to which the values serve a purpose and are of value in themselves varies enormously from organisation to organisation. To be of value they must first be a true articulation of what is actually believed by the people who make up the organisation: that is the majority of the staff as well as the leader and leadership team. Secondly they must be true values and not organisational goals or strategic objectives. Thirdly they must translate from the page to actions, decisions and behaviour. At first it might seem obvious that if the first and second of these conditions apply, the third would inevitably follow. However, sometimes organisational policies and practices can make it impossible for individuals to act in accordance with their values.

CGR's approach ensures that your organisational values will meet all three conditions and that your values capture the essence of who you are, what makes you different and how you interact with each-other and with others outside of your organisation. By combining applied research techniques, we will ensure that we do not impose values but that we articulate the unique realities of your organisational values. Beyond articulation of your values, we will work with you to design and implement procedures and initiative that will ensure your values are translate from the page to behaviour and action.

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