

How Values Shape Culture

Clear values can help an organization in nearly all aspects of their business, including how you hire, who you retain, your organizational voice, and how you engage your partners and community.

Values should be weaved throughout both internal and external policies and practices. For example, HR policies, including employee goals and reviews. Internal and external communication practices, even partner agreements.

Though the context of this sheet is specific to organizational values – each of us has individual values. How we represent ourselves lets others know a lot about us. Someone may value personal advancement, wealth, and power. Others may value collaboration, integrity, and trust. The right and wrong of these values depends on the audience. This is why it is critical that those who engage with your organization also share your values. For example, if you hire an employee who doesn't like people, but your organization values community engagement, empathy and compassion towards people, then you are probably not aligned.

Here is an example specific to our industry:

You value transparency and customer service:

Someone writes a nasty message on Facebook about their experience with your organization. It is filled with false information and over exaggerations. Their overall claim was that you were trying to keep their pet from them by changing the pet's name and not contacting them when it came in as a stray.

Contacting this person with the intention to seek to understand their perception, apologize for any confusion and explain what happened on your end follows the values above.

Responding in an abrasive way, not contacting the person directly to talk or congratulating your team for not doing anything wrong rather than understanding how you can do better would be following an alternative value system.



Determining Your Core Values

The Driver's Model process is a simple and intuitive method. The instructions (linked here: leadstrat.com/facilitating-guiding-principles-2/) were adapted by Leadership Strategies. This approach provides the opportunity to think of realistic scenarios to define your values.

1. Educate on guiding principles (Organizational Values)

Start the discussion of guiding principles by explaining to your team what guiding principles are. Guiding Principles are the core values of an organization which apply to all circumstances regardless of changes in goals, strategies or management structure.

2. Identify the behaviors you want

Next, provide a scenario in which your team members visualize someone in the organization who exemplifies the organization's values and culture. Have your team members identify the behaviors that make that person exemplary.

3. Identify the behaviors you don't want

Once you've identified the behaviors you do want, the next step is to identify the behaviors you don't want. Describe a scenario in which team members are orienting a new hire. Ask them to indicate what behaviors they would tell the new hire aren't tolerated, aren't liked, aren't acceptable, and might even get someone fired.

4. Identify the values

With both key characteristics and intolerable behaviors listed, have your team group these into logical categories. These categories typically represent the values of the organization and serve as the starting point for your guiding principles. Check to ensure your listed values can be lived through your work with all stakeholders.

5. Draft the guiding principles

Take each of the value categories and create guiding principles, using the "We believe (value)... Therefore, we will... (behaviors)" format as a template. To save time, do the first principle as an entire group and then use breakout groups to create the remainder of them.

6. Perform a quality check

Survey stakeholders and ask them for their feedback. An example of a survey can be found in the next section. Take the feedback and perform the same exercise as steps 2 and 3 categorizing their feedback into positive experiences and challenging experiences. How aligned were your perceptions and ideals with how your stakeholders view you? Any gaps should be part of your transformational plan to close the gap.

7. Develop the transformation plan

Determine the strategies you and your team will use to transform the guiding principles from paper to action. What specific actions can you take to close the gap? If you have a lot, discuss easy wins and items that will need more resources like a name change and schedule those out farther when you feel they can more reasonably be accomplished.



Example of Stakeholder Survey

1. What is your relationship to XYZ?
Checklist (can pick one or more) - Donor, Adopter, Community Partner, Volunteer, Board Member, Thrift Store Shopper, Dog Park Visitor, Employee, Other
2. If you were to describe XYZ to someone who had never heard of us, what would you say?
3. If you could only use one word to describe XYZ, what would it be?
4. From your own experience, how has XYZ Impacted you?
5. Have a story to tell about your best experience with XYZ? Please tell us:
6. How do you feel after a typical interaction with XYZ?
7. If XYZ didn't exist, what would happen?



Examples of Gaps

Value: Customer Centric

Situation: Customers get mad at us for not taking in their owner surrendered pets.

Why is this frustrating to the customer? We don't provide customers with solutions. We tell them that we can't take in their owner surrender pets because we are closed intake. This makes people mad because they are reaching out to us for help.

Remember your job is not to point fingers. You can only control your organization's response and actions. So how can you make this situation better or if you can't think of a solution, who can you call for advice?

Strategy plan: Provide a list of solutions for the team to use.

- Ideas could be to create a Home To Home program so you can provide the service of facilitating rehoming, support the public and not bring those pets in.
- Provide a printed or emailed list of other community resources to help.
- Train on friendly open-ended questions that can help to determine why the surrender is necessary and determine if you can help with simple solutions you have like pet food, telemedicine, etc.

Value: The Human-Animal Bond

Situation: There are team members who like animals more than people. They are highly critical of people who need to adopt or need assistance.

Strategy plan: Provide staff training through interactive team activities, webinar, and one-on-one coaching to help them understand why this value is important.

Quality Check: If you and your team have done a great job of developing guiding principles, you'll be able to answer yes to each of the following questions.

- Do the guiding principles identify all the organization's key values?
- Are the principles worded in such a way as to indicate both the value and the expected behaviors (e.g., "We believe... [value]. Therefore, we will... [behaviors].")?
- Has your team developed a transformation plan to help make the guiding principles part of the organization's daily operations?
- Is there a timeline and measurable outcomes defined so each person feels accountable to the process?
- Has your team developed a check in schedule to ensure this work continues?

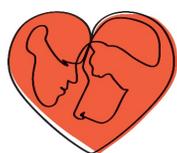


Examples of Guiding Principles (from Leadership Strategies)

Continuous improvement	We seek continuous improvement. Therefore, we'll strive not to make the same mistake twice. When a mistake is made, not only do we correct it, we seek to understand why the mistake occurred and what we need to do to prevent it from happening again.
Corporate citizen	We conduct our business in a socially responsible and ethical manner. We respect the law, support universal human rights, protect the environment, and benefit the communities where we work.
Customer service	We will not forget that our customers are our bosses, and that they pay our wages. We're responsive, respectful, efficient, and timely.
Dedication	We're dedicated to doing everything we can to help our organization be a success by working harder and smarter than our competitors.
Enthusiasm	We bring an intense and eager passion to our work each day.
Follow-through	We do what we say we're going to do. Follow-through and execution are our focus.
Industry leaders	We believe to be effective industry leaders requires investment in innovative ideas. Therefore, we will: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Interact with our customers to understand and respond to their changing needs.• Seek new opportunities.• Build and maintain partnerships.• Strive to be on the leading edge of the industry.
Integrity	We'll let ethics and honesty govern our conduct in dealings with customers, team members, suppliers, and our company.
Leadership	We believe in progressive leadership—leaders who recognize that their job is to be a vehicle for maximizing their employees' effectiveness. Therefore, we will: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Be giving of ourselves as leaders.• Make all managerial decisions by going through a decision checklist (e.g., ethics, feasibility, legality, impact).• Be consistent in our decision-making process.• Maximize our resources, both human and capital.• Hold employees responsible for their actions.• Recognize employees on the basis of their performance.
Needs-focused	We meet our clients' needs, not just satisfy their requirements. We strive to understand our clients' real needs to ensure that we provide solutions that work.
Openness	We listen to the ideas of others and encourage an open dialogue.
Ownership thinking	We believe in ownership thinking. We spend the company's money as if it's our own. We're careful to spend our time only on activities that bring value to the company.



- Performance standards** We value a high standard of performance. Therefore, we will:
- Reward employees for exceptional performance.
 - Hold ourselves accountable for our performance.
 - Be innovative and creative.
 - Be cost-effective.
 - Exhibit professional behavior at all times (e.g., dressing appropriately, being punctual).
- Personal responsibility** We take personal responsibility. If we have an issue, we take responsibility for getting it solved (as opposed to complaining to others or withdrawing); when we make mistakes we admit our responsibility.
- Professional ethics** We believe that professional conduct is crucial in all aspects of our business. Therefore, we:
- Are respectful and honest.
 - Subscribe to and demonstrate ethical standards.
 - Don't show favoritism or discrimination.
- Proficiency** We strive for high proficiency by developing competence in all aspects of our work through personal and professional training. We seek knowledge.
- Quality** We fulfill a promise to deliver the highest quality in everything we make. We design for quality- we have quality in our processes, our people, and our technology. We don't deliver until we know it is ready.
- Safety** We maintain an environment that minimizes danger, risk, or injury.
- Team** We believe in the value of teamwork. Therefore, we'll maintain an environment that promotes:
- Constructive and effective communication throughout the organization.
 - Respect for the diversity of opinions.
 - Participation and cooperation.
 - Innovation.
 - Adherence to deadlines.



Activity to Deepen Your Values

Have your new list of values in a place that everyone can see. Now ask your team to take a pen and paper and write down a list of behaviors of people they work with (coworkers, customers, etc.) that don't deserve to be handled by your values. I would do this anonymously so the team does not feel concerned about retaliation or contempt. You really want to know how they feel.

Here is an example:

The organizational values are **Respect, Compassion, Optimism.**

Stakeholders who don't deserve these values:

- The liars who try to trick us into adopting to them
- Animal neglect or abuse cases
- People who threaten us
- People or other organizations who attack us on Facebook or in the media
- People who abandon their animals
- Mean people

Discuss how values are not negotiable. We can't control other people's behavior but we can control ours. When we operate outside of our values you are functioning from an individual emotional state. If you don't think you can work with someone in line with our values you should hand the situation to someone else.

Now explore the ways in which these stakeholders/groups/people can be leaned in to to help influence the behavior we seek and how we handle extreme cases. Your goal is to not focus on the "what" but to seek out the "Why". An example of this could be an angry person. If you just focus on the fact that they are angry you miss the opportunity to seek out why they are angry. Anger is how most humans express fear or sadness. Can you help calm the person and create a positive outcome by being respectful, showing compassion and feeling optimistic?

When we seek the "why" a few things happen:

1. We see the humanity in people
2. We feel a greater sense of empowerment
3. We lean in, build relationships and influence the behavior we seek.

CAUTION:

You should discuss how to treat people who are not in a healthy mental state, on a substance or are so worked up that you need to call authorities. This exercise is not intended to overlook dangerous or unhealthy situations. This still can be done in line with your values.



Interviewing

Your organization's culture needs to be continuously cultivated. It should be a part of everyday expectations, interviewing process, and team training. Your culture is only as good as the team you have at that moment. One person can start to sew doubt into the values of the organization which can lead to division and stress. Here are some interview questions to help determine an individual's values.

Sample questions came from recruitingsocial.com and resources.workable.com

Integrity

- Have you ever faced an ethical dilemma at work? If so, what was the issue and what did you do?
- What would you do if you saw a colleague stealing stationary from the company's stock?

Collaboration

- Describe a time your team failed to complete a project on time. What would you do differently, if you had the chance?
- What would you do if you had to work with a person you didn't get along with?

Accountability

- Describe a successful team project you worked on so far. What was your contribution?
- How would you react if your team received negative feedback about a part of the project that was entirely assigned to you?

Social responsibility

- How do you keep a balance between performing thorough quality controls on products while keeping costs low?
- What company policies would you suggest creating to make our operations more environmentally-friendly? How would you ensure employees understand and apply these guidelines?

Innovation

- Describe a situation where you were facing a technical issue and your normal troubleshooting method wasn't working. What did you do?
- Can you give me an example of a well-designed product? What features make this product unique?



Customer orientation

- Describe a time you managed to calm an irate customer. How did you manage to maintain your professionalism and address their complaint?
- How would you reply to a customer who enters the store or calls just as your shift ends?

People First

- Tell me about a time you went above and beyond expectations to provide support or service for someone you were working with?
- Walk me through what you do to understand the lives and challenges of the people you serve?
- Tell me about a time you were interacting with someone who was experiencing strong emotions? How did you handle the situation and how did it make you feel?

Red flags

- **They can't support their arguments.** During job interviews, most candidates will claim they are “good team players” or having a “strong work ethic.” But if they can't give you examples that prove these values, they might be simply floating buzzwords to impress you.
- **Are they rescuers?** The nonprofit sector is filled with well-meaning wonderful people who seek to make a difference. We are always cautious to hire people who seem balanced in this approach. If someone you are interviewing spends a great amount of time telling you about all the time, they have rescued animals or people from bad situations this would be a red flag for us.
- **Their values don't match the position's requirements.** Employees with an out-of-the-box way of thinking might be great fits for a product development or marketing team that seeks to engage new customers. But they'll likely be hard to retain in a process-driven company or team.
- **They seem inflexible.** New hires could (try to) adjust to your way of working, as long as they're willing to do so. If, however, they have strong opinions that don't match your core values, that's a red flag for your future collaboration.
- **They show signs of arrogance.** Being negative toward criticism and/or demonstrating a bossy attitude are indicators of people who prioritize their own values over others'.

