

Putting Organizational Values Into Action for Results

“The ability to work together, to understand each other will not be found ready-made; it must be created...” Dr. Martin Luther King

If you asked a company leader the purpose of the organization’s values, he or she would probably tell you that they dictate a standard of workplace conduct that will benefit the company and the internal and external communities it serves. In addition, a strong values-based culture communicates clear objectives and expectations, and fosters an environment where employees can work, learn, develop, and contribute knowing that their values and behaviors are aligned with the organization. This alignment is powerful.

Having values is one thing, carrying them out is another.

To ensure that a company’s values become ‘the way things are done’ in the organization, they must be discussed frequently, reinforced through feedback and coaching, and evaluated on performance reviews. Just because they are defined doesn’t automatically lead to shared understanding. Values must be “grown into”. We have to work at it until it becomes embedded in the fabric of the organization and its employees.

The richer the implementation, the more the values energize the organization. And the more that energy and value is pushed down into every activity of the organization, the more power the organization has to direct toward accomplishing its goals and objectives.

So how do organizations make sure values become more than a plaque on the wall?

For the process to be successful management and employees must both display and demand behavior that is consistent with the values. There is often a portion of an organization’s performance appraisal system that focuses on “Values-Driven Behaviors” to reinforce the notion that all individuals have an obligation to pursue their goals in a way that demonstrates understanding, internal commitment to, and uncompromising effort to practice the organization’s values.

At the beginning of each new year, managers and employees need to discuss the meaning of each of the behaviors. Throughout the year, employees can keep track of examples of how they demonstrate each behavioral value and managers can add examples and suggestions at both mid-year and year-end.