

Harry Gilligan & Associates

Helping Individuals and Organizations Achieve Their Potential

Identifying Values

'Transforming the Organization'

Many people have given little more than a passing thought to identifying the **values** that govern their personal behavior, and even fewer organizations have done so. Instead, they accept the values of others or let situations determine the **values**. In almost all cases in which **values** are not clearly defined, good decisions are more difficult to make. Without **values**, people are easily influenced and decisions are subject to frequent change or compromise. "Situational values" confuse people, and create problems and complexity.

Successful leaders make important decisions based on a set of core **values**...doing the right things for the right reasons. In an organization, personal **values** may differ. A leader will help everyone focus on a "common-good" value that will engender a desire for cooperation and team work, without invalidating those personal differences.

What are your **values**? Can you easily and specifically identify them?

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What Are The Core Values Of Your Organization?

It's Not The Difficult People, It's The Difficult Behavior

It's a human tendency to identify people as being difficult or easy to get along with and that affects how we interact with them. The question is — are some people difficult or is it their behavior that

bothers us?

Most, if not all of us, talk about difficult people. We think: "Oh, that's John again, why is he always a pain in the posterior?" or "Why is Mary so darned stubborn and difficult all the time?" We tend to characterize (or label) people and put them into boxes or categories.

If you do that, it's not a character flaw on your part, but a way of trying to simplify the world. In fact our brains are wired to do this automatically. Brains are wonderful information reduction and labeling machines. They classify, label and organize information to make our lives easier.

Unfortunately, while our brains do this labeling almost automatically, the process makes dealing with difficult people ... well ... more difficult.

Here's why. When you label a person as difficult (or stubborn, boring, untrustworthy), you use that label to predict their behavior and actions in the immediate and long-term future.

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Motivational Quote

The speed of the leader determines the rate of the pack.

– Ralph Waldo Emerson

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What about the people throughout your organization? Are they committed to the organizational **values**?

Take time to clarify or review the **values** you hold as a leader. Focus on what is really important to you, and ask yourself, "What are those few beliefs that I value so strongly that I will not compromise?" Sometimes when crystallizing your **values**, it helps to identify and clarify those **values** that you respect in other leaders you hold in high regard. What **values** do their actions, habits, and life-style exemplify? Often the **values** you see and respect in others are indicators of what you hold as personal **values**. How do these **values** exhibit themselves in your business decisions, in your relationships with customers, employees, stockholders, suppliers, and your community? Crystallize those **values** which YOU identify and embrace as the **values** by which you want to live your life, as well as those of your organization.

Involve key people in the process of identifying what the core **values** should be. Get support and input from other senior managers. You may also want to elicit input from other people throughout the organization; the more involvement and commitment they have in the process, the more ownership they'll have of the results. Use all of this input to crystallize the core **values**.

After you have crystallized your personal and organizational **values**, you will find it helpful to rank them. The first two or three should be those **values** that you will not compromise. Your highest-ranked core **values** remain firmly established and rarely change. Strategies, practices, procedures, and structure should be continuously evaluated and open to modification and improvement. Ranking **values** helps establish priorities for decision making. Organizational **values** are an integral part of your Strategic Plan and the cornerstone for the actions and decisions of everyone in the organization. If you have not done so recently, revisit your Strategic Planning process and the plan itself. Additional time spent



in this activity will have a positive impact upon your bottom line and ultimate success.

The key to **Valueship** is crystallizing the **values** that establish the parameters for behavior. Those **values** are driven throughout the organization by your behavior and your example. As an executive and a leader, if you engage in behavior which conflicts with your **values**, you will sacrifice your credibility. The end does not justify the means.

The true test of a commitment to **values** is whether or not those **values** are upheld during a crisis. What does your behavior or the behavior of the people throughout your organization express about your **values**? Will you compromise any of your **values** for expediency, or will you champion **values** under pressure?

At one time in the history of the United States of America, it is said that there were Iroquois Indians who made decisions only after they examined the effect of those decisions on seven generations. We have come a long way from that point of view. At one time we looked up to our leaders as heroes and role models. We held them up for our children and future generations to emulate. Today it is becoming increasingly difficult to find someone worthy of recognition and role-model status. We must change that for our own good and for the survival of a **values**-based society, the future of which rests on the ability of our leaders to articulate and exemplify personal and organizational **values**.

"Perhaps more than at any previous time, an organization today must know what it stands for and on what principles it will operate. No longer is value-based organizational behavior an interesting philosophical choice. It is required for survival."

If you missed any of the past articles in this series contact us today at Harry Gilligan & Associates 413-596-4830 or E-mail hgilligan@harrygilligan.com

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In other words, you use the labels to create expectations on your part about how the person will behave. In one sense that's not necessarily bad. Predicting difficulties can help us prepare.

In another way it's really bad. When we have negative expectations about someone based on a label, we act differently than with someone about whom we have positive expectations.

When we label a person difficult and have poor expectations about the person, we are more likely to:

- Be quicker to interpret their actions as negative
- Be more likely to have strong emotional reactions to them
- Treat them more abruptly
- Expect less from them

All of these factors can create difficult situations with someone when no difficult situation is actually present in the first place.

In other words, your expectations and labels of people can cause you to create exactly what you believe will happen — a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Source: *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Handling Difficult Employees*. Robert Bacal.

Web Site Of The Month



This resource contains the latest state-level data on demographics, health, and health policy, including health coverage, access, financing, and state legislation. This site also allows you to compare data for all the states.

Check it out at: <http://www.statehealthfacts.kff.org/>

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Did You Know -

Why is shifting responsibility to someone else called "passing the buck"?

In card games, it was once customary to pass an item, called a buck, from player to player to indicate whose turn it was to deal. If a player did not wish to assume the responsibility, he would "pass the buck" to the next player.



Why do people clink their glasses before drinking a toast?

It used to be common for someone to try to kill an enemy by offering him a poisoned drink. To prove to a guest that a drink was safe, it became customary for a guest to pour a small amount of his drink into the glass of the host. Both men would drink it simultaneously. When a guest trusted his host, he would then touch or clink the host's glass with his own.



Power Words

Sardonic (sahr DAHN ik) adj. - mocking; scornful

Example: Robert's weak attempts at humor were met by nothing but a few scattered pockets of sardonic laughter.

Sanguine (SANG gwin) adj. - cheerful; optimistic; hopeful

Example: Peter was sanguine about his chances of winning the Nobel Peace Prize, even though, as an eighth grader, he hadn't really done anything to deserve it.



Salient (SAYL yunt) adj. - sticking out; conspicuous; leaping

Example: A salient characteristic is one that leaps right out at you.

By 2010, there will be 10,033,000 more jobs than there are people to fill them.

– Bureau of Labor Statistics, US Department of Labor

Harry Gilligan & Associates

- empowering organizations and their people to achieve world-class results –

51 Mountain Road, Wilbraham, MA 01095 * Ph 413 596-4830 * Fax 413 596-5063 * hgillian@harrygilligan.com



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