EVALUATING ORGANIZATIONAL VALUES

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Abstract

This article argues that establishing objective criteria for evaluating corporate values is imperative if we plan to build a future that's healthy and successful for people and organizations. Four such criteria are proposed: viability, balance, alignment, and authenticity. Suggestions for how leaders and OD practitioners can use these criteria to move toward vision are proposed.

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Why Establish Criteria for Values?

Historically, OD practitioners have been the champions of healthy work values, serving the mutual interests of human beings and organizations. Today, however, we are under intense pressure to help organizations increase productivity, efficiency, and short-term profits at all costs with little regard for other values. The risk is that we will become co-opted, tearing down the values that the profession has emphasized in the past. Is it possible to help today's fast-paced, technology-driven organizations achieve their goals, while continuing to advocate the humanistic, democratic, and developmental values upon which the field was founded? This is possible if we can articulate objective criteria that align the energies of individuals, teams, and organizations.

Putting values under a microscope conjures up images of scrutinizing motherhood, the flag, and apple pie. Many people become defensive when their values are questioned, regarding this as a personal affront. They expect you to show respect for their values simply because they embrace them, and are easily offended if you don't. People develop a vested interest in their values, sometimes to the point of fanatical allegiance. When listening to them, it often becomes clear that they believe their

values are the right ones, the best ones, the only ones.

Scrutinizing values is necessary, however, because they have either a positive or negative impact on decisions, priorities, strategies, plans, and behavior¾there's no such thing as a value with a neutral impact. Throughout history, values have been used to justify everything from the noble to the heinous. Each day we read about atrocities being committed in the name of national security, religious freedom, patriotism, ethnic or racial pride, and other values. Similarly, organizations justify downsizing, restructuring, plant closings, mergers, acquisitions, and hostile takeovers in the name of corporate survival, profitability, efficiency, and shareholder value. We can engage in endless debate about whether these are the best or even the real values, only to remain adrift in a sea of subjectivity. The need to assess values has become imperative, because globalization has made organizations such powerful institutions and their decisions affect us all.

This article will suggest four criteria for assessing organizational values. This working model is based on qualitative and analytical research in the area of values, performance, and organizational effectiveness. My intent is to spur thought and discussion. I am using this approach in my own consulting and am offering it as a model for further use and exploration. Let's start by defining values.

What Are Values?

A value is a standard of importance based on beliefs (Gellermann, Frankel, & Ladenson, 1990). A value system is a hierarchical ordering of values along a continuum of relative importance. Once embraced, values play an executive role in personality and organizational culture, serving as criteria for making decisions and setting priorities. Values are to people what instincts are to animals.

Without the capacity to formulate and act on values, life on the human level would not exist.

It will foster understanding to first discuss the role of values in personality, and then their role in organizations. The purpose of behavior is to meet needs, and values are preferred ways of meeting needs. While people have a variety of needs, it's the values they choose to address their psychological and social needs that have the greatest impact on behavior in the workplace. Rokeach (1973) maintained that the ultimate purpose of our value system, as well as all our other attitudes and beliefs, is to maintain and enhance our self-conceptions, or what we refer to as self-worth. He distinguished between *terminal values* and *instrumental values*. Terminal values define the overall goal we want to achieve and have two components: our purpose or personal mission defines *why* we exist, and our dreams for the future or personal vision defines *what* we want to become. We have a current self-image (who we are now) and an idealized self-image (who we want to become). Terminal values inspire us to move toward the latter.

Instrumental values are preferred modes of conduct, defining *how* we plan to fulfill our purpose and dreams. When people use the term "value" they're usually referring to instrumental values, and this is how the term will be used in the remainder of this article. These values focus on *competence*, which focuses on abilities, and integrity, which focuses on *character*. We're not only industrious problem-solvers but also ethical and moral beings, concerned with questions about good and bad, right and wrong. In order to preserve and enhance our self-worth, therefore, we must perceive ourselves and be perceived by others as both capable and ethical. Competence and character have both a personal and social dimension, allowing us to distinguish four sub-needs (see Hultman, 1998.):

· **Personal competence**-People need to view

themselves and be viewed by others as being skilled, knowledgeable, and capable.

· **Social competence**-People need to view themselves and be viewed by others as making a contribution.

· **Personal character-**People need to view themselves and be viewed by others as being ethical and moral.

· **Social character**-People need acceptance from others.

Values are psychological constructs, internal to a person. Organizations as such don't have values but, because they are composed of people, their cultures are shaped by values that are shared in varying degrees. Terminal values reflect corporate mission and vision, while instrumental values are standards for attaining these ends. Previously (see Hultman, 2002) I suggested four criteria for assessing the effectiveness of values: viability, balance, alignment, and authenticity. I define *effective* as the ability to get desired results. The material that follows expands and elaborates on my earlier work. The criteria, which themselves are values, should be viewed as a source of hypotheses open for discussion, debate, and research (see Table 1).

ues are workable in the current business climate. Viability centers on the content and functions of values.

Value Content

Some organizations boast about being "values-based," but all organizations are values-based in the sense that all decisions are guided by values. The more important questions have to do with the particular values that are chosen, and how those values guide action. These questions are crucial, because not all values are created equal. Research has shown consistently that high-performing organizations have values that differ from others, whether performance is measured by financial criteria, such as stock returns or revenue growth, or by corporate longevity or sustainability. Results from several recent studies are summarized in Table 2.

These findings reveal a great deal of overlap. In the area of personal competence, the emphasis is on *excellence* and *learning*, i.e. using and further developing one's knowledge and skills. Such values allow organizations to do quality work in the present, be creative, and adapt to changing conditions. In the area of social competence, the emphasis is on *empowerment* and *ownership*. It would be difficult to overstate the relevance of these values to performance. Kotter & Heskett (1992) found that revenues for firms with values affirming the legitimate interests of employees, customers, and stockholders (ownership), and encouraging leadership at all organizational levels (empowerment), increased by an average of 682% over an 11 year period, as compared to 166% for firms that

Criteria	Issues
Viability	● Value content ● Value functions
Balance	● Balanced value represent ● Balanced value emphasis
Alignment	● Intrapersonal conflict ● Interpersonal conflict ● Discrepancies betweenespoused and actual values
Authenticity	● Offering real reasons for actions.

Table 1: Criteria and Related Issues

Viability

Viability can be defined as the degree to which val-

didn't have those. Employees are more productive and satisfied when opportunities exist for them to act like stakeholders.

In the area of personal integrity, values pertaining to *honesty* and *fairness* are mentioned in every study. Kouzes & Posner (1995) found that honesty was ranked first among characteristics of admired leaders, followed by forward-looking (setting a vision), and inspiring (motivating people to follow the vision). Unless leaders are honest, nobody cares about their vision. In the area of social integrity, the focus is on establishing a *community*. De Geus (1997) found that longevity doesn't depend on the ability of a company to return investment to shareholders: profitability was a *symptom* of corporate health, but not a *predictor* or *determinant* of it. In long-lived companies, ROI was a means to the end of creating and maintaining a community. In these companies optimizing capital was secondary to optimizing people.

Consistent with De Geus' findings, Collins & Porras (1994) reported that the key difference between visionary and comparison companies was that the former possessed a rock-solid core ideology that didn't change over time. They concluded that superior market performance was not a function of having profit as a primary value. However, some managers are likely to view this counter-intuitive finding with skepticism. Logic tells them that organizations can't be "humanistic" and "practical" at the same time, but the research clearly indicates that this is not only possible but also necessary. The challenge for leaders is to consider the needs of both organizations and people, i.e. to be practical and humanistic.

One more point needs to be made about the content of values: values aren't defined by what we say, but by what we do. To be considered viable, therefore, these behaviors must produce effective outcomes.

When an organization establishes or changes its values, it's very important to give those values clear behavioral definitions, so employees will know what's expected of them. It's also important that leaders model the behaviors, and embed them in management systems, such as employee selection, day-to-day supervision, training, and performance evaluation. These latter efforts are what make values *real*. This will be further discussed in the section on alignment.

Value Functions

Values not only vary by content, but also by function or purpose. Maslow (1968) divided values into three functional categories: growth values, healthy-regression ("coasting" values), and defensive-values (unhealthy regression). He maintained that people have an intrinsic motivation for growth, but they need homeostatic values for peace, rest, and relaxation. He asserted that more mature and healthy people place greater emphasis on growth values, but that "coasting" values are always necessary. He also maintained that defensive-values, which protect against pain, fear, loss and threat, are a sine qua non precondition for growth, but cautioned that they can also inhibit growth. Values for conformity and routine, for example, can undermine creativity and innovation.

I have taken Maslow's definitions slightly modified them to distinguish values by function:

- Growth Values (G), which focus on forward movement
- Stabilizing Values (S), which focus on maintaining the status quo
- Defensive Values (D), which focus on protecting against perceived threat

Examining the value system of an individual, team, or organization will reveal a combination of defensive, stabilizing and growth values. In fact, as shown in Figure 1, value systems can be classified as predominately D, S, or G. No matter how hard

Source	Values	
Collins & Porras (1994). *Build to Last: Successful Habits of Visionary Companies.* A study of the values of 18 visionary companies.	**Personal Competence** Product/service excellence Continuous improvement/ learning Creativity/innovation	**Social Competence** Empowerment Contribution to society Customer service Profit
	Personal Integrity Honesty/integrity	**Social Integrity** Respect & concern for employees
Jac Fitz-Enz (1997). *The 8 Practices of Exceptional Companies.* A study of the values of the top 5% of 1000 companies studied over a four-year period, using a rigorous set of quantitative and financial performance criteria.	**Personal Competence** Innovation and risk Continuous improvement	**Social Competence** Balance of human and financial values Commitment to a long-term core strategy Linking culture and systems
	Personal Integrity (Honesty is a given)	**Social Integrity** Extensive two-way communication Partnering with stakeholders Collaboration
Arie De Geus (1997). *The Living Company: Habits for Survival in a Turbulent Business Environment.* A study of 27 companies older and larger than Royal Dutch/Shell, founded in 1907.	**Personal Competence** Anticipating the need to adapt and change Developing individual and organizational potential Learning Productivity	**Social Competence** Conservative financing Corporate survival (long- term interests) Empowerment Tolerance (openness to ideas) On-going assessment of internal structures
	Personal Integrity Fairness Honesty	**Social Integrity** Cohesion (Belonging) Communication Creating and maintaining a community Networking Trust
Kouzes & Posner (1995). *The Leadership Challenge: How to Keep Getting Extraordinary Things Done in Organizations.* Most admired leader characteristic (values) in rank order, from surveys of 20,000 people on four continents.	**Personal Competence** 4. Competent 7. Broad-minded 8. Intelligent 10. Dependable 13. Imaginative 15. Determined 16. Mature 17. Ambitious 20. Independent	**Social Competence** 2. Forward-looking 3. Inspiring
	Personal Integrity 1. Honest 5. Fair-minded 9. Straightforward 11. Courageous 19. Self-controlled	**Social Integrity** 6. Supportive 12. Cooperative 14. Caring 18. Loyal

Table 2. The Impact of Values on Performance

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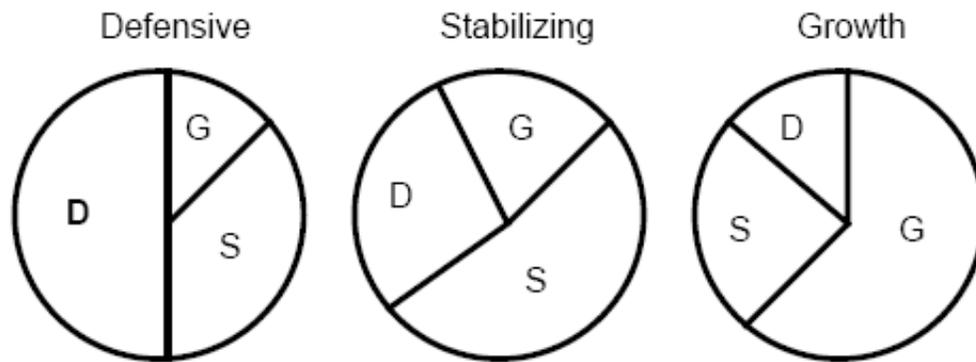
Figure 1. Value Mix In Defensive, Stabilizing, and Growth Organizations

you try, it's unrealistic to think that D or S values can or should be eliminated entirely. For example, safety (a D value) is a core value at NASA and in other organizations where there are large risks. Also, honesty (an S value) is a necessary condition for healthy and effective relationships in any team and organization. Nevertheless, most of the values listed in Table 1 are growth values; this is where organizations need to place their emphasis if they plan to remain competitive in the new economy.

In my view, the best way to revitalize organizations is to decrease conditions associated with D values and increase conditions favorable to G values-eliminating threats and adding opportunities. When I work with teams or organizations on values issues, I often ask people to estimate the amount of emphasis given to D, S, and G values, and then to generate ideas for decreasing D values and increasing G values. This often deepens people's understanding of organizational issues, and generates useful suggestions for dealing with those issues. Recently I posed this question to a group of internal consultants at a Fortune 100 aerospace company. Six subgroups working independently were remarkably consistent in estimating the company's values to be about 60% D, 30% S, and 20% G. The organization was losing market share to a competitor and needed a culture change to be revitalized. These internal consultants agreed that the percentages for D and G values needed to be reversed; their challenge was to figure out how this could be done proactively, to avert a potential financial disaster. Table 3 provides a checklist of questions that can help determine the viability of a value.

Finally, yesterday's values are not viable today, and today's values may not be viable tomorrow.

Table 3. Viable Value Checklist

- Is it favorable to growth?
- Does it contribute to a sense of wholeness and completeness?
- Does it encourage people to achieve their potential?
- Does it foster a positive sense of self-esteem?
- Does it free people to pursue their aspirations?
- Does it take a long-range perspective?
- Is it based on accurate beliefs?
- Is it based on trust?
- Is it in tune with current business realities?
- Is it defined clearly?
- Are the behaviors chosen to pursue it effective?
- Does it produce the desired results?
- Are potential consequences taken into consideration?
- Does it have the intended impact?
- Does it satisfy people's needs and wants?

Assessing the viability of values is a process of continuous improvement. OD practitioners can make an important contribution by helping organizations do this.

Balance

Balance can be defined as the degree to which values are given proper emphasis relative to one another. There are two chief types of balance: balanced representation and balanced emphasis.

Balanced Value Representation

Elsewhere (Hultman, 2002) I've argued that a balanced value system must contain values relating to the four categories of personal and social needs: mastery (personal competence), a sense of contribution (social competence), self-respect (personal character), and acceptance (social character). This ensures that the important areas of human functioning are covered and provides for accountability. Imagine what it would be like if an organization lacked standards of importance for individual performance (personal competence), or if no effort were made to show employees how their efforts contribute to the whole (social competence). Similarly, imagine if an organization asked employees to compromise their ethical standards (personal character), or if people felt marginalized by their color, age, sex, or ethnicity (social character). It doesn't take long to realize that all four types of values are necessary for effective functioning.

I've worked with organizations that lacked values in one or more key areas, resulting in a variety of problems. For example, one organization had three stated values: excellence (personal competence), customer success (social competence), and teamwork (social character). They didn't have any stated values in the area of personal character, however, which resulted in questionable business prac-

tices and customer complaints. Another organization had five values: trying your best (personal competence), developing your potential (personal competence), delighting the customer (social competence), contributing to society (social competence) and being honest (personal character). They didn't have any values in the area of social character, however, and this surfaced as petty bickering and internal competition.

In contrast, at a health-care organization where I facilitated the establishment of organizational values, the values chosen were excellence (personal competence), service and stewardship (social competence), integrity (personal character), and teamwork (social character). At another health-care organization, the values selected were creativity and efficiency (personal competence), enthusiasm (social competence), honesty (personal character), and compassion (social character). Having all four categories represented allowed these organizations to balance their business and people interests.

Balanced Value Emphasis

Balanced emphasis or priority must be given to the values chosen to meet the four psychological and social needs. Such balance is often difficult to achieve, however, because a value system is hierarchical. This doesn't mean that the order remains constant; values shift in emphasis depending on the situation, such as when people go home after work. Nevertheless, every organization has a value that's at the top of the pecking order-it operates like a CEO-and this value has an overarching influence on other values in the system. For example, I once worked at a mental health clinic where the top three values were (1) the number of clients, (2) completing client paperwork, and (3) quality of treatment (Note: these weren't the stated values, but rather my assessment as a member of the culture). When push came to shove, numbers and paperwork invariably took precedence over quality of service.

where I once served as a consultant, the top value was "products shipped." This value was given so much emphasis that employees shipped unfinished or broken products just to meet their daily quota, fully aware that customers would return them. I've worked with other organizations that placed such a high emphasis on performance (personal competence) that teams failed to develop cohesiveness (social character), and others that emphasized speed at the expense of quality (both personal competence values). It doesn't take long to figure out what's most important in an organization; as you listen to people talk and watch them in action, the real priorities become abundantly clear.

Finding the right balance among values is an ongoing challenge, requiring organizations to monitor continuously the potential impact of decisions on the integrity of their value system. This is another area where OD practitioners can make an important contribution. Table 4 summarizes some consequences of overemphasizing and underemphasizing values, along with suggestions for improving balance. You can easily add your own examples to the model.

[Table 4 here]

Alignment

Alignment can be defined as the degree to which values are compatible. I distinguish two types of alignment, *intrapersonal* and *interpersonal*. Intrapersonal alignment, or what many people refer to as congruence, is consistency or integration among an individual's values; interpersonal alignment is consistency or integration among an organization's values. In either case, alignment also refers to consistency between espoused and actual values.

The opposite of alignment is misalignment, i.e.

lacking of consistency or integration. Both imbalance and misalignment cause conflict, but for different reasons. With imbalance, the conflict stems from either overemphasizing or underemphasizing values; with incongruence, the conflict stems from a basic incompatibility between values-like mixing oil and water. Let's talk about interpersonal and interpersonal value conflict separately.

Intrapersonal Conflict

Recall that values serve to maintain and enhance a person's self-worth. One's sense of self-worth can be placed on a continuum extending from completely conditional at one end to completely unconditional at the other. Although some people lean toward the conditional and others lean toward the unconditional, most of us hold a mixture of beliefs representing both types. One's sense of self-worth tends to ebb and flow during the course of daily life. We notice, for example, how a person's self-confidence rises and falls with their performance. Moving from conditional to unconditional self-worth is a growth process that unfolds over time.

People who have a mixture of conditional and unconditional self-conceptions often struggle with internal conflict. If the conditional beliefs prevail, they tend to settle for defensive or stabilizing values; if more unconditional beliefs prevail, they are freer to embrace growth values.

Sometimes people have trouble identifying sources of internal conflicts, and coaching or counseling is needed to uncover and resolve them. One time, for example, a supervisor who was terminated for failure to meet project deadlines came to me for help. He revealed that as a child he was taught to present a can-do attitude to others. His self-worth was based on being positive and optimistic; therefore, whenever his manager asked if a project was on schedule he always said yes, even if there was no way it could be completed on time. Through

Table 4. Consequences of Lack of Balance and Ways to Achieve Balance

Value	Overemphasis	Underemphasis	Ways to Achieve Balance
Mastery (Personal Competence)	Fear of failure Unrealistic goals, deadlines Insecurity Stress, frustration Anger, resentment Feeling used Feel treated like a number Internal competition Exploitation Emphasis on tasks at the expense of relationships Sabotage, rebellion Unionization, strikes	Poor quality Inefficiency Customer complaints Lack of performance goals Carelessness, mistakes Loss of business Waste of talent, ability Underutilizing people Tension between productive and unproductive employees	Set performance goals that are meaningful, achievable, measurable, and controllable Emphasize developing one's potential Focus on learning, instead of labeling performance in terms of success or failure Strive for excellence Balance work/home life Think creatively
A Sense of Contribution (Social Competence)	Fear of insignificance Making arbitrary distinctions between the importance of jobs Status issues Emphasis on "hype"	Lack of fulfillment Indifference, complacency View job as just a paycheck Lack of recognition Lack of commitment Lack of ownership Cynicism	Praise good performance Point out how a person's work contributes to the whole Stress mutual interests Strive to add value Give credit where credit's due Avoid minimizing contributions Emphasize customer success Focus on stewardship
Self-Respect (Personal Character)	Fear of being judged Emphasis on formality Lack of spontaneity Fear of offending people	Hostile work environment Harassment Insensitivity Lack of accountability Labeling people Lack of trust	Clarify acceptable and unacceptable behaviors Hold people accountable Follow the "Golden Rule" Do the right thing, even if it's unpopular Present yourself as someone worthy of trust Deal with issues directly Maintain a commitment to the truth Honor commitments
Acceptance (Social Character)	Fear of rejection Social club atmosphere Emphasis on relationships at the expense of tasks Deadlines are missed Compromising honesty to maintain acceptance Pressure to conform Office politics	Prejudice, discrimination Alienation Cliques, in-groups, out-groups Favoritism Lack of cohesiveness Lack of cooperation Lack of teamwork Communication problems Lack of diversity, inclusiveness Lack of participation involvement Lack of trust	Invite participation and involvement Stress team success Champion inclusiveness and diversity Avoid unhealthy competition Strive for cohesiveness and cooperation Foster open communication Eliminate discrimination Challenge stereotypes

coaching he realized that his need to be optimistic prevented him from being honest with himself or others. Separating his self-worth from being optimistic freed him to make more realistic work assessments.

Intrapersonal conflicts may also stem from competing values within a person's value system. Rokeach (1973) explained that a person could have conflict between two integrity values (honesty and sensitivity), between two competence values (logical and creative), or between integrity and competence value (humility and ambition). Such conflicts need to be identified and resolved, so they don't undermine a person's effectiveness.

Also every choice involves tradeoffs, because making one choice means foregoing or deemphasizing others. Parenting, for example, involves a trade off of personal freedom to raise a family. If people are prepared to make the tradeoffs associated with a choice, they can still remain congruent. If they're not prepared, however, they'll feel trapped by the choice and seek a way of escape. It's crucial, therefore, to identify tradeoffs associated with choices and determine whether or not they're acceptable.

Interpersonal Conflict

When people with different levels of self-worth come together in a team or organization, the stage is set for interpersonal conflicts. Those with a lower sense of self-worth pull toward defensive or stabilizing values; those with a higher sense of self-worth push toward growth values. These differences manifest themselves as disagreements about goals, priorities, and methods resulting in power struggles, hidden agendas, manipulation, internal competition, and mistrust.

Such conflict can be understood as lack of alignment or a poor fit between personal, team, and/or

organizational values. The concept of alignment is controversial. Some people view this as manipulating employees to achieve organizational ends. However, attempts to force alignment never work for long; they only serve to increase conflict and mistrust. They drive values issues underground, resurfacing as passive-aggressive behavior, open defiance, sabotage, morale problems, and turnover.

There's nothing wrong with seeking alignment *per se*. Increasing consistency between personal and organizational values results in higher levels of morale and productivity. The issue isn't whether or not to work toward alignment, but how. I believe the best way is to create a *shared* vision with which people can freely align themselves based on their personal visions. Alignment based on value integration is an on-going process. Rokeach (1973) estimated that people have between 30-40 values in their value system. A team or organization would reflect a much larger number. Like personal alignment, therefore, it's unrealistic to think that a team or organization could achieve complete integration. Also, people can agree on values but disagree on their priority. For these reasons, alignment is better seen as a dynamic process. I've consulted in situations where there was alignment at the team level, but disconnects between team, departmental, and overall organizational values. Increasing integration among these levels requires an atmosphere where people can discuss their differences openly, identify tradeoffs involved with decisions, and manage them effectively. People are more willing to support decisions they don't agree with if they've been given an opportunity for input, and they trust that their input will be considered.

Discrepancies between Espoused and Actual Values

Misalignment between espoused and actual values can accompany both intrapersonal and interpersonal conflicts. As mentioned earlier, regardless of

what values people espouse, others will infer their real values from what they do. The actual values of a team or organization are revealed by what it rewards and punishes. Schein (1992) said, "Leaders can quickly get across their own priorities, values, and assumptions by consistently linking rewards and punishments to the behavior they are concerned with." Leaders who fail to do this create confusion. I remember standing next to an employee once that pointed to a list of the organization's noble-sounding values, and said cynically, "All they really care about is getting us to do the most work for the least amount of pay." Sometimes discrepancies between espoused and actual values represent hypocrisy-not "walking the talk"-while at other times they represent a lack of skill or emotional intelligence. In the former case, people should be held accountable for choosing behavior consistent with the values; in the latter case, training and/or coaching is indicated. Inconsistencies between two behaviors-such as being supportive on one occasion and critical on another-could reflect a value conflict or other issues. More information is usually necessary to identify reasons for such inconsistencies. Finally, differences between actual and desired values pose no problem, as long as people are actively working toward the latter. Values are ideals; people can accept inconsistency as long as progress is made toward those ideals.

Authenticity

I define authenticity as the degree to which values are expressed-verbally and behaviorally-in a genuine, sincere manner. Earlier I said that people's core need is to have a sense of self-worth. We're not only motivated to enhance our self-worth, but also to protect it from perceived threat. Here's where authenticity comes into play. Authenticity is offering the real reasons for our actions, while lack of authenticity is giving plausible but false reasons

for what we do ("I did it out of fairness"). Authenticity is similar to Senge's (1990) concept of a commitment to the truth, which he identifies as a criterion for the discipline of personal mastery. It's also related to what McAniff (1999) calls level four truth-where rational and emotional intelligence combine. Inauthentic values manifest themselves as defensive behavior, which leads to interpersonal conflict, mistrust and, ultimately, blocks alignment toward vision.

A relationship exists between authenticity and self-justification. People use both authentic and rationalized self-justification. Asking people why they did something can be perceived as a threat to their self-worth, so they must decide whether to be candid or to rationalize. All defense mechanisms serve the purpose of helping people maintain a sense of self-worth. Rationalization is the defense mechanism most closely tied to values, however, because values are the justifications we offer for decisions and actions.

People often rationalize when confronted with discrepancies between espoused and actual values. There is, however, a difference between intrapersonal misalignment (incongruence) and rationalizing. With intrapersonal misalignment, a conflict exists among values (cooperation and competition) or between values and behavior (honesty and telling "white lies"); with rationalization, a false value underlies the reasons offered, while the real value-maintaining self-worth-remains hidden. No one says, "I'm doing this to salvage my self-image," but this is the underlying motive behind many actions in the workplace. Defending self-worth is so basic that even very self-aware and confident people are capable of doing it unconsciously. The degree of defensiveness varies greatly among people, of course, but increasing self-awareness offers more freedom to pursue growth values.

Fostering greater authenticity in a team or organization requires a culture where people can admit mistakes and still maintain their self-worth. The emphasis should be on learning and continuous improvement, not placing blame. A shared commitment to such values as trust, mutual respect, honesty, openness, cooperation, collaborative partnering, and taking responsibility for one's actions is essential to creating a more authentic culture. These values are also good for business.

Organizations are like ships on a stormy sea, battered on all sides by the winds of change. Values function as a rudder or, even better, as a compass. By ensuring that values are viable, balanced, congruent, and authentic, OD practitioners and leaders can help individuals, teams and organizations successfully navigate the rough waters through which they must pass.

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