Core Value Alignment

Organizational Values + Personal Values = Organizational Culture

When personal values and organizational values are not aligned you will typically have an employee who is unhappy in the job. From the employers' perspective this person will be, if not in reality, most likely perceived as nonproductive as well. If this is pervasive throughout the organization, department, or office, it is likely the culture of that entity is dysfunctional. I can't count the number of times I've come across companies or government organizations where there are either one, or even a few dysfunctional teams/departments amid an otherwise extraordinary organization. Visa-versa I've seen some extraordinary teams/departments that were in total sync and are islands of success in a sea of dysfunctionality.

We only need to look to our evening news and our run up to this presidential election to see this played out with some extreme examples of what it looks like when individual values are not aligned with the party's values (both Republican and Democratic), not to mention us as a nation as a whole. But I digress.

How do your personal values fit in with your organization's values? The more closely aligned they are, the more likely you have high job satisfaction and you actually enjoy coming to work.

Let's say the stated organizational core value is work/life balance, yet the culture is 10 plus hour workdays and weekend work. If your personal values are family and you leave every day at four to coach your child's soccer team, you may very well be perceived as not being a team player, or are considered a slacker.

On the other hand, if you are working late and on weekends you may be perceived as a productive employee, but you are most likely dissatisfied with the job missing out on valuable time with the family.

Conversely if your personal values are such that your work is your life - staying late and working weekends is what you do - then not only will you be seen as a high achiever, but you will most likely have a high level of job satisfaction.

In all three scenarios there is the potential for organizational dysfunction. Only when the collective individual core values are aligned with the organization's stated core values will you have a culture driving towards greater success. In 2 Corinthians 6:14, Paul writes, "Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness?" From a secular perspective, what he is saying is, don't expect to get a lot of work done if you try harnessing an ox and a donkey to the same yoke. If everyone isn't working in the same fashion, with the same values, the same set of beliefs, there will be challenges.

Just this week I read an article in the Federal Managers Association Spring 2016 newsletter that indicated a full 56% of employees felt the organization had either denied, discounted or rationalized bullying in the workplace. FIFTY SIX PERCENT! Scarier than that! Five percent of the respondents indicated bullying was encouraged. (Read the article here) Yet how many of those organizations have teamwork, respect, or safety as a stated organizational core value?

Organizational core values have to be something more than powerful words on your website or poster on the wall.

To create values that drive successful behavior in an organization, start by thinking how these values will influence the culture, the decisions made on a daily basis, and in daily operations. How do the policies, written and unwritten, support your organizations value system? Are they conducive? Or counter intuitive? Does everyone from the C-suite, or senior executive(s), to the frontline hourly employee conduct themselves, communicate and exemplify the organizations core values?

Don't expect a cohesive workforce when the stated values are an empty set of cute words or phrases that aren't lived up to by the senior leadership, much less middle management and frontline employees.

"We value teamwork and cooperation", says the Department Chair for a major university as he instructs the faculty to come to the next staff meeting, "prepared to fight for their projects if they want them funded."

"We empower our employees", says the manager who directs supervisors to, "check in", with her prior to making any decisions.

"Safety is one of our core values", says the supervisor who leads through intimidation. Not a very emotionally safe environment in this workplace.

A lot of great leaders are quoted as saying something along the lines of, "Hire for attitude and train for the skills you need." I say, "If you want extraordinary success in your organization, hire people who share the values of the organization." With that said, don't confuse values with morals and ethics, but that's for another article.

On the home front. This holds true at home and with the family as well. I read a book once titled, "The Lies We Tell at the Alter" I recommend any couple contemplating a serious relationship and perhaps marriage to read it. It's not so much about what we say as much as it is about what we don't say, or talk about. What are each of your thoughts on money, sex, religion, work, family? By asking the right questions we start to have a better understanding of each other's values and in some cases perhaps, for the first time, our own.

How aligned are your personal values with your organizations core values? Download an exercise here to see. Use the same exercise to facilitate a values conversation with your team. Need some guidance? Email me personally and I'll walk you through it. Or let us know what you think on our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/successtraining

Extraordinary Leaders have extraordinary character; with extraordinary character they are not afraid.

Be Extraordinary!

Anthony Tomey

President & CEO
Leader Development Institute
www.LDiWorld.com