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# The value of values.





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Your organisational values form the pivotal link between ways of working and delivery your purpose. They're more than buzzwords – they shape the core of how your business thinks and behaves.

Many large organisations make a big deal out of defining, launching and embedding their values. Loads of internal communications are deployed for employee engagement with these lists of words. But in many organisations, values can start to gather dust and grow less relevant as time goes by.

But values – when authentically surfaced and thoughtfully written – serve important functions in your business:

- They act as a code of conduct for your ways of working
- Kickstart everyday conversations and guide mindsets
- Provide a roadmap for promotion and progression
- Act as the ultimate sense-check for your business decisions

This all comes together when everyone understands the true benefit of making these values part of their own world. They're there to enrich and guide the employee experience, but only when they're aligned with your organisation as a whole.

# Where values sit in the larger business landscape.

**Values serve as a translator between the loftier purpose and the practical, day-to-day actions to live out that purpose and get things done. While your purpose or brand mission might have a more aspirational feel, the values that support it are easier to grasp and follow.**

## THEY OFTEN HAVE MORE EMOTION ATTACHED TO THEM THAN PURPOSE, AND THAT EMOTION IS A STRONG MOTIVATOR OF BEHAVIOUR

Purpose is why you exist.

**Purpose**  
*The 'why'*

Your business strategy outlines what you're going to do to live out your purpose.

**Strategy**  
*The 'what'*

Values help identify the behaviours you need to see throughout the organisation to deliver on your business strategy that is ultimately in service of your purpose.

**Values**  
*The 'how'*

Because of this, values can act as your north star. They set out the most important rules for your business, creating a clear guide for how people should go about their work and interact with customers or colleagues. Without clearly defined values, people may go their own way to achieve their goals, exposing your company to various risks.

Every organisation has different tribes and teams with their own needs and interests. This can create conflict and unhealthy competition if people can't see how it all unifies towards one objective. By setting organisation-wide values, making them explicit and modelling them from the top, you make it clear what your priorities are and what matters most in how you'll achieve your vision and strategy.

Then, when your company values align with people's personal values and what matters most to them, you're then able to attract and retain people and inspire and enable them to do their best work. It can make people management a breeze. And, naturally, this will also bring likeminded people together under one roof, which can lend itself to enhancing collaboration as employees can then work towards a common goal together.

# Developing values through behaviours and ways of working.

**Values without meaningful behaviours attached to them won't get the job done. However, there are additional elements to consider when it comes to helping your people embrace your values and change ways of working.**

## SET PARAMETERS

There are upper and lower limits to every behaviour. A strength becomes a weakness when it is overplayed, while it's powerless when it doesn't show up enough. As we set new values, we need to show the range of acceptable behaviours: the bare minimum we expect and what can happen if boundaries are pushed too far. This creates a range of behaviours that different people can accept and tailor to their own comfort zone – but also gives scope for stretch and longer-term development.

## ACCOUNT FOR CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

Different countries often have very different interpretations of the same characteristics of a behaviour. You should actively surface the interpretations of behaviour across your regions to build a map of your organization now, and a targeted action plan for behaviour change if needed.

## RE-EXAMINE HIERARCHY STRUCTURES

The operational transformation of many businesses has accelerated in recent years but can we say that about internal hierarchies? A less hierarchical structure can enable people to better live the values, as the need to seek permission before acting is less prevalent.

## TAKE THEM ON A JOURNEY

A pivotal part of any successful campaign is making sure people play a part in the process, rather than feeling that the new values are thrust upon them without the chance to input. That delicate dance of involving people at the right time to benefit from their expertise, without the whole show going off the rails, is needed for a smooth journey to approval.

## DIAL UP THE MOTIVATION

A common pushback we hear is, 'Our current ways of working are working, so why do we need to change them to align to our values?'. Pushing through that resistance means figuring out the right motivational sources. This is often done via storytelling.



# Ready to surface your values?

When it comes to your own values, it's likely that they're already there within your organisation as underlying ways people think about your employer brand. If you're looking to set your values as a business, or are looking to refresh your existing ones as your organisation evolves, we're here to help you out.



You'll need to start by getting key stakeholders together for a workshop, where you can use these questions to kickstart the conversation:

- **Are your values and behaviours a code of conduct?** Will they tell employees what to do and not do within their day-to-day roles?
- **Are your behaviours going to be tied to performance?** Will they involve an element of objective setting, with rewards for those who follow all of your values?
- **Are your values in service of something in particular?** Are they designed around helping the business be more innovative/commercially-minded/consumer-focused?
- **Are your values aspirational?** Do they act as an ideal for employees to strive for?
- **Are your values demonstrated at a leadership level?** Could there be a level of cynicism as a result of the behaviours that leaders are seen role modelling?

These will help to guide your conversations around how your values will function – as hard rules or softer ambitions, driving certain KPIs or in service of an ideal. There's no real wrong answer, provided everything feels authentic to your organisation and works together as a cohesive strategy.

If you need a little support through this, our expertise is never far from hand. As an employee experience agency, there's no area of an employee value proposition and values statement we aren't familiar with. We can collaborate on this process together, with you firmly in the driving seat, so we arrive at a place where your values all ladder up to the organisation you've always wanted to be.

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Online. [hello@scarlettabbott.co.uk](mailto:hello@scarlettabbott.co.uk)  
[scarlettabbott.co.uk](http://scarlettabbott.co.uk)  
[@scarlettabbott](#)  

**scarlettabbott.**