



The Importance Of Corporate Values Alignment

As an owner or manager you must have clear ideas of how you want your team to work together; but are you constantly frustrated by their failure to collaborate and communicate? Does everyone seem to have his or her own agenda? If so you need to ensure everyone's values are aligned with your own and maximise their full potential.

Values are central to motivation, behaviour, relationships and happiness. Most often values are unconscious and have been decided upon at a young age and are typically never re-evaluated, so we can end up with values that are not congruent with our current environment.

“Values are stable constructs from which belief systems are generated. The rule of thumb is values can be expressed in 1 to 3 words. Beliefs need a full sentence. Attitudes tend to need a paragraph.” Douglas Pride

We can have moving towards values which, when satisfied, bring us pleasure, e.g. Success, Wealth, Health and moving away from values which attempt to keep us from feeling pain, e.g. Failure, Poverty, Disease.

We have different sets of values for each aspect of our life, e.g. Career, Relationships, Family, Health & Fitness, Personal Growth, Spirituality, etc.

While our values are usually out of our awareness we constantly express them through our language and indicate which are the most important through our behaviour.

When we are operating out of our highest values we experience congruence and a sense of satisfaction. We like people who share our values and often have strong reactions to people who don't. Arguments and disagreements are almost always associated with people having conflicting values.

In business, 97% of employees and executives surveyed believe that lack of alignment within a team directly impacts the outcome of a task or project.

Lets consider a hypothetical example:

Stardusttechnologies are an established company and market leader with an extensive range of PC-based software. They have just created a new team to produce a set of complementary mobile applications. The senior members of the team are:

Jenna Cole is the Product Owner; she has been with the company for over ten years and is responsible for the current software products. She wants the new applications to enhance the product range, while maintaining consistency with the existing look-and-feel, standards and technology. She has been told that if the mobile applications are a

success then she can expect to be promoted to a C-level position. Her top 3 Career values are: Respect, Success and Dependability.

Darius Craddock is the Lead Developer and architect; he has just joined the company from a start-up where he used Agile methodologies to develop a innovative and award-winning marketing app. In his spare time he contributes to several open-source projects and is very excited by the latest advancements in cloud-based AI applications. He is enthusiastic about research and continually pushing the boundaries of what is possible with new technology. His top 3 Career values are: Knowledge, Satisfaction and Recognition.

Kimberley Rosenbaum is the Project Manager; she has just moved into this department from the finance department where she was credited with successfully delivering the company's payroll system upgrade on time and within budget. She prides herself in delivering projects on time, and achieves this by remaining in total control of her pedantically meticulous project plans. Her top 3 Career values are: Control, Acclaim and Competence.

Demetrius Wisniewski is the Testing and Support Manager; he has been with the company for over 5 years, his motivation is helping customers make the best use of the company's products and retaining customer loyalty. He isn't interested in company revenue and profits, his focus has always been on product reliability and functionality and ensuring everything is built and documented to the highest standards. His top 3 work values are: Reliability, Approval and Understanding.

Shanelle Mclean is the Sales Manager; she joined the company from a major competitor 2 years ago. During previous negotiations she has made guarantees about functionality and performance that proved problematic for development and support. She has an expensive lifestyle and needs to exceed her quarterly sales targets to maintain it. Her top 3 Career values are: Wealth, Winning and Prestige.

So can you guess what happened?

- i. Darius wants to develop the new applications using the latest technology and Agile development methodologies. This conflicts with Kimberley's controlling project management style and Jenna and Demetrius's focus on consistency and company standards. Darius is overruled which he finds very disheartening; in a fit of pique, he informs Kimberley and Jenna that the application will now take longer to develop, as he is unfamiliar with Stardusttechnologies' out-dated development environment.
- ii. To secure sales, Shanelle makes promises about the application's functionality and performance to the customers without consulting the other team members. This results in additional development work that causes the timescales to slip significantly, causing further tension between Darius and Kimberley. Jenna rebukes Shanelle for her behaviour, but feels that she cannot risk letting the customers down by failing to deliver the promised features and performance.

- iii. Demetrius insists on additional testing and documentation for the new features, which risks further delays to the application's release, increasing the tensions between Kimberley and the rest of the team.
- iv. The delays mean that Shanelle may miss her end of quarter sales target, so she puts intense pressure on Darius and Demetrius to release the product early so the revenue can be realised. Jenna is also worried about the impact of potential delays on her promotion and also pushes for the early release. Demetrius strongly resists compromising his existing testing procedures.
- v. Jenna overrules Demetrius and the product is released before testing is complete. Some of the promised functionality is missing and the performance of the application is poor. The number of support calls puts increased demand on Demetrius who is under pressure to test the next patch release that Darius has been working 12+ hour days to complete.
- vi. Kimberley is now struggling to control which features have been included in each patch release and whether they have been exhaustively tested or not. Customers are becoming exasperated with the mounting number of incompatible releases. The CEO of a major customer calls the Stardusttechnologies CEO to complain that the product has been mis-sold, demands a substantial refund and implies that he is considering taking his business to a competitor; Jenna struggles to explain why things have gone so wrong in a very fraught meeting with her CEO.
- vii. As pressure builds, everyone starts blaming other team members for the projects problems. Meetings become acrimonious and unfocused and there is a complete breakdown in communication and trust between the team members. Jenna is told her promotion is on hold and annual performance reviews fail to reward anyone on the team. Darius and Shanelle contact previous colleagues to see what opportunities might be available outside Stardusttechnologies. Kimberley makes a formal request to be moved to another project...

I'm sure you were expecting those problems from my descriptions of the team and their respective values; but will you have that type of information available when you're building your team or know how to obtain it? Even if you do know your team's values, do you know what you must do to ensure that the team all work together successfully?

Please get in touch to find out how we can help you build successful teams by utilising NLP techniques to elicit your team's values and align them with your own.

Mike Burrow

NLP Master Coach Practitioner

Email: mike.burrow@sunsetsql.com

Mobile: 07729 909186