

TONE FROM THE TOP

HOW CAN YOU BECOME RECOGNISED AS A VALUES-LED LEADER? JO SIMPSON EXPLAINS



Values-led leadership starts with you – the leader. It is about becoming more consciously aware of what is most important to you, and what is driving you, your decisions, your relationships (personal and professional) and the goals/objectives you set and achieve (or not, as the case may be).

Most leaders don't truly know what is really driving them, however. We hear the term 'values-based or values-led leadership', but what does it really mean?

Values explained

Let's start with what it's not. A large majority of companies take an outside-in approach

and impose the company values on to each individual who works for the company, ie these are our values and behaviours, and they need to be honoured.

This approach doesn't work for many reasons, but mainly because the individual isn't engaged or aligned. Now, of course, it is important for people to honour the company values, but this honour needs to come from the inside out, with each person taking the time to really discover their own core values and only then to align with the company values, looking at them through a lens of their own.

As an example, let's say your organisation has

a company value of 'great customer service' and you have a personal core value of 'making a difference'. The leader with 'making a difference' as a value could easily see how they could align to the company value through the lens of 'making a difference'.

So, how do we discover our values? This is best done through someone, ideally a professional coach, asking you some powerful questions. I like to keep the process

simple and use a three-step approach: Discover, Define, Ignite™.

Take the time to really Discover your core values (see box, Three Powerful Questions for Values Discovery, opposite) and then Define what each one means to you. This is a very important step, and the absence of this is at the heart of a lot of communication breakdown and conflict.

One word means different things to different people.

Your values are what matter most to you in life, so bringing them into your communication is vital

How often do you take the time to ask yourself, “what do ‘freedom’ or ‘honesty’ mean to me?”

Once you are clear on your core values and what they mean to you, it’s time to Ignite them in all that you do – in your decisions, communications, visioning, goal and objective setting, hiring and firing, and resolution of conflict.

Our core values are at the heart of everything we do, whether we are consciously aware of them or not, and it takes courage to fully live them and to be a values-led leader. Being true to ourselves is often more difficult than ‘fitting in’ or ‘doing what we think we should do’ in the short term, but if you carry on ‘being someone you are not’ for too long, you will become restless and frustrated, and eventually feel drained.

Let’s explore a few areas, where you can step into that place of courage and lead from your values.

Conscious choice

Do we always have a choice? The answer is ‘yes’, although sometimes it may not feel like it, or perhaps there are things that we ‘have to do’ that don’t necessarily bring us joy.

Once you can own the fact that you always have a choice, it brings empowerment and a sense of liberation. So, what about the things we ‘have to do’ – for example, that long report that will have an impact on other people or the business, if it is not done? Find a way for it to meet some of your values. If you have values of ‘connection’ and ‘fun’, don’t sit there doing it alone – get some support and make it lighter, and see how much easier it is to accomplish when you consciously ignite your values into the task.

Courageous communication

Your values are the things that you hold most dear. They are what matter most to you in life, so bringing them into your communication is vital, and they are especially helpful when you are dealing with difficult conversations.

Let’s say that you are ‘in conflict’ with another person. Instead of having a disagreement, or trying to get your point across, try asking through curious questioning, what is important to the other person about the situation, and then share what’s important to you. Not only will you have an easier conversation, you will gain a depth of understanding about what is driving each one of you and it’s likely that, going forward, you will work in a more collaborative and respectful way.

Projection of values

The more we become aware of our own set of values, what they mean to us and the priority we place on them, the more we appreciate

FIVE WAYS TO BECOME A VALUES-LED LEADER

①

Be true to yourself and honour your values in all that you do.

②

Express your truth.

③

Make courageous decisions and set goals that are aligned with your values.

④

Trust your intuition.

⑤

Lead from the inside out.

THREE POWERFUL QUESTIONS FOR VALUES DISCOVERY

Q1. What’s important to you?

What does that give you? (Delivering on promises may be important and it could give ‘integrity’ or ‘honesty’, which are the core values in this case.)

Q2. What do you enjoy?

What does that give you? (Working on projects with others could be enjoyable and give ‘connection’ or ‘teamwork’ – the core values.)

Q3. What frustrates you?

Flip the answer over to the opposite that resonates with you, to elicit your core value (ie if you get frustrated by deceit, your value might be ‘honesty’ or ‘truth’).

that others have their own set of core values with different meanings and a different priority order. This is what makes us unique and interesting.

Without this awareness, we can unconsciously project our values on to others. If person A is driven by respect, excellence and focus, and person B by positivity, adventure and fun, imagine how this plays out when they work together.

Unless each person is aware of their own values and those of the other person, a lot of frustration can ensue, since each person believes their way is the right way. Person A may just want to get the job done fast and achieve the highest possible results, whereas person B, the way it’s done would be more important – it would matter more to them that is done in a positive way and ideally with some fun. Be aware of what you are projecting on to others and notice what others may be projecting on to you.

Being triggered

The next time you get ‘triggered’ or someone annoys you, take the time to reflect

and ask yourself which of your core values has just been impacted.

If someone is late for a meeting, it could have triggered your ‘respect’ value, or if someone is negative around you, it may impact on ‘positivity’. The more we become aware of which of our values are triggered, the easier it becomes to find a sense of peace within.

When we know why we feel the way we do, it lessens our feelings of frustration or anger. By all means, have a courageous conversation with the other person, but do it from a calm place. We know that we have no control over what others do – yet unconsciously, it is this that triggers us the most.

Focus on honouring your own values first and foremost, and let go of expectations from others. You will see the difference that it makes to your wellbeing and peace of mind.

Being a values-led leader means being true to yourself, no matter what. Values can’t be imposed or picked from a list; they must be discovered from within. Enjoy the discovery. ♥

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