4 Reminders To Help Define Your Company's Values

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A company's core values shouldn't just sound nice. They should become guiding principles for everyone in your organizations to follow.

Ideally, employees should be able to consult our values during times of autonomous decision-making. That way, they can make choices that align with our intended brand direction. However, many companies have values that aren't clear or up to date. As Gallup research shows, this can lead to serious problems.

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In one of Gallup's recent surveys, fewer than one-quarter of respondents said they're led by their company's values. A mere 27% admit to believing in the values that their employers highlight. As a result, the values become little more than words — and that undermines their potential to be inspirational and clarifying.

Ideally, you want your corporate values to do much more than sound good on paper. You want them to resonate with all your team members and appeal to your customers or client base. To get those benefits, though, you may need to reconsider or refresh your existing company values. Below are the best strategies to make sure new values are reflective of what employees and buyers need.

1. Bring your workers into the discussion early

Getting buy-in for values is hard if you haven’t asked your team for feedback first. A better way to ensure that your values are on the right track is to survey your workforce. We recommend bringing in a third party. Consider partnering with a consultant with experience creating strong, effective corporate cultures. After all, you want your values to drive your culture – and vice versa.

To put it into practice, hold town halls, send out surveys, and find out the ways your people want to be contacted and ultimately treated. I’ve found that this is one of the best ways to get the conversation started across the corporate landscape.

2. Match your words with your actions

Too often, companies share values but don’t live those values. Your corporate actions should support your company’s values. For example, one of our values is to treat all people equitably. If we had gender pay gaps that weren’t being addressed, we would show my team that I’m not truly behind the values I push. It wouldn’t take long before someone noted the disconnect, which could lead to employee turnover or negative press.

There are plenty of ways to match your actions to your values. Case in point, you could donate to specific causes. Or you could pay your employees to do volunteer work throughout the year. Feel free to get creative in a way that makes sense based on what your values are.

3. Talk about your values

Keeping your values top of mind can be tough, especially during busy periods. One method to keep values alive that we've leaned into is talking about them openly. For instance, adding them to your company's social media or blog posts. The more often you speak about your values, the more real they'll become to internal and external stakeholders.

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A side advantage of discussing your values is that they'll become synonymous with your brand. Patagonia is a good example of this. The company's core values include environmentalism, unconventionality, and a commitment to justice. As such, Patagonia's leaders have made bold stands about protecting the planet and fighting systemic racism. The result? The company and its values are forever married.

4. Start small and sincere

If you're starting on the path to constructing values, begin on a smaller scale. You don't need to have a dozen value points. I've noticed that selecting just one is enough to kickstart your company. It's okay to add more value statements or expand them as you move forward.

Remember: The goal isn't to overwhelm everyone with what you value as an organization. It's to show your business's true colors. Feel free to choose individual words to make up your values or generate a sentence that embodies your values. Slack does the latter with its header: "Make work life simpler, more pleasant, and more productive." It's easy to see how that value statement could become a roadmap for teams to follow.

You can't always be around to tell your employees and peers what to do. But your core values can. Start refreshing and

refining your value proposition today. When you do, you'll better position your company to remain strong and competitive.

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