Core Values: What They Are, Why They're Important, and How to Implement Them Today

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The buzz around the phrase "core values" has skyrocketed in recent months. It's almost as if the hiring and retention culture post-shutdown has really shifted in the direction of leadership and company culture. With all the posts, videos and articles swirling out there about core values and how important they are, I wanted to take the opportunity to share what core values are, why they should be an integral part of your company's culture and how to implement them today.

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What are core values?

Very simply put, core values are your company's shield against itself. They are the set of internal values that set the barometer of the entire team inside the organization. These values must start with the leadership team and be a direct representation of the values that each leadership team member lives by. This will set and maintain the standard of behavior for the entire rest of the team as the company grows. Generally speaking, a company wants to have 3-7 clearly defined and actionable core values documented. You want them to be easy to understand, difficult to manipulate and memorizable by any level team member.

Remember, keep it simple, but keep it impactful. This is important. As the company grows and expands, it will continue

to rely on these values to set the tone when challenges arise. Use your own life as an example of where to come up with these values. Some questions you can ask yourself are: What is most important to you daily? What are some non-negotiables you live by? What are the assets you see in others that inspire you to be better? You can use these as a starting point to brainstorm your value system inside your organization.

As you grow, your business is going to hit roadblocks. When this happens, there will be moments when the whole team needs something to rely on to keep pushing, and that is the most crucial moment these will come in to play.

Examples of company core values include:

- Communicate Proactively
- Extreme Ownership
- We Do The Right Thing
- Harmony
- We Put Our Customers First
- Integrity
- Honesty

You can use single words, or you can choose phrases. Once you have those selected, you want to write a mini blurb about the value. Give insight and examples of where it would apply inside your organization, and give your team some ideas to think through. For each value, you want to set it up in a way that looks appealing to everyone involved, so they will adopt this way of thinking and operating. Core values are truly a win-win scenario for the team, the customers and you as the owner or leader.

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How to implement your core values

Next, you’re going to set this in motion inside your team

meetings. The most practical and efficient way to implement a value structure that sticks is by giving constant reminders. Pick specific meetings each week that can open with core values. You can ask people to read them, you can ask for examples of how they were applied in the week prior, or you can simply ask if anyone saw someone else live the value. This creates a buy-in that shows the team you are serious, and they will also be rewarded and recognized for living in the value system that the company relies on now.

Keeping core values implemented on a company-wide level starts with you. You have to take these values more seriously than anyone else. You must operate on a daily basis applying them, talking about them and holding yourself accountable to these core values you set in motion, even when it stings. It is incredibly important that you do not show that these are not important enough for you to apply. And when you do falter, it is of the utmost importance that you own it, acknowledge it, and tell your team how you will do better.

It can be hard for a company that has not defined their core values to see the true ROI in setting and implementing them, but trust me when I tell you it is everlasting, and it is grand. People thrive on great leadership, and all great leadership starts with a set of unwavering values towards the greater good of the team.

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