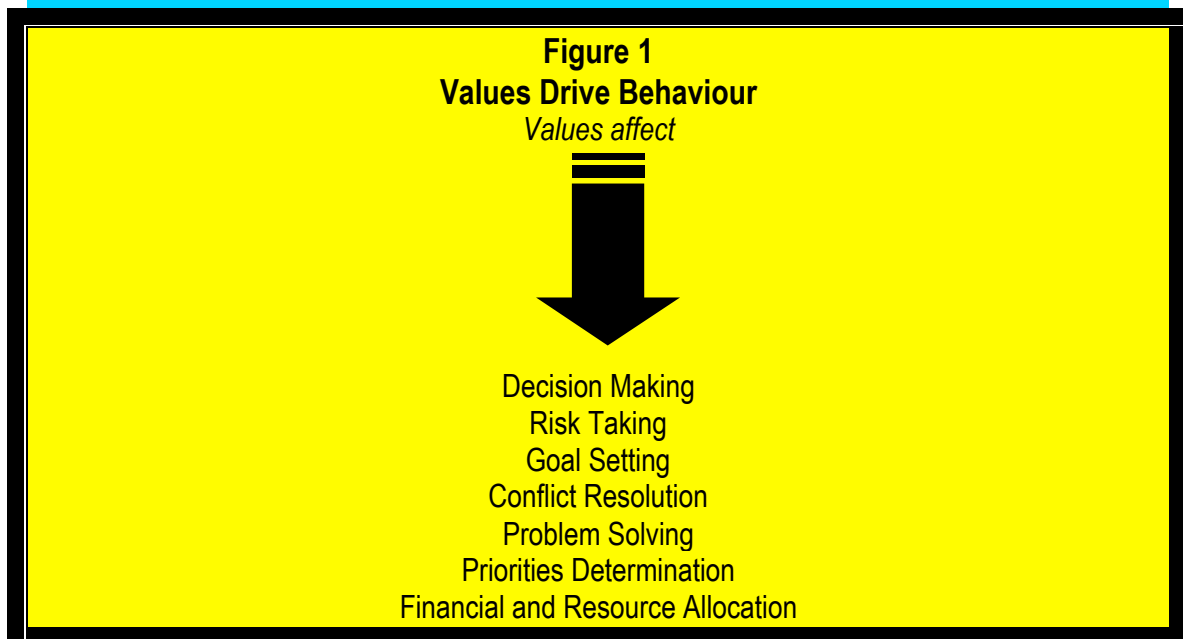


why do values matter?

Each individual's life has its priorities. These priorities are important because they signal not just what someone regards as important, but what is most important. A leader of character finds it easy to identify "most important" priorities because they know and understand their values. Living a values-filled and valued-driven life is what Internalize Right Principles is all about and it enables people to focus their energies.

The choices we make present us with an opportunity to be authentic to our values and to encounter "truth" as we live each day. Others see values through our behaviour. People admire excellence, but abhor arrogance. One is a value the other is a behaviour which opposes the value. Each individual (and organisation) has many values. They do not exist in isolation or separation. Values are part of a chain, each value is a link and they all are intrinsically connected with each other. Our behaviour is rarely a demonstration of only one value, it is a demonstration of linked values. You can violate the rules for a season, but the trap door will eventually open and you will fall through. So living a values-full and values-driven life is an important step in the progressive realisation of authentic success.

Values are important because they affect us (refer Figure 1 below).



There are many kinds of values and if you know your core values not only does the internalisation of these principles become easier to live, but also their impact becomes more tangible to observe. Values do, however, exist in tensions. These tensions are:

Conscious versus unconscious values

When you are able to articulate your values they become conscious. If you are aware of your *soft spot* values and you are working towards making them your *sweet spot* values then they also are conscious. People who hold their values at a conscious level are more

Coaching Toolkit

proactive (able to make things happen). They know what they believe and the values that drive these beliefs. Each of us holds many values, the majority of which are unconscious. To leave high priority values unconscious will prevent someone from living a full authentic life. Lower priority values may remain at an unconscious level.

Shared versus unshared values

In their book *In Search for Excellence* Tom Peters and Robert Waterman wrote, “I believe that real difference between success and failure in a corporation can very often be traced to the question of how well the organisation brings out the great energies and talents of its people. What does it do to help these people find common cause with each other?” Kouzes and Posner conducted research that involved 2,300 managers at all levels regarding the importance of shared values. They found that shared values foster strong feelings of personal effectiveness, encourage ethical behaviour, and reduces levels of stress and tension. Shared values also help individual leaders in the same way. To know your values, and not share them, means that energies can't be applied as easily, and the level of accountability one has around their values reduces. A common characteristic of role model ethical leaders is their ability to share and be held accountable for their values.

Personal versus organisational values

The major difference here is that personal values affect primarily the individual, but have the potential to affect an entire organisation. Organisational values, affect all who are part of its community and encourage these values to be tangibly evident. Each of us belongs to an organisation, and are at times caught between the tension of our own personal values versus the organisational promoted values. Additionally, at a personal level we are often in the tension of how well the organisational values can and are lives out in the processes, practices and behaviours of the organisation.

Actual versus aspirational values

Leaders all have both actual and aspirational values. Actual values are the ones, which we own and act upon daily. Aspiration values are not currently owned but represent something that someone would like to adopt and have become part of the actual values. Core values (or high priority values) become a part of you. So the tension becomes “What values have I adopted?” rather than “What values should I adopt?” Being authentic is about operating with greater awareness of the first question, not the latter. Being a leader is about uncovering the right aspirational values of self and others and working towards their adoption. This is only possible when we are accurately aware of our actual values in practice.

Congruent versus incongruent values

Why do some people achieve their goals more than others? One reason may be congruent core values. These are the values that fit together with, and support, self and others with high levels of alignment. Many of us will experience times of incongruent values. For instance how can I have a passionate and worthwhile dialogue with someone I disagree with whilst holding the tension of disagreement yet valuing the relationship highly? You might say the disagreement is about something and the relationship is about someone, however, the tension will still exist. You can't always take the tension away, and in fact you may need to stay in the tension to honour both values highly.

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Having values does not remove the challenge of moral conflicts. Values are both enduring and dynamic. An individual or organisation holds them. They are about the worth of beliefs which impact ethical behaviour. Each person's life is, in part, defined by his or her values.

Doing a values audit is a helpful reflection and development project. Leaders of character are prepared to regularly audit their values personally and through key relationship feedback. Ethical behaviour is derived from values. Hugh Mackay has shown that the quality of relationships lies at the heart of perceptions about ethics and values behaviour. Our willingness to be vulnerable and to have our values audited through relationship feedback is an important development step for any leader.

In closing, can I say, there is a type of role model that we are all looking for. Someone who displays moral courage – the ability to stand up for what is right – their internalised principles evident in their making things happen. This moral courage is founded on a belief that there may be a significant personal cost yet recognising that the cost is low risk. Some people think that heroes are forged in the white heat of the dangerous moment. But there is another kind of authentic leader. The person whose quiet decency, whose achievements, and authentic living is built over time through their values-filled and values-drive life.

Here are some questions to reflect upon:

- How can I reinforce and communicate my core values on a daily basis?
- What can I do to help people understand how values drive authentic success?
- What behaviours will make my values tangibly identifiable by others?
- Who can I ask to help me audit and be accountable to my values regularly?
- What can I do to maximize the impact of my values?

In just two days tomorrow will be yesterday.

Don't hold off exploring your values. Connect with them by uncovering them, make them conscious, share them and live by them. Here is the test of a Good Value:

- A good core value is a universal principle.
- A good core value engenders passion.
- A good core value is shared
- A good core value is constant
- A good core value is expressed clearly
- A good core value is congruent with and linked with the internal chain of values
- A good core value is evident in behaviour

