

WORKBOOK

FATHOM



# Crafting Meaningful Values For Your Organization

2018

“

Your beliefs become your thoughts,  
Your thoughts become your words,  
Your words become your actions,  
Your actions become your habits,  
Your habits become your values,  
**Your values become your destiny.**

- Mahatma Gandhi



# Introduction

**People want to be part of something that makes a difference. Thriving organizations, ones that stand out in the marketplace, understand the meaning of their work and can communicate its value clearly for others.**

?

Do you have difficulty making tough decisions on behalf of your business?

?

Is there a lack of alignment between your teams?

?

Is your turnover rate for new hires way too high?

**This workbook is designed to help you and your team craft meaningful values that will help you effectively guide your organization to its full potential.**

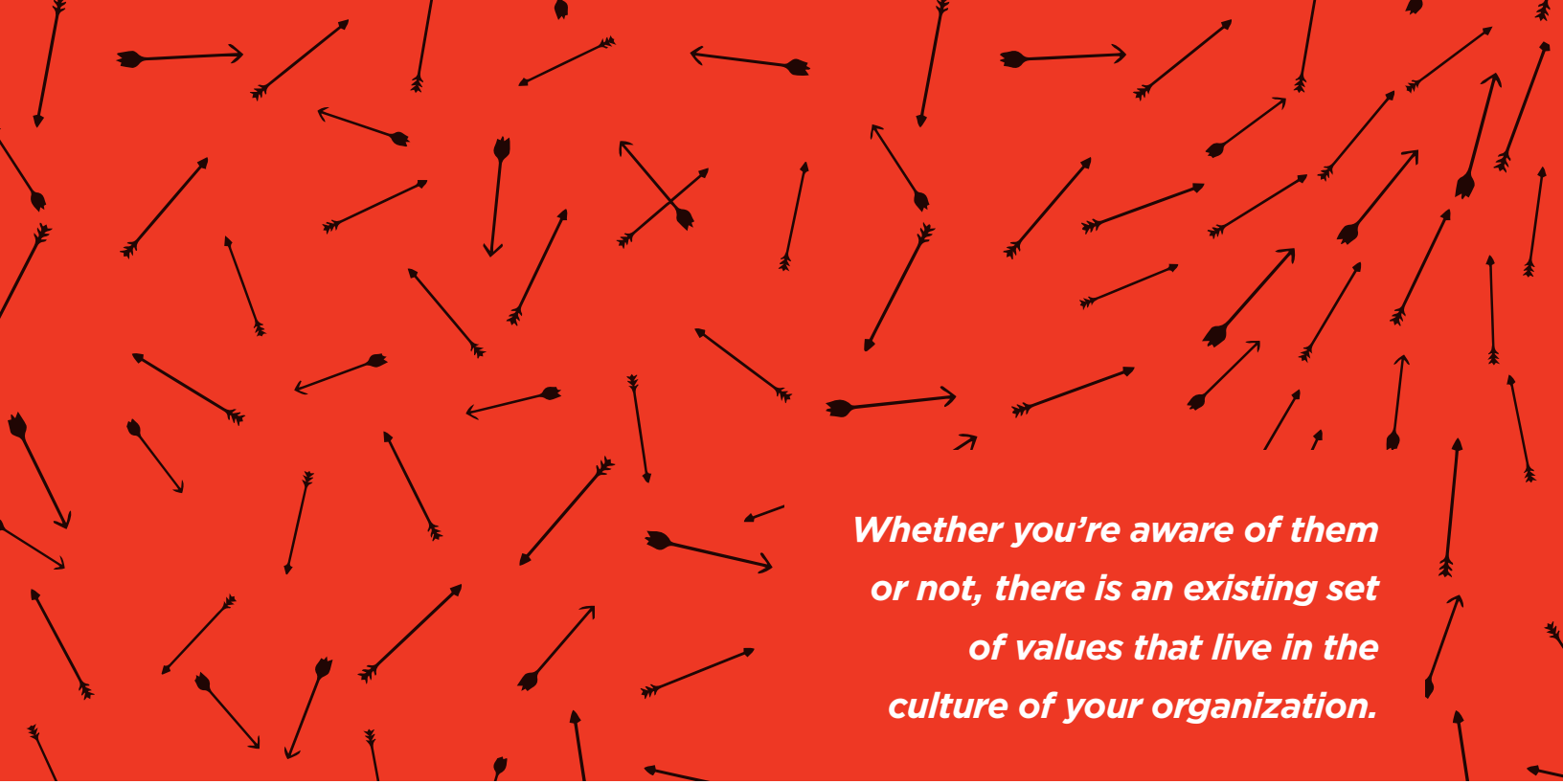
*In the following chapters we will cover:*

- 1 What are organizational values?** ..... 1-8  
What they are, where they come from, and how they mesh with personal values
- 2 Why are values critical for a modern business?** ..... 9-14  
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Working on behalf of your values and making your values work for you



# **What are organizational values?**

*What they are, where they come from, and how they mesh with personal values*



*Whether you're aware of them or not, there is an existing set of values that live in the culture of your organization.*


## ***What are organizational values?***

The culture of an organization is naturally invisible and it forms gradually around the beliefs, actions, and spirit of its like-minded members. Because you can't see it, culture becomes something that is felt and can be difficult to define and communicate.

When defined, values can act as an operating system, providing principles that guide an organization's behaviors and determine its priorities. These key traits and qualities shape your team's daily interactions with other employees, customers, suppliers, and partners. Over time, values become the fabric that holds a well operating organization together.

## ***What they are not:***

- ×** Organizational values are not personal values. They are not solely based on the leaders who run the organization, but should be alive in every person involved in the company.
- ×** They are not descriptions of the work you do or the strategies you employ to accomplish your goals.
- ×** They are not cultural norms, industry terms, or operating practices. They are not aspirational. If there is no living proof that a value has been practiced, it is not one of your values.



*When personal values and organizational values align, the objectives of both the individual and the organization become more meaningful.*

## ***Personal values and organizational values***

As the leader of an organization, finding connection points between your personal values and your organization's values is vital.

Leaders set the tone for organizational culture and must embody the values of the organization.

When organizational values are clearly articulated, everyone within the organization can find a connection to their own personal values.

When people feel personally connected to an organization, their work is much more satisfying. If their values do not align, they may move on and others who do share the values of the organization will fill in.



# 2

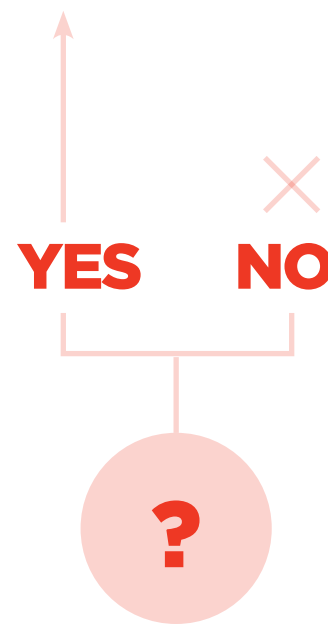
## **Why are values critical for a modern business?**

*The importance of values for strategic  
decision making, employee engagement  
and alignment, recruiting, and more*

## ***Make difficult decisions quickly and confidently***

It's pretty simple, ask yourself, "Does this course of action align with our core values as an organization?" If you're being honest with yourself, the answer should be clearly "yes" or "no."

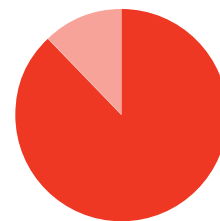
When you and your team are whole-heartedly committed to your values, tough decisions and negotiations become much easier.



# ***Improve alignment and engagement***

Organizational values can inspire everyone to align their daily actions around a shared set of principles. They can create a sense of pride and community and provide a method for praise and recognition within that community. According to a [Gallup study](#) where over 10,000 business units and more than 30 industries were analyzed, individuals who receive regular recognition:

- + Increase their individual productivity**
- + Increase engagement among their colleagues**
- + Are more likely to stay with their organization**
- + Receive higher satisfaction scores from customers**
- + Have better safety records and fewer accidents**



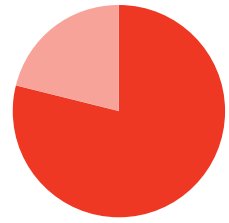
**88%**

of employees who know their company's core values report being engaged

[Gloforce](#)

## ***Create evangelists***

Successfully cultivating conditions for your organizational value system to thrive brings out early adopters who are aware of their strengths and can quickly ground them in the values of the organization. Shining a light on what is best about your people encourages them to promote what is best about the organization.



**79%**

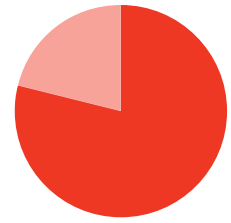
of employees understand company goals better when values are tied to recognition

[Gloforce](#)



# ***Grow the people who grow your business***

Great companies make their best employees better and all of their employees better than they thought they could be. Values help create a structure for learning and pathways to leadership. They demonstrate an organization's awareness that it is not just a great place to work, but a place to grow.



## **79%**

of millennials want to work for a company that cares about a bottom line other than profit, such as social responsibility or sustainability.

[Cone & AMP Insights Study](#)



## ***Enhance onboarding success***

Clearly communicating what is important to your organization invites newcomers to be more transparent about their authentic selves.

Matching the personal values of prospective employees with the values of your organization leads to greater employee engagement and retention.



# 3

## **Have values? Let's put them to the test**

*Three tests to help you understand  
if your values are helping  
your organization*

# ***Do you wonder if your values are working for your organization?***

It is all too common in corporate culture for leadership to turn to catchy buzzwords that they think people want to hear. Words like “Innovation, Quality, Synergy, or Community” sound good to customers, investors, and maybe even a few employees. However, ungrounded, unlived, and sometimes untrue terms like these are usually meaningless to the actual operation. They can even damage employees’ belief in the organization itself.

Here are a few tests to help you understand if your values are in play:

**Test 1 - Between a rock and a hard place**

**Test 2 - Gut reaction**

**Test 3 - Listen to the people**



# Test 1

## *Between a rock and a hard place*



Take a look back and outline the three most challenging decisions your company faced in the last year. Choose the tough ones, the ones where you were really challenged, the ones you were losing sleep over.

**What decision was made? Does that decision reflect the values you have as an organization?**

Answer YES or NO and if yes, HOW?

**Do your values help you understand why you did what you did?**

Answer YES or NO and if yes, HOW?

If the honest answer is no, it's time to take a harder look at your values.



## **Test 2**

### **Gut reaction**

Note three times in the last year that you had to make a decision very quickly and did not have time to take a step back to think, research, or map out implications.

**What decisions did you make? Do those decisions reflect the values you have as an organization?**

Answer **YES** or **NO** and if yes, **HOW?**

**Do your values help explain the decision you made?**

Answer **YES** or **NO** and if yes, **HOW?**

If not, you could benefit from more meaningful values to help you make those quick decisions more effectively.

## ***Test 3***

### ***Listen to the people***



Depending on the size of your organization, think about the last 2 to 10 people you hired. Review the hiring and onboarding experience for each individual.

**How many of those employees are still at your organization and how many of them would you classify as right fit, high performing individuals?**

**Were your values used during your hiring and onboarding experience? If so, did they help you find right fit people whose values align with your organization? If not, could they have helped you?**

If your values weren't a key consideration in your recent hiring, you could benefit from a set of meaningful values to help attract like-minded talent and ensure that your onboarding experience matches the expectations new hires have of your organization. Transparency from both parties about what the other values will ensure that time is not wasted pursuing wrong-fit relationships.

# 4

## **Five guidelines for success**

*Five tips for ensuring your values  
are authentic, effective, and owned  
by your people*

# **1** *Decide if you're committed to creating a values-based culture*

Don't expect employees to take your organizational values seriously unless you are committed to upholding the values yourself. Computer desktop wallpapers, hallway posters and PowerPoint slides alone won't drive behavioral change within an organization. The only way to create an authentic, values-based culture is to become the living model of your value system and to celebrate others who consistently act on behalf of the same values.

# **2** *Define your personal values*

Don't ask anyone to do something that you aren't willing to do. Put yourself through the introspective journey that your organization is about to undertake. Discover your personal values first, so you have a clear understanding of how they compliment the values of your organization.

## **3** *Focus on the values that live in your people*

Many organizations make the mistake of declaring values that they aspire to. However, with the exception of start-ups, you must understand that values are discovered, not set. In order for your values to be embraced by your people, they must come from your people. They must represent the best truths of the existing culture.

## **4** *Involve a broad cross-section of employees*

To jump start the effectiveness of values, it is critical to include a number of contributors from various segments and levels of seniority within the organization. This helps ensure that the values are relevant to every employee, not just management. When employees are included and listened to, they can clearly see themselves in the values and are much more likely to embrace them.

## **5** *Make them authentic to your culture*

Naming values is key, but bringing them to life for people makes them actionable. We've found that value statements written with personality and reinforced with examples are much more actionable and alive for employees, new and old.

# 5

## **Uncovering your values**

*A step by step checklist with corresponding  
worksheets to help you and your team  
uncover authentic organizational values*



# Create authentic cultural characteristics

## Assemble a values team

- Assemble a team of employees who are most engaged and passionate about what they do and what the organization is up to

*[Team size based on size of organization - 5 to 15 average]*

<b>Values Team</b>	

## ***Interview team members***

- Interview each team member using these two questions and record their answers. Remove repetition by combining similar thoughts into singular statements.

<b>In your words, how do people at our company interact as they work together?</b>	<b>What part(s) of our culture, if eliminated, would mean it no longer felt like our company?</b>

# Extract cultural characteristics

- Use team member answers as source material to extract cultural characteristics.

*Cultural characteristics are beliefs and behaviors that people in your organization express as common.*

**Examples:**

*“we try to be creative and inventive,” “we are reliable and dependable”*

<b>Cultural Characteristics</b>		

# ***Distill cultural characteristics***

- Assemble your team to review and refine your list down to 10 cultural characteristics.

<b>10 Cultural Characteristics</b>	<b>1</b>	
	<b>2</b>	
	<b>3</b>	
	<b>4</b>	
	<b>5</b>	
	<b>6</b>	
	<b>7</b>	
	<b>8</b>	
	<b>9</b>	
	<b>10</b>	

# Invite your entire organization to contribute

## Company-wide survey

- Create a company-wide survey and have each person select 5 characteristics (out of the 10 distilled by the team) they believe are most important to the future of the organization.

Meet with the team to review the survey findings and select the 5 final cultural characteristics.

[SurveyMonkey](#) is an excellent tool for creating digital surveys.

<b>Final 5 Cultural Characteristics</b>	<b>1</b>	
	<b>2</b>	
	<b>3</b>	
	<b>4</b>	
	<b>5</b>	

# Convert characteristics to values

## Choose three words

- For each of the five characteristics, choose up to three single words that represent the essence of that characteristic.

**Examples:** “creative,” “inventive,” “reliable”

	Characteristic	Word 1	Word 2	Word 3
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				

## Choose one word

- Assemble the evangelist team to review and decide on one single word to represent each characteristic and act as the value.

**Example:** “*creative*”

	Characteristic	Final word
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		

***This is big...***

**In case you didn't realize, your 5 final resulting words are your organizational values! Wahoo! Now, on to craft value statements...**

# Crafting value statements

## Share stories

- Meet with your team to share real life stories of individuals in your organization who have demonstrated one of your 5 values. Use these stories to write a one to two-sentence description for each value.

### Example:

“Creativity: We approach difficulty with an adventurous spirit, coming together to share our best ideas and face our biggest fears.”

	Value	Description
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		



The background is a solid light blue color. It is decorated with numerous small, dark blue square confetti pieces scattered throughout. There are three wavy streamer-like lines in a slightly darker shade of blue, positioned in the upper left, upper right, and lower center areas of the page.

# Congratulations!

*You have successfully crafted  
authentic values for your organization!  
Next step, make them meaningful...*



# **Making values meaningful**

*Align your organization around its values  
by communicating them with purpose,  
modeling them as a leader, and recognizing  
individuals who uphold them*

# ***Communicate your values with clarity and purpose***

To demonstrate how important the values are and will be to your organization, roll them out dramatically.

An extreme example is Starbucks. When the company was struggling in the depths of the recession in early 2008, Howard Schultz stepped back in as CEO. Schultz and his team had the fortitude to respond to this historic threat to their business by reconnecting to and refining the values that had made them great in the first place.

They quickly worked to articulate their guiding principles and then flew 10,000 of their team members to an amazing relaunch event in New Orleans.

After this launch, the company retrenched and within two years, was back to record-setting results.

> [Watch the video](#)

## ***Let your people know you're serious***

Make promises and keep them. Explain how your leadership team and organization as a whole will hold itself accountable to its values and celebrate those who consistently embody them.

## ***Empower your evangelist team***

Ask for volunteers within your evangelist team to become the ambassadors of the values. Give them the room to dedicate extra time in their workday to create communication channels and materials.

## ***Make your values visible***

Do whatever it takes in your workspace to keep your values front and center. Posters, computer desktop backgrounds, display screens, and meeting reports are just a few places your values can be reinforced.

## ***Celebrate values heroes***

To reinforce your values and create role models for other employees, it's crucial to regularly celebrate employees who exemplify the values.

If employees go out of their way to uphold one of your values, let them know, recognize them publicly and reward their continued dedication.

Rackspace does a great job of showcasing their commitment to Fanatical Support by rewarding employees with a straight jacket that is visibly displayed in their workspace. They also produce compelling videos highlighting these individuals, including a recent profile on a “Fanatical Support day in the life” of one of their support representatives, David Corn.

> [Watch the video](#)



# **Putting your values to work**

*Working on behalf of your values and  
making your values work for you*

## ***Lean on your values when making difficult decisions***

Use your values to help guide difficult financial and strategic business decisions. They represent common ground and should provide clarity when weighing pros and cons.

When you discuss decision-making in the context of your values, you help solidify those values in everyone's minds.

***You can now rest easier knowing that no matter the outcome, your decision is on behalf of what your entire organization believes is important.***

“

“It's not hard to make decisions when you know what your values are.”

- Roy Disney



## ***Use them to guide hiring and firing***

Clearly communicate your values in your recruitment and interview processes to attract like-minded talent.

Hire candidates that demonstrate technical and emotional capability. If you want to cultivate a values based culture in your company, look for a candidate's emotional capacity to care about the job and what it represents.

When star or senior employees continually act in ways that violate your values, you must move them out.

***Whether it be a joyous addition to your staff or a regretful removal of a long standing member, your action will be in the declared best interest of your entire organization.***



**That's  
all folks!**



## ***Share your success***

A big thank you from Fathom for using our Workbook! Please share with us your successes or challenges with this guide. We are always looking to improve the tools we use to help clients design futures worth fighting for. We would love to hear from you!

If you are struggling with values, feel like your organization is stuck, or have a strategic initiative you just can't get off the ground, feel free to reach out to discuss how Fathom can help your organization.

The fastest way to reach us is my e-mailing:

[\*\*brentr@fathom.net\*\*](mailto:brentr@fathom.net)



# ***Who is Fathom?***

Fathom is a strategy and creative consultancy working with business leaders to design futures worth fighting for™

[fathomfutures.com](https://fathomfutures.com)