

Are company values important?

How to design company values that motivate staff

Today a set of company values has become like the human appendix – we all have one but we’re not exactly sure what it is for. While many companies have a set of values, their employees often do not know what they are, or what to do with them.

Kobus Neethling, president of South African Creativity Foundation, says that for most companies values have become empty words on a company profile, collecting dust in a bottom drawer. “The problems in world markets today are largely due to companies whose values have become meaningless. It is not uncommon for a

company to list integrity as a value, while using unethical means to increase profits,” says Neethling.

Companies need to anchor themselves in a totally new way, with values that are meaningful and lived every day. “We have to redesign our values and breathe new life into them – only then do they have an impact.”

In order to have your values work for you, design them so that they speak to all your employees. A good way to reach all your employees is to

communicate to all the different kinds of thinking types.

Neethling identified eight different types of thinking types or dimensions based on what he calls his eight dimension whole brain instrument. The instrument is able to measure and describe thinking preferences in people. By answering a list of questions, Neethling can determine what thinking type you are.

There are only eight thinking types: the strategist, imagineer, empathiser,

Spot the signs

In order to determine what type of thinkers your staff members are, you can start looking for clues in the way people speak. People who talk using a lot of facts and information are probably realists. Neethling says, “If my colleague is a realist, then I know I need to communicate using facts and information. When you move into the other person’s dimension there is greater acceptance.”

If the person is always in a problem-solving mode, he or she is probably an analyser. Someone who uses softer language and emotional words is most likely an empathiser. Once you know who you are speaking to, you can adjust your communication styles accordingly.



People have different thinking styles



socialiser, organiser, preserver, analyst, and realist. Most people are dominant in one of these thinking styles, with one or two minor styles.

According to Neethling, values need to be designed so that they speak to all eight thinking types. For example, many companies have passion as a value but passion means different things to different people. A strategist creates passion by the excitement of creating new ideas while a socialiser creates passion by working in groups towards a common goal.

“People flourish in an environment where they feel their uniqueness is valued”

In order to create values that make an impact, you need to connect it to a set of behaviours. Only then will you achieve results. “For example, you can’t say passion is your company value and leave it at that,” says Neethling. “You have to identify a set of behaviours attached to passion. That way you ensure that passion is alive and understood by everyone in the company.” Passion is the excitement of creating new ideas, for some it is working in groups, and for others it is problem-solving. Make sure your values speak to all eight thinking types.

Values are about creating an environment where everyone is happy and positive. Neethling says, “If you leave out any of the eight dimensions, there will always be people in the organisation who feel as if they don’t belong.”

There are many benefits in creating values that speak to all your employees. Firstly, when you anchor your values in behaviour, you become a value-driven company where values are alive and have meaning.

A second benefit is that once leaders are eight-dimensional, they create an environment where productivity is increased. “People are happier, more motivated, and more productive when they have a sense of belonging. The moment employees feel they belong, they are more committed and energetic.”

Thirdly, eight-dimensional values enhance the creative spirit of an organisation a hundredfold. “Your brain is able to come up with millions of new ideas since the culture of the company is open to diverse opinions.”

The fourth benefit is that relationships between people are far more positive. “With this approach, there is greater acceptance of different opinions and people tend to understand each other a lot better. People flourish in an environment where they feel their uniqueness is valued.”

Keeping this eight-dimensional model in mind goes a long way in evaluating your employees’ performance. Neethling says, “You can’t judge everyone with the same measuring stick. For example, some managers who are organisers, only consider punctuality as hard work. But there are seven other ways to view hard work.”

Once you understand the eight-dimensional model you can apply it to any area, says Neethling. When giving a presentation, make sure you use language that speaks to all eight thinking types. This model is also extremely useful when creating teams, managing people, recruiting and even parenting. “If you use this model, people you interact with will feel respected and understood.” **S**

Which thinking type are you?

Strategist – sees the vision, breaks new ground, forecasts and predicts, challenges the status quo

Imagineer – listens to inner voice, thinks in pictures, intuitive flashes, day dreams

Empathiser – reaches out, caring and sensitive, services environment, attachment with a few people

Socialiser – mingles, works in groups, consensus, networks and co-operates

Organiser – puts things into action, arranges schedules, organises and plans, perseveres with details

Preserver – disciplined, steady, conscientious and diligent, respects tradition

Analyst – assesses, digs deeper, reasons rationally, clinical solutions

Realist – simplicity, clarity, no distractions, focus, likes clear goals