

The Value of a Value

One of the strongest messages that senior leadership can communicate at a time of change is a statement of values. Values can add stability and opportunities for innovation at times of change. But for values to have value, they must be understood.

Shared values are critical to binding people and creating shared expectations. However, our interpretation of values can differ. For example, the value of 'Excellence' can mean many things. For some, excellence means getting something right. For others, excellence means trying something new to improve an outcome, even if there is a failure. Both positions are easy to understand, but our starting points may differ and cause disagreements. Where differences get in the way of solving a problem, we can forget what the problem was we were trying to solve!

One method to create a shared understanding of team values is to create a "Values to Behavior Charter." This is a simple but powerful tool that can be useful for both internal team use and for teams working with external teams. The charter works in the following way:

- Identify organizational (or team) values
- As a group, examine each value and describe what it means
- Write down three behaviors that you want to see that support the value
- Write down three behaviors that you do not want to see or do not support that value
- Create a charter
- Use the charter as an open document to be used in team meetings, to call out behavior not desired, and to complement behavior that supports the value
- Use the charter to orient new team members and be open to changing descriptions of the desired and undesired value behaviors over time.

In organizations where differences are respected, values are an invitation to see and understand a different point of view. As we work closely with people from different cultural, gender, and generational backgrounds, we soon learn there is 'no one best way' to manage human relations or deal with differences in time and the environment.

As leadership author and culture expert Fons Trompenaars notes, "The value of a value is how it solves problems." Team Charters can help unify and create a shared understanding to overcome differences, accomplish new goals, and achieve the desired change. A Team Charter reflects and deepens organizational culture, making explicit, implicit behavior expectations.

For MC employees interested in more information about the Team Charter or in developing their intercultural leadership competencies, please consider joining the [Global Leadership Cohort](#) beginning October 11.

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