



VALUES



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The Baldrige Criteria is replete with references to Values. It is not by chance that Category I, Leadership, starts the questioning process with, “(1) How do senior leaders set organizational vision and values?”

An organizations’ values set by example by senior leadership is the rudder that determines the path the company will travel toward success, failure or somewhere in between. So..., why are values important?

Value means, “to be worth”. Values come in two basic colors, economic values and personal values. The Criteria are clear that organizational Core Values are the building blocks and behavioral outline for the company’s success and resultant economic value. Very simply, values beget value. The Criteria’s very foundation is built on these interrelated Values. In effect, they proclaim, “This is the way we are going to manage our organization”.

Core Values are those characteristics set by senior leadership to define the organization’s way in dealing with customers, employees, stakeholders and the community. Just how does senior leadership choose the core values for their company? Essentially, they are organizational concepts that are determined by personal values to reach certain goals. The role of being socially responsible and accountable has grown from those core and personal values of not just senior leadership but of all persons within the organization. Unfortunately, in some cases, these have grown from irresponsible leaders with selfish motives that have culminated with the destruction of the organization and the wanton ruin of employees’ future lives and dreams.

The only problematic issue with documented Core Values is that they may not necessarily reflect the true personal values of those trusted to lead the organization forward. Let’s take a look at what one would normally think is intuitively obvious relative to values. As a customer and consumer, what do you want from the person (and the organization) that is selling you something or providing a service to you? Organizations’ senior leaders are also customers and consumers. What are our personal expectations in any transaction? What personal values are you expecting?

- Honesty – the truth, all the truth
- Integrity – honesty over time; doing what you say you will do; keep promises
- Ethical – conforming to accepted social and moral standards; organizational transparency
- Caring – for employees, for the customer, for stakeholders, for the community

- Appreciation – showing everyone concerned they have worth
- Selflessness – caring for more than just profit
- Learning from past mistakes to plan the future – no surprises but be flexible

The Golden Rule – treat employees, customers, stakeholders and the community as you would like to be treated

These few are by no means all inclusive. I do believe possession of these types of personal values will determine success or failure in meeting the Criteria goal for Leadership, integrating sound values and judgment throughout the entire Criteria.

There may be many personal meanings and concepts of Values. What counts in the end are positive results. Setting the example of exhibiting commendable values (all the time!) will ensure not only customer loyalty but employee loyalty as well. The Criteria are based on this premise.