



214 South King Street

Leesburg, VA 20175

703-819-5032

www.IgnitePurposePro.com

IGNITE PURPOSE PRO CORE VALUES EXERCISE

Phase 1. Interviews and Data Collection:

Step 1. Understand Corporate Values:

What are company values and why do I need them?

*Company values (also called corporate values or core values) are the set of **guiding principles** and fundamental beliefs that help a group of people function together as a team and work toward a common business goal. These values are often related to business relationships, customer relationships, and company growth.*

From a business perspective, having a core set of company values makes it **easier for a company to make decisions**, quickly **communicate principles** to clients and customers, and **hire employees** with the right attitude. Creating a business is a bit like creating a community: if you want the community to act as a group, you need a shared code/vision/identity/ethos that drives whom you choose to invite in and how the community functions as a whole. If you don't own, define, and care about the values of your community, they will evolve on their own, potentially in ways that hurt your business.

Step 2. Personal Core Values Exercise:

Have the leader(s) do the *personal core values exercise* on their own. This group should be the founders, owners or top executives—the ones who set the tone for the rest of the company. The goal of this step is to identify shared values within their responses. We will compile all the responses and look for common themes or repeated values. This list will be narrowed to 10 or fewer values that are shared by the greatest number of people and discussed in the next phase.

Step 3. Leadership Interview(s):

EXAMINE WHAT MATTERS MOST TO YOU AND YOUR STAKEHOLDERS:

Think about all interactions between your company and each of its major stakeholders. Then ask what those stakeholders want or need out of the experience.

What is your company's purpose?

Think about why your company is in business, and consider the impact that the owners, managers and employees want it to have. Ask a series of questions focused on the company's interests, goals and defining characteristics, such as:

- *What is our company's broader purpose or reason for existence (beyond making money)*
- *What contributions does our company make to the world?*
- *What do we want be known for?*
- *How do we want to treat people, whether they're employees, customers, partners, or the public at large?*
- *Why do we act the way we act and do the things we do?*

Based on those answers, (re)consider the values and ethics that are needed to help you achieve your broader purpose. For example, Google is famous for its "Don't be Evil" mandate, but the company's core values also include statements that describe how it wants to do business, such as "Focus on the user and all else will follow."

What is most important to our team?

Feeling trusted? Being treated fairly? Having a significant say in the company's direction? Depending on your company culture, employees may value having fun, or feeling like their work has a positive impact on the world. What is most important to our owners and managers? Exceeding customer expectations? Being transparent about financial and management decisions? Helping employees achieve their potential?

What is most important to our clients?

Responsiveness and customer service? Value for their money? Working with companies that have a positive social or environmental impact?

Step 4. Turn personal values into shared values:

Some companies don't need to look very hard to find their core values. They're right there, within the personal values of the people who make up the organization. Defining core values from shared individual values is a good approach because the people inside the company—and their decisions and actions—ultimately make up a company's culture. When you align core values with people's personal beliefs, you stand a better chance of creating a culture that upholds those values.

Step 5. Survey the team:

Share the results with the whole company. After you've reviewed management feedback and made any necessary changes, send the list of proposed values to all of your employees and ask for their feedback. Also ask them to include any of their personal values that they think should be added to the list. Finalize the list based on the responses. If there is strong consensus to include additional personal values, combine them with your existing values. At this point, you should have a list that represents the collective interests, beliefs and values of your organization.

Step 6. Present final results to the team:

Present the findings of Step 1 - Step 5 to the entire company, get any final feedback and map out the "re-owning process."

Phase 2. Execution:

Step 7. Embed the values and shift the culture:

The company leaders now need to own any culture shifts personally, by understanding what is important, and what was not important, and how to describe it and execute needed changes. The process may take months, but will be a wonderful exercise that leads to a (re)prioritized set of values and vision that will be articulated in a very intentional way.

The work doesn't end when you articulate the values: you need to embed them in the company to make sure they succeed. For example, like many companies, *Whole Foods* includes quality in its core values. But the organic retailer defines quality in the context of its business, which means "*Selling the highest quality natural and organic products available.*" The company then goes further by describing the actions it takes to uphold that value: "*We define quality by evaluating the ingredients, freshness, safety, taste, nutritive value and appearance of all of the products we carry. We are buying agents for our customers, not the selling agents for the manufacturers.*"

If your company is more oriented toward actions than conceptual values, you can take this exercise even further and follow the lead of Netflix: When defining its culture, Netflix decided that, "*Actual company values are behaviors and skills that are valued in other employees.*" Therefore, the company didn't cite its list of values. It assembled a list of nine core behaviors and skills:

1. *Judgment*
2. *Communication*
3. *Impact*
4. *Curiosity*
5. *Innovation*
6. *Courage*
7. *Passion*
8. *Honesty*
9. *Selflessness*

After you've linked core values to specific actions, you can build those examples into your code of ethics and employee training programs. Employees often benefit from having these kinds of illustrations, which show them what values-driven behavior looks like in the context of your business.

"If you start with a good mission statement, you can conquer the world!" Donald Miller

The **mission statement** should be connected with the **core values**.

The mission statement should...

1. Introduce the conflict: What obstacle are we trying to overcome.
2. Define the destination: Where do we want to take our clients?
3. Foreshadow the stakes: What is at stake if they DON'T use us?

Every mission demands certain characteristics from the team that will accomplish that mission and these are DIFFERENT from the core values.

The KEY CHARACTERISTICS should...

1. Be necessary to accomplish the mission and live out the values.
2. Be aspirational and achievable.
3. Must be in priority order.

With the core values established and applied to the mission statement, with key characteristics, the team will truly be in UNITY and primed for authentic success both internally and client facing!

Step 8. Test your commitment:

The way to test your commitment to core values is to ask tough questions, such as:

- *How is this value showing up in our company today?*
- *Would we continue to hold these values if they put us at a competitive disadvantage?*
- *Are we willing to hire or fire employees based on whether they fit with our company's values?*
- *Will these values still be valid in 100 years?*

Based on this honest assessment, you might have to take a step back and do more work defining your core values. If your list of core values doesn't seem solid, you can try a different exercise to see if it generates different results. If you're falling short on a value that's truly important to the company, you can try to modify your employees' behavior, rather than cutting it from the list.