



LEADERSHIP EFFECTIVENESS: POLITICS, PRINCIPLES & POLEMICS

Values alignment in an organization leads to higher performance. Alignment is about how employees' values line up with those of the company. It's also about how employees view leaders as living and demonstrating the agreed upon values. Getting this alignment right is vital for your organization's success. Alignment impacts strategy execution, perception of communications, hiring practices, retention and more. Successful companies ensure top executives, and all the employees, are aligned with organizational values.

This level of values alignment can catapult a company into attaining high performance. What it takes is for the organization, the CEO and the executives, along with the employees, to own the process, the follow-up, and more. It isn't driven by human resources – it is line owned, and it is not a flavor of the month. This is why it works.

For a good summary of the benefits of values alignment, see the recent HBR article, [What Does Your Company Really Stand For? |hbr.org](#). In short, the research of the authors reveals these benefits: higher job satisfaction, lower turnover, better teamwork, more-effective communication, bigger contributions to the organization, more productive negotiations, and more diversity, equity, and inclusion.

We have done this work for many years at all types of organizations. This principle-based approach has always been the foundation of our work. We have helped many organizations thrive. We often start with getting clarity on their guardrails. Alignment of values *matters* to prospective and current customers, employees, partners, regulators, and other parties.

And, at this point in history, the politicized environment we live in is inevitably and profoundly affecting both for-profit and nonprofit organizations and how they live out their values, internally, and externally.

How do your values mesh with the issues du jour and what do you need to do about that? See this article for several examples of corporations that have taken a visible stand on controversial issues and what the outcomes have been: [Ready or Not Wake Up CEOs](#). Some companies that have been in the spotlight for taking a stand are Starbucks, Disney, Citi, Delta, and Nike, to name a few.

So, does this mean that you, as an organizational leader, must make pronouncements (polemicize!) on every issue that emerges? No. However, you had better make sure that any position, communication or action you take, aligns with your core values. Your margins depend on it! Here are five steps we strongly recommend.

1. Reevaluate and revalidate your values. Are they right for your organization now, as it has evolved?
2. Ensure your strategy, leaders, and employees are aligned with those values. Hire and retain in accordance. Communicate. Match actions to the values.
3. Align your organization's stance on any important issue with the core values. Some issues will clearly hit closer to home than others, depending on the industry and mission of your organization. Those are the issues to be particularly attentive to and ready for.
4. Be ready to discuss the organization's position internally and externally.
5. Know that there will be times when, to maintain integrity, you will have to speak out and be prepared for the consequences that might ensue.

Are you ready for the issues that hit closest to home? Is there values alignment within your organization—strategy, human resource practices, people, behavior ...?

Further reading:

[Strategy in a Hyperpolitical World | hbr.org](https://hbr.org)

[To See the Way Forward, Look Back | hbr.org](https://hbr.org)