



LEADERSHIP EFFECTIVENESS: VALUES INTO BEHAVIORS

What we see in our executive coaching practice is that truly great leaders are those who actively and consistently demonstrate, model, teach, and actualize leadership qualities (not just possess them), and at least equally importantly, also actualize the organization's core values into observable behaviors.

Question: To be a great leader, is it sufficient to have integrity and vision, to articulate the vision and one's expectations with commitment and clarity, to care for people, to communicate well, to be forward-looking, strategic, financially astute, and creative, and to possess all the other oft-touted attributes of great leadership? No, not completely.

Having all those qualities and holding those values are necessary, but not *sufficient*, conditions of great leadership. Putting into action your values, as well as ensuring that your entire organization has the tools to do the same, exemplifies truly great leadership.

Let's look at examples of how well known and well admired leaders have turned their core values into behaviors:

- **What makes Howard Schultz a great leader at Starbucks?** One significant contributor to his leadership is that he *aligns his actions* with his values. He invests in healthcare insurance for his workers. He invests in training and inspiring his workers to follow the mission of filling souls not bellies. His actions and policies reflect his beliefs even in the face of shareholder disapproval.
- **What made Alan Mulally a great leader at Ford?** An important and powerful factor was that he changed the culture from combat to collaboration . . . and not by saying "collaboration is one of our values," but rather by *modeling* candor, discussing the (formerly) undiscussables, and bringing the senior team together weekly in a safe environment where they too could do the same (exhibit candor and discuss the taboos).
- **What makes Jeff Weiner a great leader at LinkedIn?** Central to his leadership, Weiner has made compassion the bedrock core value at LinkedIn and it apparently is working for him. He gets very high CEO marks from employees and the company is doing well again. He *looks in the mirror*, puts himself in others' shoes, and guides his leaders to do the same.

Here are some tips for turning values into behaviors.

- Ensure your team knows what the values mean behaviorally. Be concrete. Model the behaviors. Teach what each value means *behaviorally*. Ask your leaders questions like (for example): Do you know what you need to change in the behavior of the teams that report to you in order to improve collaboration? Hold a specific discussion about this.

- Be consistent in your own modeling of the behaviors. For example, if customer focus is a core value, act as your organization's chief customer service representative. Put in the effort to visit customers and understand their needs. Ensure the organization has the capabilities to fulfill those needs.
- Hold people accountable for the values. If integrity is a key value in your organization, that means all the time for all the people, no exceptions. If you tolerate exceptions, you send a mixed message.

Do your leaders know specifically how to put core values into action? Do they see you doing it? Can they articulate what each value means behaviorally? See [related article](#) that addresses an approach to values-driven leadership development.