

Create & Communicate Business Values with Integrity

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Introduction

You need integrity with employee engagement - your actions have to match your words. Employees will then have greater trust in your business and stronger commitment to helping achieve your business' aims. This will help improve business performance.

This guide sets out best practice principles for defining, communicating and embedding employee engagement values and behaviours in your business. It provides practical ideas to use ranging from small steps to wider initiatives. There is no single way of achieving integrity - what's appropriate for one business may not be right for you.

What are business values?

Business values are the core principles or standards that guide the way you do business. They sum up what your business stands for and what makes it special. While business plans and strategies may change the core values of your business remain the same.

For example - some businesses say that innovation is one of their core values - they are constantly developing new products or services and this shapes their whole approach to business.

Other businesses may say that they are agile - they are constantly responding to change and creating new opportunities for customers.

Every business is different and will have its own set of values - whether or not these are

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articulated.

Communicate business values

It is important to communicate your business values to employees at all levels so that everyone understands what they mean. This will also help employees understand how they will be expected to behave to deliver them in practice.

You and your senior managers need to practise the values of your business every day to show employees what is expected and encourage them to do the same. There are many ways you can raise awareness and build understanding of your values among employees, you could:

- publish them in recruitment and induction materials
- discuss them with senior managers to make sure they understand the importance of the values to your business
- provide a face-to-face induction session regarding the values and what they mean for all new employees
- create a specific statement or picture of the values - for example - on wallcharts, posters or postcards
- use internal communication channels to explain more and show how they are guiding behaviour
- recognise and celebrate people who demonstrate the business' values in practice
- quote or refer back to the values in your presentations, briefings or written communications so that employees see how important they are to you - for example - articles in newsletters or a blog
- write to colleagues congratulating them on examples of behaviour that delivers the values and celebrate these examples with other employees
- make a symbolic commitment - eg a pledge to values - that you sign up to and ask employees to follow suit
- hold question time sessions that invite employees to ask you and other senior managers how you are delivering values in practice
- hold an employee workshop to explore values and behaviours - [download guidance on running an employee workshop on values and behaviours \(DOC, 185KB\) - Opens in a new window](#)
- include regular features or case studies in internal newsletters - or on the intranet if you have one - to show how employees have used the values to inform their decision making
- create an online quiz through so that employees can test their own understanding of the values and explore required behaviours
- invite employees to articulate what values mean to them in their own way - for example by submitting photos, films or objects
- invite employees to nominate colleagues they feel are really living the values, and celebrate these colleagues - for example - through internal publications, the intranet or your own messages and briefings
- ask employees or external experts to give lunchtime talks on what the values mean or how other businesses have embedded their values
- include stories and examples of the values in action in recruitment materials and induction packs for

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new employees

Brief managers on values and behaviours

Managers are the crucial link between every business and its employees. You need to help your managers understand what the business values are, what they mean and how to put them into practice. You could consider:

- running a workshop for managers - which could be particularly useful for new managers
- giving all managers a briefing pack that explains the values, emphasises their importance and explains how employees are expected to deliver them
- providing guidance to managers on how to handle any employees who are failing to demonstrate the values in practice through their everyday behaviour
- making sure managers understand that they will be assessed on their own behaviour and the behaviour of their team through the performance management process
- providing mentors for new managers to help them learn how to influence the behaviour of their team

Managers have a key role in employee engagement - they are the crucial link between every business and its employees. For more information see our guide explaining how to **become a more engaging manager**.

Embed business values

You could use recruitment and management systems to communicate your business values. This can help make your expectations clear and assess whether employees are living the values. For example, you could:

- include clear information on and examples of your expectations of employees in induction materials
- ensure that role profiles, job descriptions and personal objectives align with values and required behaviours
- conduct separate value reviews for employees and include 360 degree feedback
- recognise and reward employees who demonstrate supportive behaviour
- ensure any policies and practices for dealing with external organisations also live up to your organisation's values - for example - suppliers
- treat leavers with respect so that other employees see that your business continues to value and support the people involved

When you recruit you could ask candidates about their opinions on work culture, for example:

- What is your ideal working environment?
- What stops you from giving your best?
- Describe your ideal working day - what would it involve and what would you avoid?
- What do you look for in a business and the way it operates?
- What do you value about your working life at your current employer - what have you particularly enjoyed

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and what elements of its culture have disappointed you?

Ask external audiences about your values and behaviours

Involving trusted customers, suppliers and/or partners as you define your core values and behaviours can give you a valuable, independent perspective on what it is like to work with your business. In turn, this can help you assess whether there is a gap between what your business says and does on an everyday basis.

Those you approach need to be people who know your business well and have been working with or alongside you for some time. You need to know that they will give you open and honest feedback. If you are the person with primary responsibility for the relationship you should ask another senior manager to do this for you.

Every business will have different issues or areas that it wants to explore but here are some sample questions:

- How would you describe the organisation and the way it does business in three words or phrases?
- What do you see as the core values that underpin the way this organisation does business?
- How do you experience those values in action - can you give examples?
- Are there any gaps between what the business says and what it does - are there any specific examples?
- Does your experience of working with the business vary depending on the people you deal with?

Share the main themes with all your

employees when you communicate with them about your values. Also let them know how these values can help the organisation achieve its aims.

Here's how we build our business around our values

Lane 4 is a performance development consultancy co-founded by Olympic gold medallist Adrian Moorhouse and sport psychologist Professor Graham Jones. It is driven by its core values of:

- openness
- care
- integrity
- enthusiasm
- quality
- learning
- performance

Role model from the top

Board members are acutely aware of their position as role models in behaving in a way that is congruent with the organisation's values. Teams are given time together to talk about the values, what they mean and how they apply to different business functions and individual roles.

Help employees understand their role

Management works hard to ensure that employees have a line of sight between strategic objectives and their team or individual goals. Once a quarter the whole organisation gathers for a full day off-site to hear how the business is doing, share lessons learnt and spend time outside teams planning for the next quarter. Each Company Day has one of the seven core values as its theme.

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Embed values in the business

"Values drive behaviour, and that's what we want our people to understand," says Adrian Moorhouse. "It's certainly not enough to hand out a document with a list of values on it. Although structured and formal communication must play a key role, it's during everyday conversations that people make sense of things."

Here's how we built a programme to embed values

In 2008, the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) put in place a three year 'Making It Happen' programme to establish core values for all its 2,500 employees. The first year of the programme focused on visibility and action - engaging over 50 per cent of the staff in the development of these values. The second year focused on embedding them into the culture and the third year on building them into the DNA of the organisation.

Involve employees

A group of 20 'Making It Happen' volunteers from across the CLG and from varying grades champion these values with staff and act as the department's sounding board on how well the organisation is living its values.

Lead from the top

With very visible and active leadership from the Permanent Secretary and the Board each Directorate has nominated employees to be responsible for taking forward their values' action plan. These set out steps to ensure colleagues really are living the values. Leaders are held to account for progress in their area, feeding directly into their performance review.

Evaluate and recognise success

A 360-degree appraisal tool has been developed which focuses specifically on the values. In addition, a 'Making it Happen' Award scheme recognises and rewards individuals who have gone the extra mile in living the values through their work.

Here's how we developed values with staff

Global charity Save the Children developed its core values by working closely with its employees at all levels of the organisation to draw out core principles and behaviours with which everyone could identify.

Hold workshops with staff

Over 500 staff in the UK and around the world were involved in a programme of workshops and an online poll which enabled them to vote for and prioritise statements about their beliefs and motivations.

The four values emerging from this process were:

- we're outraged
- we're ambitious
- we're creative
- we keep our promises

The workshops also helped employees explore the organisation's heritage as part of the global Save the Children movement and to discuss specific priorities for the UK. These priorities informed the desired breakthroughs for children that lie at the heart of Save the Children's strategic plan.

Communicate values to employees

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The organisation then mounted an extensive communication programme to play back the values and encourage supportive behaviour. This included management briefings and communication via the intranet, a staff booklet and DVD. The values also form a core part of every new employee's induction process - including a specific workshop regarding the workshops and how to deliver them in practice.

Measure success

In Save the Children's 2008 employee survey, 77 per cent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the organisation lives its values.

Here's how we live our values through engagement

Sainsbury's values lie at the heart of its business. They are:

- passion for healthy, safe, fresh and tasty food
- delivering great products at fair prices
- a history of innovation and leadership
- a strong regard for the social, ethical and environmental effects of its operation

Sainsbury's takes active steps to live its values through its engagement with all colleagues, with all opinions and ideas valued.

Give employees a direct line to senior managers

The Tell Justin scheme encourages colleagues to put forward their suggestions on how to improve the business. Over

25,500 suggestions have been received, with suggestions ranging from the simplification of store processes to improvements in customer service. Many of these have been implemented.

Involve employees face-to-face

For the first time in 2008, colleagues from across the country came to the store support centre to present their ideas face-to-face through The Big Pitch and the latest scheme invites colleagues to shape 'Make the difference days' which will be launched in stores during 2010.

Inspire local activity

In addition, colleagues form a Colleague Council in every location to act as a consultative body and a voice for colleagues and look at everything from colleague facilities to charity fundraising activities.

Related guides on businesslink.gov.uk

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[Communities and Local Government - Opens in a new window](#)

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Save the Children - Opens in a new window

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