Operationalizing Your Values

A STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS FOR GROUPS AND TEAMS

Cultures thrive when there is a shared language and commitment to a set of behaviors that align with the stated values. Below is a process that we've used with organizations and teams across the world who are ready to put their values into practice.

We recommend this exercise as a way for executive teams, culture/HR/talent teams, and people managers to get clear on the specific behaviors that are expected, encouraged, and rewarded within their culture.

We suggest 8-20 participants for this exercise, though the participant number can flex up or down depending on your organization. The process not only yields measurable and observable behaviors that support your values, but the process itself is a powerful way to build trust, rumble skills, and engagement.

This exercise assumes that your organization and/or team's core values have already been established. If that's the case, let's get started!

Prep Work

Materials Checklist

01. Large poster-sized post-its or flip chart paper and tape (one sheet per value)
02. A few pads of sticky notes per participant
03. Writing pens and markers
04. A list of your organization's values
05. 2+ hours of time together (it depends on the number of values – feel free to chunk out the time in blocks of at least 90 minutes)
06. Rumble skills (these can be tough conversations – bring all of the curiosity and grounded confidence skills from the book)
07. Behaviors list* (download on the Dare to Lead hub under operationalize your org's values)

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Prep Work *(continued)*

*We provide many variations of behaviors identified through our research to get your team started. Our behaviors list is expansive but not complete. We encourage you to pick behaviors that resonate for you, get creative, and make the behaviors your own. And, if necessary, feel free to develop new behaviors that meet your needs.

Our behaviors list is worded as "I statements" (e.g., "I take responsibility for our customer's experience"). Depending on how you plan to use your final behaviors list, you might want to change the wording of the behaviors to "we" (e.g., "We take responsibility for our customer's experience").

Process for Operationalizing Your Values

Step 1 | "Build a container" with your team to make sure boundaries are in place before you rumble on this important topic (instructions found in *Dare to Lead*).

Step 2 | Write each org value on the top of a poster page and post in the room (one value per sheet).

Step 3 | Ask each person to focus on the first value and identify the behaviors that they believe would support that value and contribute to your culture. Let participants know that they can use the behaviors list or come up with their own observable behaviors.

Participants write one behavior per sticky note. They may end up with 10 or 100 behaviors per value, and that's ok. Start big and you can edit through this process.

Repeat this process for each value, confirming that people have had enough time before you move on. If pressed for time, you can have the team complete this task before you meet as a group, but make sure you still start with container-building.

Step 4 | When you've moved through all of the values, each team member will post their sticky notes on the corresponding value sheet. There's no need to take turns. Have everyone get up and place their sticky notes at one time. Let everyone know that there will be an opportunity to look at the collection once everything is posted.

Step 5 | We like to give the participants the opportunity to do a "silent walk" and spend ten minutes or so walking around and reading the behaviors. We strongly recommend the "silent" part because sometimes people start pointing to a specific contribution and the contributor is standing right there.

Operationalizing Your Values Process *(continued)*

Step 6 | After the silent walk, assign a working group to each value. For example, if you have 5 values and 12 team members – you will have teams of two or three people who will work together. If your working team is smaller, adjust the group size as needed. For example, a small group of 2-5 people could work together to review two or more sheets, or assign one person per sheet.

Step 7 | Each group looks for patterns and themes under each value. On the flipchart, write the common behaviors identified by the group for each value. Rumble on the outliers to check if they should be included. Consider keeping the sticky notes for eliminated outliers to decide later whether they fit better with a value that another team is working on.

Step 8 | Time to rumble with the full team. Each team presents their value and aligned behaviors to the full team. It's important to ask questions and pressure-test the behaviors by talking through real examples of what happens in your organization.

Some suggested rumble questions:

01. Are there current behaviors that are considered normal in your culture, yet they get in the way of good work and building a brave culture? If so, have you included behaviors that address or limit these actions?

02. What you are willing to commit to for the long-term?

03. What are the behaviors that we will actually hold people accountable for during goal setting, feedback conversations/check-ins, and performance evaluations?

You now have a draft list of behaviors that are aligned with your organization or team's values. Now the work begins within your organization to make it stick. At the close of your meeting, get clear about next steps for ways to integrate these behaviors into how your organization manages its talent, builds culture, and engages with each other, your partners, and customers.

We recommend closing the meeting with everyone sharing one thing they learned from the process and one thing they are grateful for in working with the team.

And, don't forget that we have exercises for operationalizing your personal values in our Read-Along Workbook in the download section. It's powerful work for individuals and teams.

Stay brave!