

The Trusted Executive

John Blakey





Values Elicitation Exercise

- Identify three peak moments when life felt perfect, fulfilled and 'in the flow'. Re-live these experiences and recount them to a trusted colleague. Explore the details of the moment – What was happening? Who was there? What did people say? What did you see? What did you feel? What made it special? What else do you remember about it?
- Ask the colleague to play back what they have heard about the experience and which words had most impact and energy for them. What values do you both think were being honoured in this experience? Choose a maximum of four values.
- Next identify three moments of despair when life felt empty, blocked and frustrating. Repeat the above steps for these experiences, but now working with the colleague to identify the values that were being ignored or not honoured at these times. As before, choose a maximum of four values.
- Combine the two lists of values and start to assess the priority of each by asking yourself the question, 'If my house was burning down and my values were in the house, which value would I take with me first?' 'And then which one next?'...and so forth.
- After the discussion, write down your values in order of priority and add a couple of sentences to each that describes them in more detail. There should be a maximum of eight values on your list.

This exercise can also be carried out for a team or an organisation by reviewing the relevant history and identifying the same high and low points. It is those moments when emotions are running strong that reveal the true values of an individual or a team or an organisation as opposed to the text book values that our logical brains would suggest.

Now what do we do with our set of values once we have identified them? They are no use as a dry set of words that are reeled out annually at performance appraisals and business retreats. We have to live by our values if they are to demonstrate our consistency. Living by our values means converting them into a decision-making tool. Thankfully, there are many ways to do this and I will share three simple tools that drive values into the heart of decision-making. Firstly, at the personal level, I have had a weekly habit for the past twelve years where I take ten minutes on a Sunday evening, I pull up my Evernote app and I open the note titled 'How I honoured my values this week'. In this note I see the following list of values:-

- Challenge
- Variety
- Sharing
- Freedom
- Flair
- Care
- Courage
- Fun

I then look at my diary for the week and I write down what I am going to do that week to live out each value. For example, I might be speaking at an international conference and that would tag the values of challenge, sharing, flair and courage. I might be writing on a weekday and popping out to the gym over lunch which honours my values of freedom, fun and variety. Through this weekly routine, I become aware of which values are being honoured and which are being squeezed. I then make decisions about my future commitments to keep them in balance. I have found this a powerful tool for living out my values at a personal level.



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