

## Building Higher Trust 95 When Values Have Most Value

by Bob Whipple, MBA, CPTD



We are all familiar with the benefits of having solid values. For leaders, the values become a bedrock foundation for doing business. The irony is that values do you the most good when it is difficult or expensive to follow them. That may sound backward, so let me explain.

### When it is easy to follow the value

When a value is easy to model, then we do not even think about it. We just do what the value tells us. In those cases, having that value in place underscores what we already know. The impact is minimal.

### When it is difficult to follow the value

Consider the other extreme, where following the premise of a stated value might be cumbersome or expensive. Following our values might even set us back in terms of short-term business objectives. Now the rubber meets the road. If we ignore the value because it is inconvenient or costly to implement it, then it shows hypocrisy. It shows that the values we brag about are only for show.

### A frequent example

Let me share a common example to illustrate the conundrum for leaders. Many leaders advance a value that states “People are our most important asset.” That statement is wonderful in terms of publicity but beware. The execution of that value literally means that when the market goes south, we do not lay people off. If we purport that people are our most important asset, then we train them when work is slow.

When operating according to our values means that we miss our overall performance numbers, the condition has gone critical. It is during these times that we demonstrate to our people that we really do believe in our values.

## **A real-life example**

I know the CEO of a construction company that faced such a difficult decision. The engineers discovered they somehow put the wrong size drain pipe under the concrete floor of a building. They had built the building 10 years earlier. Engineers discovered the error after the warranty period had expired. There were no problems with the drainage for the past 10 years. The engineers recommended they say and do nothing.

The CEO got up and pointed to their first value which was “integrity.” He said, “we need to follow that value and chip up the concrete to replace the piping.” The repair cost the company over \$40K but the employees knew for sure their values were real.

## **When values mean the most**

The CEO rejected the temptation to rationalize the situation and ignore the problem. He took the hard route, and it showed true integrity. Values do you the most good when it is difficult or expensive to follow them. You have the opportunity to demonstrate that your values mean something.

Bob Whipple, MBA, CPTD, is a consultant, trainer, speaker, and author in the areas of leadership and trust. He is the author of *The Trust Factor: Advanced Leadership for Professionals*, *Understanding E-Body Language: Building Trust Online*, and *Leading with Trust is Like Sailing Downwind*. Bob has many years as a senior executive with a Fortune 500 Company and with non-profit organizations