

Sticky Values

by Bob Whipple, MBA, CPTD



Does your organization have Sticky Values? It seems like a strange juxtaposition of words, so let me explain the important concept here. In professional training circles, many authors have written about how to make training programs sticky.

Have the training materials be so real and compelling that people remember and apply them in the future. The same condition can

apply to the values of an organization. This article is about how to accomplish that. It also stresses how vital it is to have the values be sticky.

Values are crucial to organizations

Values form the bedrock of how we operate daily. Select them from a list of candidates in a serious and thoughtful process. Avoid the temptation of having a long list of values. It is better to have five or six strong values than a list of 20 of them. The reason is that people must be able to remember and apply the values daily.

It is helpful if the first letters of the values form an acronym that people can remember. For example, the values of my corporation spell out the word LIGHT (Loyalty, Integrity, Generosity, Honesty, and Trust). I use a picture of outstretched hands with light emanating from them in my materials.

The Actions of Leaders make all the difference

Leaders must communicate and model the values at all times. If something seems odd or difficult to people, the leader needs to explain it. "We are doing this because we have a value of integrity (or whatever value applies)."

The values need to be incorporated into the onboarding and all training programs of the organization. Employees need to be allowed to give feedback on how well the values are being followed.

Share successes and failures with transparency and consider each instance a teachable moment. Be sure to reinforce behaviors consistent with the values. Also hold the entire organization accountable for always following the values.

Demonstrate unwavering commitment

Values are most helpful to organizations when following them would be difficult or expensive. When it is easy to follow a value, we just do it. But if it is painful to follow a value, we get the chance to show we really mean it. Never try to rationalize not following a value because it is inconvenient. Doing that destroys the effectiveness of values.

Conclusion

Consistently uphold the values, especially during difficult times. You reinforce their authenticity and credibility when you do that. Your values will become sticky and provide great value to the organization in the long run.

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