

The Value of Values

By Timothy JohnPress

Have you ever had to make a tough decision? How did you do it? With the deluge of information we find ourselves in day to day and seemingly infinite opportunities and choices to be made, how do you evaluate all the data the world now offers? Incessantly bombarded with an endless stream of schemas, strategies, and solutions around the clock, we literally have within our finger tips anything we want. It's no longer a question of finding the answers; it's a question of choosing the answers that best serve us.

The information age despite all its marvels of real time data, communication and endless resources has left us overwhelmed and exhausted. We've been swept away by the waves of information and it has many of us in search of a solid foothold. Luckily, we're arriving at a point of development in business and life where we are becoming less influenced by society, the market or the web. We are learning to be guided by something even stronger, our values.

WHAT ARE VALUES?

Values are choice constructs that guide individuals and groups toward satisfaction, fulfillment and meaning. They are "operational beliefs" or priorities which you discover and choose to guide your behavior. More simply put, values are what's most important to you or what's most important to an organization.

When your values are clear to you, making decisions becomes easier.

- Roy Disney

THE TOP TEN "VALUES" OF VALUES

1. Values give meaning to our life and work. Our values create who we are. They define our beliefs, our behaviors, they define our life. How can you be true to yourself if you don't know who you are? Living in line with your values provides a purposeful and fulfilling experience of life.
2. Values make it easier to make decisions. When you look at your choices through the viewpoint of your values, the answers become self-evident. I recall a story where a client was struggling with his decision to marry his girlfriend of many years. After realizing how much he valued "family" he knew she was not the girl. Her parents were unable to move beyond their religious prejudice to welcome him into their family.

3. Value clarity helps you identify areas of your life that don't support your values. Often, when we experience difficulty in work or life it is a matter of values. People, environments or situations don't cause us discomfort, our values being compromised does. When you find yourself taking a strong stance against something, chances are you perceive your values being compromised.
4. Your values will naturally lead you to that which best support them. Clear values facilitate you attracting more of the people, atmospheres and experiences you do want in your life. Having done values and purpose work with clients for nearly 10 years I never cease to be amazed at how the "right" opportunity seems to magically appear once an individual puts their values to paper and their life.
5. Values provide you with a profound sense of peace. Knowing who you are and what is most important in your life endows you with a more natural strength and confidence. Problems are a fact of life, being bigger than the problems make them easier to address. The results of this are inner peace and tranquility.
6. Having clear values allow you to work and live from a more resourceful state. If you reflect on past situations which seemed uncomfortable or times where you may have reacted defensively, it's a fair guess you may have perceived yourself being untrue to your values. Why else would you get upset?
7. It's easier to achieve values based goals. The alignment of your goals with your values harnesses an emotional energy, passion and "higher drive" that make the journey enjoyable and seemingly effortless.
8. Values make it easy for you to eliminate the goals that were never really yours. How many of us have voraciously pursued the goals and dreams of others? If your goals and aspirations are not a reflection of what's most important to you and who you are, chances are you're struggling and wasting a great deal of energy that would be better utilized on values based goals.
9. Values serve as the foundation for your personal guiding principles. While values are subject to interpretation, guiding principles are not. Guiding principles which include your values are your "true north" principles. Living in accordance with these principles promotes stability and consistency in our actions and behaviors resulting in more beneficial and ecological outcomes.
10. Values provide clear guidelines and behaviors for other's behavior. Living and working in accordance with your values not only influences and guides your behaviors, it influences and guides the behaviors of others. This promotes effective and seamless communication and interaction, even with the most difficult people.

Susan Franzen, the owner of LifeU shared a story with me regarding how valuable “values” are. Upon hiring her, a client had identified three focus areas for his business. During a following session, he excitedly told her about a new business opportunity that could also make him a great deal of money. She asked him to share his initial three focus areas with her again and then asked where this new opportunity fit within them. When he admitted that it didn’t, she asked which of the three original areas of focus he was willing to give up for this new one. “None” he replied. His decision to pass on the new opportunity was not because he couldn’t do it, but because he didn’t want to give up other things that were more important to him.

Whether we know it or not, we all have values. The challenges and problems we often face arise from not being true to them. When your values are clear, life and work occur on your terms. Your values shield you from the information inundation of the world and provide you with the direction and perspicuity to focus on that which is most important to you.

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