



WPO SPARK KIT: Values Based Leadership

A curated facilitator kit for WPO Chairs and members

HOW TO USE THIS SPARK KIT

This kit offers you an easy way to engage in a group discussion focused on the topic of **Organizational values**. To get started, we recommend the following steps:

1. Review the recommended reading list in the Spark Resource Summary chart below.
 - a. Click through the links to see complete articles and videos in Spark, **OR** simply read the [Executive Summary and Key Points](#) section for quick reference.
2. Prepare to facilitate your discussion using the prompting questions and tips suggested on page 2.

TOPIC OUTLINE

Explore the role of company values as the foundation for clear decision making and exemplary leadership.

SPARK RESOURCE SUMMARY

Here's a carefully curated selection of Spark content to assist you in leading your discussion. You're encouraged to peruse the complete articles and view the videos. For your convenience, we've provided **Executive Summaries and Key Points** on the subsequent pages to simplify your preparation. Also feel free to delve deeper into the wealth of additional resources available in your Spark subscription.

SPARK RESOURCE TITLE

TIME COMMITMENT

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------|
| 1. <u>Ten Essentials for Getting Value from Values</u> | Article - 2 min read |
| 2. <u>How Corporate Values Get Hijacked and Misused</u> | Article - 5 min read |
| 3. <u>When Company Values Backfire</u> | Article - 5 min read |
| 4. <u>Living Our Values</u>
<i>(consider your impact as a leader by living your values in your company)</i> | Video - 2 min watch |
| 5. <u>Use Values in Decision Making</u>
<i>(a simple example of using values to make an impactful decision appreciated by employees)</i> | Video - 2 min watch |
| 6. <u>Managing Values Across Cultures</u>
<i>(how cultural background might impact interpretation of values)</i> | Video – 8 min watch |



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PREPARATION FOR SPARK DISCUSSION

- **WPO Chairs:** Share this entire document with your members ahead of your meeting and encourage them to review content.
- **WPO Members:** You're welcome to distribute this within your organization to facilitate your own discussions on this subject. Please keep in mind that a paid Spark subscription is required for your team to access the complete articles; alternatively, they can utilize the provided Executive Summaries if the subscription is not in place.

SCOPE

This Spark Kit focusses on the importance of clearly defined and communicated values as a foundation for effective decision making, strategic direction, and unifying culture.

Of course, feel free to follow the needs of your group and broaden the discussion as required. The articles and videos provided are specifically related to establishing values, leadership responsibility to communicate values, and how employees may experience and perceive values within an organization.

LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

- Turning values into action.
- How to deeply embed and communicate values to your organization.
- Your role as a leader in modelling values.

SPARK DISCUSSION: 30 – 90 MINUTES

Feel free to initiate your discussions with these prompting questions. Consider adopting a round-table approach where members can share their experiences. You can also kick-off simply by asking for any key learnings from the Spark materials.

- How well established are your organizational values?
- How are your company values reflected in day-to-day operations?
- Please share an example of how your values support your success.
- What role do your values play in your hiring and retention practices?
- How are your personal and professional values aligned?

DISCUSSION WRAP-UP

We recommend concluding the discussion by requesting key takeaways and any commitments from each participant regarding their plans for implementation, along with significant insights gained. Ideally follow-up at the next meeting to check in on progress.



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY & KEY POINTS FOR SPARK RESOURCES

(noted in chart on page 1)

Ten Essentials for Getting Value from Values - Article, 2 min read

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This article emphasizes the importance of organizational values, distinguishing them from mere passive statements. It outlines 10 essential ingredients to strengthen the impact of organizational values. Organizations dubbed "supercorps" are highlighted for being particularly innovative, profitable, and responsible. They demonstrate active dialogue and apply values to enhance accountability, collaboration, and initiative.

KEY POINTS:

1. **Leadership Priority:** Values must be a priority for leaders, consistently invoked in messages and management discussions.
2. **Inclusive Dialogue:** The entire workforce should engage in conversations interpreting values, ensuring alignment and shared understanding among employees.
3. **Codification and Regular Review:** Principles should be codified, transmitted in various media, and regularly reviewed to maintain understanding.
4. **Higher Purpose:** Statements about values should invoke a higher purpose beyond daily tasks, potentially becoming part of the company's brand and competitive differentiation.
5. **Guiding Dialogue:** Values become the basis for ongoing dialogue, guiding debates during controversy or disagreement, and supporting decisions.
6. **Guidance for Choices:** Principles guide strategic choices, helping decide on business opportunities, investments, and long-term goals.
7. **Internalization and Control:** As employees internalize values, they act as a control system, substituting for impersonal rules and preventing deviations.
8. **Storytelling:** Actions reflecting values become the basis for memorable stories, reinforcing what the company stands for and influencing behavior.
9. **Aspirational Nature:** Values should be aspirational, signaling long-term intentions that guide thinking about the future.
10. **Extended Collaboration:** Principles, purpose, and values should be discussed with business partners to ensure consistent high standards throughout the business ecosystem.



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How Corporate Values Get Hijacked and Misused - Article, 5 min read

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This article delves into the destructive consequences of corporate values being misused within organizations. It argues that the common practice of creating and publishing values, without genuine integration and commitment, leads to cynicism, resentment, and indifference among employees.

KEY POINTS:

1. **Vulnerability of Values:** A major study reveals a significant disconnect between stated values and employee belief in and application of these values.
2. **Critical Conditions for Positive Impact:**
 - **Accountability:** Values must be lived top to bottom, with objective behavioral measures and consistent standards applied.
 - **Self-Honesty:** Acknowledging failure to live up to values with humility is crucial for course correction.
3. **Ongoing Transformation:** Values are fluid and should be viewed as evolving rather than being seen as a conclusion.
4. **Common Misuse Scenarios:**
 - **Values as a Punishing Weapon:** Lack of accountability results in values being used as a means of shaming and punishing individuals.
 - **Illusion of Change:** The creation of values statements should not be mistaken for genuine transformation.
 - **Flimsy Values:** Values that lack genuine meaning weaken organizational confidence, integrity, and competitiveness.
5. **Call for Genuine Integration:**
 - Companies should embed values deeply into processes like strategy, selection, rewards, and performance management.
 - Don't simply write values and expect results. There is a need to commit to genuine integration and accountability.



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When Company Values Backfire – Article, 5 min read

This article is best read directly as it tells a relatable short story of a real company and how their earnest values went sideways. The article emphasizes the critical role of a leader's perceived values and underscores the importance of fostering a shared understanding of these values among both employees and management.

KEY POINTS:

1. **Shared Understanding:** To effectively demonstrate values, a leader must ensure that there is a common and shared understanding of these values throughout the organization. This involves clear communication and a commitment to transparency.
2. **Alignment Across Levels:** It is not sufficient for values to be understood only at the leadership level; they must permeate the entire organization. Both employees and management should have a collective comprehension of the values that guide the organization.
3. **Cultural Impact:** Shared values contribute to the organizational culture, influencing behavior, decision-making, and collaboration. A cohesive understanding of values fosters a positive and unified workplace culture.
4. **Continuous Communication:** Leaders need to consistently communicate and reinforce the values, ensuring that they are not only articulated but also embodied in day-to-day actions. This ongoing communication helps build trust and credibility.
5. **Values as a Leadership Yardstick:** A leader's success and effectiveness will be measured not just by their accomplishments or results, but by how well they embody and promote the organization's values.

BONUS READING FOR KEENERS

When Your Values Clash with Your Company's – Article, 4 min read

This article delves into the alignment of employee values with the company, and the positive impact of maintaining integrity. It highlights how staying true to one's values benefits both employees and the company as a whole.