

Values and Behaviours

Workshop Resources

Carry out this workshop with your team to distil and refine a set of values that your team endorse, and generate the behaviours that represent them.

Outcomes of this exercise

- Team members understand what is expected of them and others.
- Team cohesion and performance improves.
- The team are aligned to the values of the organisation.
- Boundaries regarding acceptable behaviours are agreed.
- The degree of psychological safety of team members increases.

You will need

Flipcharts or Whiteboards (and appropriate pens)

Post-it notes and pens

Coloured dot stickers for voting (or you can use pens but stickers are better!)

At least 2 hours in total, but you could extend it to a half-day session. This might be part of other team exercises, and may be carried out over several days.

Timings for each stage are a rough guide.

Stage 1: Set the Stage (10 minutes)

Explain to the team that you're all going to work together to *find out* what the team values are. Be clear that nobody is going to tell the team what their values are.

If you have a set of organisation values already, write these on a flipchart or whiteboard and keep them in view. The aim in this case will be to reframe these organisational values in a way that is meaningful for your team.

Stage 2: Values gathering (10 minutes)

Give each team member a stack of post-it notes and ask them to write down values that either:

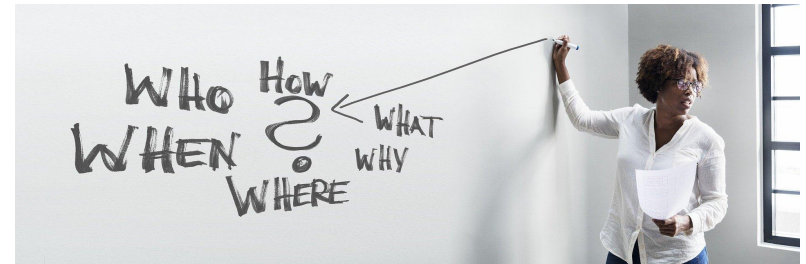
- a) They believe the team already possesses, or
- b) They would like the team to work towards.

Encourage everyone to write all their ideas down, including those that seem obvious or fundamental. You might want to display some ideas to get people thinking, but be clear that this is a team exercise. For inspiration, see these 190 examples of great values: <https://inside.6q.io/190-examples-of-company-values/>

Stage 3: Alignment (15 minutes)

If you have organisation values already, take your post it notes, and place each one next to the organisation value that it best aligns with. If it aligns with more than one, use that as an opportunity to “balance” the proportions aligned to each organisation value. If something doesn’t align at all, place it to one side in a “new” category.

If you don’t have organisation-wide values, begin to group your values into themes, removing any duplicates.



Stage 4: Distilling and Refining (5 minutes)

Give each team member 5 voting stickers and ask them to vote on the values that they hold most dear and feel provide the most value to the team.

After voting, remove any values with zero votes, but give the team one “veto” as a backup for an important value that should remain.

Check that you still have all the organisational values covered. If necessary, ask the team to “bring back” some values to the board.

Stage 5: Decision Time (20 minutes)

Your aim now is to come up with a set 3 to 9 clearly defined, team-endorsed values. Try to retain at least 1 team value per organisation value.

You may use a mixture of discussion and voting to reach consensus. In discussions, consider:

- What does this value mean to us? Are we clear and agreed on its meaning?
- What does it look like in action?
- How might it be misinterpreted?
- How will we know if we're living it?
- What positive impact will this value have on us, our organisation and our customers?

On flipchart paper, write each of your agreed values as a column heading.

Stage 6: Create Behaviours (25 minutes)

Now, ask your team to consider what behaviours demonstrate each value. Get them to write their ideas onto post-its and stick them into the appropriate value column.

For example, if a value is “*Quality*” then a behaviour may be “*Test early, test often*”.

Try to avoid negative statements, e.g. rather than “*Don’t blame,*” try “*Take collective responsibility for mistakes.*”

Some behaviours may represent more than one value. This is great - it simply means your values are well aligned.

Carry out a round of voting if necessary to identify the most powerful behaviours. Aim for 2-4 behaviours per value.

Stage 7: Consolidate (15-30 minutes)

Depending on the size of your team and how much time you have, you could ask your team members to do this verbally, or have them write answers on post-it notes to put on a board to share.

Ask each team member to explain:

- Their favourite value, and why they chose it
- One way in which their approach or behaviour will change as a result of this exercise and living these shared values.

Ensure that as the team leader, you do this too! You may want to go first so that you can model the approach.

Post-Workshop Activities

Document and Share

Now that you have a set of values and behaviours, you can work to embed and share them inside and outside the team.

Find a way to visually display these values in a way that suits your team, perhaps creating stickers, posters, wall displays, desktop backgrounds, stationery or even clothing.

The more you communicate and live these values and behaviours, the more they become part of the team's identity.

Embed and Strengthen

Regularly refer to your values and behaviours in your interactions with the team, verbal or written.

Praise team members when they live and manifest the values and behaviours. If necessary, you can also refer back to the values to explain your rationale for correcting negative behaviours.

Allow plenty of time to implement, embed and strengthen your values before you consider changing or improving them.

Revisit and Improve

Defining your values doesn't mean they can't change and evolve. Once you have allowed a good amount of time to embed your values and behaviours (ideally at least 6 months), revisit them with your team.

These questions may help structure your discussion:

- Does this value still work for us? Are we still clear and agreed on its meaning?
- What has it looked like in action?
- How did we know we were living these values?
- Are there ways in which the values or behaviours have been misinterpreted?
- What impact did this have on us, our organisation and our customers?
- Are there changes we would like to make?

After your discussion, make changes as necessary.

Addendum: Why not just stick with your organisational values?

Different teams can and should interpret organisational values in different ways. A sales team may have a completely different interpretation of the value to a HR team, so it's important to facilitate and support these different understandings.

This exercise empowers teams to translate the organisational values into words that they identify with and feel ownership of.

It is possible that all or some of your team may disagree with an organisation value, or find none of their values align. In this case, take the opportunity to discuss how you could interpret that value in a way that better reflects the team.