



BUILDING A HIGH-VISION HIGH-VALUES LEADERSHIP AND BUSINESS CULTURE

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We live in interesting, and damning, times. Despite the efforts of companies to build ethical cultures, the actions of a few who have traded integrity for profits have cast a shadow on all. Never has it been more important for businesses to 'talk and walk the talk' of what they stand for.

Designing and understanding corporate cultures has been an uphill task for leadership and workers alike. Efforts to recognize and study the organizational culture began almost 40 years ago. Herskowitz (1948) viewed culture as 'a construct describing the total body of belief, behavior, knowledge, sanctions, values and goals that make up the way of life of people'. It is in the context of formation of an organizational culture do values play a key role.

Historically research has focused on understanding and evaluating organizational culture, and not so much on designing processes that enable organizations to develop and manage their culture. In the face of continuing corporate breakdowns, it is crucial to address the critical importance of creating ethically viable corporate cultures. It is also imperative for corporate leadership to make an assessment of their organizations' growth and eliminate the risk of corporate scandals. Corporate leadership has to be convinced about creating, nurturing and sustaining ethical cultures because it not only minimizes the risk of breakdowns but actually adds value and creates a competitive advantage for their companies. In fact business ethics cannot to be 'taught'. But tools can be developed to address the multiple needs of businesses in creating and sustaining ethical cultures. They will not only keep a check on today's businesses but will help in shaping the next generation of business leaders so that they too are committed to building ethical cultures.

The Path Forward:

A deeper analysis of the Enron, Tyco Electronics, WorldCom and Arthur Andersen in the news during the past year would clearly indicate that outstanding professionals who possessed excellent skill sets and competencies were managing these organizations. But what they lacked in was an alignment between the purpose (vision) and the process (values). Every individual or organization starts with a clear set of vision and values, as they move forward, especially with a great deal of success, they tend to lose sight of the values that brought them to where they were, or the vision that kept them focused. One of the most critical factors is the lack of clarity on the vision and values that should govern the organization and fuel its journey towards its ultimate stated purpose. The vision and values of an organization need to be defined well and, more importantly, aligned. For, an imbalance in them will have serious implications. While vision without values is risky, values without vision goes nowhere and values with vision is evolution.

This means that the leadership will have to respond to the following basic questions at any point of time in the life cycle of the organization.

Where to go?

How to go?

Why one wants to go to where one wants to go?

What one wants to do?

If one looks at these questions deeply one would find that each question gives rise to an important component of organizational existence and direction. The response to the first question '**Where to go?**' would give clarity on the goal or vision which is the end point of an organization's or individual's objective.

Vision the power of attempting to see the future...the ability to think about or plan the future with great imagination and wisdom. It is different from goals and objectives. Goals can differ from person to person. But when one talks of a vision, there is an 'ultimate ness' to it. It is what one wants to achieve in a long, long time... at

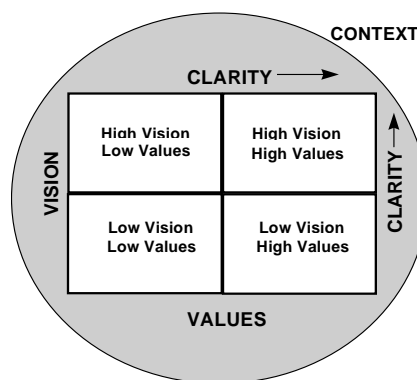
least not immediately. A vision gives meaning to every action of the individual and the organization, like a lighthouse that guides us. A vision also gives a lot of scope for defining realms. It is not restricted to specific aspects of development or any one facet of the organization. It operates at multiple levels. And, within an organization every employee must define and align his vision to the organizational vision and continue his quest for perfection. A vision is not only inspiring but it is also inspired. A vision also has to have a competitive edge. But it must also be able to transcend competition and look at evolution.

‘How to go?’ will provide insight on the kind of values that would guide the actions of individuals and organizations to move in the set direction. This would determine the means to achieve an end. Values are subtle beliefs and life principles that get indoctrinated into the human psyche over time. They give meaning to every purpose through feeling. Simply put, “values are those beliefs that are within myself, which guides my behavior in any given context. Some of these beliefs are known while others are not.” Yet, they govern behavior. (Sampath, 1999)

‘Why one wants to go?’ will give the Clarity-a deeper understanding of the goal and the appropriate means to be adopted to achieve the goal. Complete awareness and full knowledge of the dynamics of an action – consequences included – defines clarity. Lack of clarity on purpose, will lead to distractions and result in decision-making that is not in line with the long-term vision of the organization or the individual.

‘What one wants to do?’ will give an insight into the context. But one can be sensitive to a given context only when one has the clarity to the responses to the first three questions. Context is the framework within which one carries out an activity. A context-less activity is like a lost action, rudderless and meaningless. Context is a support to understanding, a situation that facilitates closeness to comprehension and appreciation.

Mapped against clarity of vision and values in a given context, the leadership can have high vision and low values, high vision and high values, low vision and high values and low vision and low values.



Each of these four leadership styles has distinctive characteristics. A brief view on each of these styles is given below. The detailed profile is given in the appendix.

<p>High Vision Low Values</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Survival of the fittest - Ends justify means - Self-centered - Master game player 	<p>High Vision High Values</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Change is way of life - Principle centered - Trendsetters - Leaders
<p>Low Vision Low Values</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - While in Rome be a Roman - Shortsighted - Comfortable with established paths 	<p>Low Vision High Values</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Believes his way of life is ‘the’ way of life - Form-centered - Externally-driven

The Challenge:

The challenge in today's corporate world is in identifying these styles in leadership and enabling the leaders from every other quadrant to move into the high vision-high values space. It is easier said than done, but this is what separates ordinary leadership from extraordinary leadership. These apparently conflicting leadership styles, or managerial types, are present in every organization in good measure. While some of them focus on the vision others focus on the value, without ever realizing that neither of them can exist without the other. To understand this further let us consider the hypothetical case of two leaders working in different departments of an organization. Leader-A is strictly quality conscious and lacks the foresight of time and related factors. He is typically a high values-low vision leader. Leader-B is more bottom lines driven who does not mind bending the rules a bit. He is a low values-high vision leader. Both are likely to get into conflict when there is an issue of quality, because of which delivery is rendered not possible. The high vision-low values leader somehow wants to ensure delivery, to achieve his targets, seemingly insensitive to quality considerations, while the low vision-high leader turns insensitive to the need to achieve targets, focusing instead on quality.

The illustration underscores the point that each group needs to be given a better idea of the philosophy of the other group(s). It can lead to a process of integration thereby enabling both groups to move towards the high vision-high values space. That would mark the beginning of a lasting organizational revolution. Every such conflict is an opportunity for navigating the organization towards its objective, with the leadership learning valuable lessons along the way. When we look into the life cycle of organizations their rise and fall have been predominantly due to the fact that the organizational leadership has tended to lose sight of the organization's vision and values. Most of the turnaround strategies, therefore, are aimed at realigning the vision and values within the organization.

The movement from any other category to the high vision-high values space will be lasting if the change arises out of realization, and not merely out of knowledge. The change has to happen at the 'causal level' than at the 'effect level'. This is precisely what Robert Pirsig state in his much-read book, 'Zen and the art of motorcycle maintenance'.

Ultimately, the question that every leader should ask himself is not whether there is alignment between vision and values, but what is the extent of that alignment. When this question is addressed to the total satisfaction of the leadership the growth of the organization is assured.

The tool to enable aligning vision and values: The Vision-Value Instrument

The Vision-Value tool is an instrument that measures the extent of misalignment of vision and values in an individual and establishes the current location of the individual on the grid. It is a forty-item instrument also aimed at measuring the clarity on vision and values. The Reliability index indicates Alpha (0.7978); Guttman Split half (0.8038). The face validity and the consensual validity of the instrument appear to be fairly high. The uniqueness of these instruments is their ability to assess the extent of clarity on vision and values covering various dimensions. The response is marked on a seven-point scale. The responses to various items are scored and the total scores of each subject are computed. The total scores depict the extent of clarity on vision and values.

The Instrument presents the location of the individual in the vision-value grid and describes the predominant characteristics of the individual in the current state of being. It also provides the focus area for immediate action. The grid below provides clarity to the individual leader or group where they stand.

Sample Vision-Values grid

VISION VALUE GRID

	HIGH		LOW	
V I S I O N	HIGH VISION	LOW	HIGH VISION	HIGH
		*	*	*
	*	*	*	*
	LOW VISION	LOW	LOW VISION	HIGH
	LOW		HIGH	
	VALUES			

Using the tool with its evaluation of the Leadership needs to be followed by a well-articulated, customized module to enable them to develop action plans. The module that has been used by the author aim towards-

- Understanding the importance of vision, its relevance to leaders and organization.
- Understanding the meaning of values and learning how to work with causes
- Gaining clarity on one's own vision and values.
- To identify areas of comfort and discomfort within oneself in the path of alignment.
- To learn to navigate oneself towards High-vision High-value position on a continuous basis.

The Instrument and focus on vision-values alignment can be used in Selection process, for various Leadership positions; in Leadership coaching; in Organizational diagnosis and based on the results appropriate training needs can be formulated; in processes aimed towards Team alignment and synergy.

Conclusion

Continuous alignment of vision and values through ethical leadership would result in evolving a business culture, which would nurture excellence and larger well-being, which would further become the foundation for building a lasting organization. Ethical leadership and vision driven business cultures are catalyst processes that guarantee lasting organizational success, especially in an era of fragile corporate existence.

Ethical and effective leaders are driven by a singular vision, not of what is, but of what is to become and they make sure that everyone around them understands and buys into that vision, and navigate through the maze of chaos to achieve an alignment between their vision and values. Like Mohandas Gandhi, Winston Churchill and Martin Luther King, who were not merely leaders but navigators; men who negotiated the nuances of life; pilots who pursued their goals to perfection. It is therefore imperative for leaders to turn navigators and to create an environment, and a process, which enables people to identify misalignments and eliminate the causes. Ultimately effective organizational leadership is an alignment of vision and values, and an effective leader has to have high vision and high values, clarity on purpose and context sensitivity.

Reference:

Herskowitz, M.J., 1948. Man and his works, New York, Knopf.
 Sampath J.M., 1999. "A Sociological Study of Values Clarification Process in the Development of Organization Culture". Unpublished PhD thesis. Gujarat University.

Appendix:

Profile of Leadership qualities- Detailed description of the characteristics

Profile	Low vision - Low values	Low vision - High values	High vision - Low values	High vision - High values
Vision	No vision	No clarity on vision	Focus on vision only	Clear focus on vision along with values
Values	No convictions or values	Strong values	No conviction or values	Principles centered and values driven
Initiative	Low initiative	Externally driven	Externally driven	Internally driven
Leadership	Followers	Value keepers	Game players	Leaders
Influence	Can be easily influenced	No exploration	No exploration	Introspective and influential
Context orientation	Context insensitive	Out of context	Out of context	Context sensitive
Convention	No convention	Conventional	Unconventional	Highly progressive
Commitment	Can't say	Is committed when in line with values	Is committed when in line with vision	Is committed only when in line with vision and values
Driven by	Others	Values	Vision	Vision and values
Ego	No ego	Egoistic	Egoistic	Humble
Flexibility	Flexible out of ignorance	Rigid	Rigid	Flexible out of awareness
Learning	No introspection, no learning	Arrogant out of being right	Power driven hence arrogant	Process driven hence humble
Response	Reactive	Reactive	Reactive	Proactive
Conviction	No convictions or values	Strong conviction	No conviction	Principles centered
Certainty	Wants absolute certainty	Deals ambiguity with resistance	Does not bother about ambiguity	Finds solutions out of ambiguity
Options	Zero self options	Few options	Few options	'n' Number of options
Tradition	Mixed up tradition	Traditional	-	-
Orientation	Comes from the past	Lives in past	Lives under constant threat	Lives in present.
System	Just follow	Stagnates	Degenerates	Creates