

The Value of Core Values

The Challenge

Every business faces the demand to differentiate itself. Whether in pursuit of new customers or hiring the next rock-star, standing out has benefits - providing the unique differences add value. At **humanworks8**, we're familiar with the ways in which companies have differentiated their employee experience to attract and retain the best talent. But flexible work environments, generous vacation time and countless perks have failed to create the relevance employers hoped would win the loyalty of their people. This was highlighted most recently when Glassdoor released their annual list of the best places to work in 2020, a list that saw both Google and Facebook, famous for their employee perks, drop out of the top 10.

When assessing what makes a business one of the "best places to work," the conversation undoubtedly turns to culture. As even the most notable employers have learned, while world class perks may help you stand out, they don't replace or create culture. When **humanworks8** is approached to improve a client's company culture, we turn first to their foundation. We help our clients discover that the answer to a thriving culture is their authentic core values. Whether they're accurately recorded or not, their values already exist within their "walls" and are alive each day in their people. The challenge our clients face, along with every other organization, is how to articulate, elevate and extend those values into every element of their business.

Most organizations have heard about the benefits of core values and have attempted to capture them. As we work with our clients, we find a similar story: the core values they have written aren't accurate, aren't unique to the business or aren't actionable. In many cases, core values exist only in a handbook or mounted on a wall, but they are not alive within the business. However, once the authentic core values of a business are captured and shared as imperative statements, they become guiding principles, used in decision making at every level, relied upon to establish expectations and applied to influence every part of the employee and customer experience.

Consider three different companies with uniquely different needs that improved their culture, employee and customer experience by either establishing or enlivening their core values while working with **humanworks8**.

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Established Company

After decades of successful growth, one member of the organization's leadership team (who is now a founder at **humanworks8**) recognized it was time to enliven the company's values. Realizing the existing values did not accurately reflect the culture the company's people had created and believing a revitalization of values could lead to a stronger business, he successfully proposed a process to company owners that would update the values. This reinvestment in culture and talent was accompanied by a global rebranding effort to mark the company's 40th anniversary. Members of the **humanworks8** team led focus groups and worked with employees at every level to identify actionable phrases that described the values of the organization and its talent.

Non-Profit

After successfully operating for over 50 years, leadership desired streamlined operations and increased efficiencies for their organization that would improve communication and connection between employees and leaders. As a foundational element to this development, they elected to work with members of the **humanworks8** team to capture core values - something that had never been done at the organization.

Small Company

Having believed in the importance of core values for some time, the company's leadership was struggling to implement the results of another consultant's work who had been hired to identify core values. The values that had been established were not adopted by the employees and simply didn't "feel right." Wary of making too many rapid changes and losing the buy-in of the team, the company engaged **humanworks8** to help them "evolve" stronger and more accurate language using the previously completed core values work.

The Process

humanworks8 engaged each organization by leading focus groups with employees and leaders to capture the attributes that were inherent to their success. Focus groups were prompted to discuss a series of questions and respond by giving specific examples which were recorded and organized to reveal consistent trends. Then, together with senior leadership, language was carefully crafted to define the organization's collective and uncompromisable values. Following a period of discussion and ideation, finalized core value language and descriptions were rolled out to the full organization. In this step it was critical for employees to see themselves in the results. In each case, the core values were applied to improve existing practices including talent acquisition, performance management, employee recognition and more.

The Results

Established Company

Old: *Wellness / Innovation / Integrity / Relationship / Profit*

How did enlivened core values change them?

The business thrived, winning a Top Workplace rating annually from 2014 to 2018, and landing a spot on the national Healthiest Employers list in 2016, driven by the value of Be Well, Work Well, Live Well. The business continued to grow financially and wove values into critical business decisions and strategic updates, with Embrace Change playing a major role in acquiring a new business in 2017 and Live End-to-End driving a refined approach to customer service practices. The new values were infused into everything from interview questions to recognition programs to performance management.

Non-Profit

Created their first core values:

How did new core values change them?

Business leaders reported stronger connections between employees, who were frequently overheard encouraging each other by quoting the values. Leaders also shared that the new values were critical in navigating tough situations and were being used as the foundation to their major decisions. The non-profit is currently working with **humanworks8** to develop a new performance management system built around the values and is integrating them into interview questions to ensure prospective talent is aligned to company culture.

Small Company

Old: *Collaborative / Passionate / Strategic / Motivated / Integrity*

How did enlivened core values change them?

The organization rolled out the evolved core value language which was quickly understood and adopted as employees shared stories of each other demonstrating the values in their work. The company engaged **humanworks8** to build a new employee recognition program based on the values as well as a new performance management system with the values as its foundation.



Businesses need to set themselves apart from their competition, but they don't need superficial perks to build a meaningful culture. In fact, they don't need to look further than what already exists inside their organization and their people. They need to identify and articulate their authentic core values, champion and elevate those values, and extend them into every part of their business.

humanworks8 is a consultancy focused on driving exponential growth for organizations by embracing and unleashing the full potential of their people. We leverage our core values to bring work to life, and life to work.

Our Core Values

Champion People: Lift people up. Never lose sight of who makes everything possible in the first place.

Be Authentic: Follow your instincts. Honor your vision. Stay true to your dreams.

Elevate: Never settle for the easy answer. Pave a better, brighter path.

Breathe: Pause & reflect. Find energy in balanced well-being.

Wonder: Be curious & be in awe. Always believe in what could come next.

