



The Power of Core Values: Let Your Employees and Your Customers Know What You Stand For

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The Power of Core Values: Let Your Employees and Your Customers Know What You Stand For

As we continue to strive within our current economy, it occurred to me that this would be a great time to re-visit and re-commit to the values your organization has in place, or to make the time to establish your core guiding values. No matter what our current journey is as a company, the "way we are being on the journey" must never falter. Although core values have existed for centuries, most of us in the business world were exposed to them when we read *Built To Last*, by Jim Collins and Jerry I. Porras in 1994. Collins and Porras cited the long-established visionary companies who had determined a set of core guiding principles, along with a company vision, a simple company purpose and a mission statement.

In the book, the authors **define core values** as *"the essential and enduring tenets of an organization - the very small set of guiding principles that have a profound impact on how everyone in the organization thinks and acts."* He cites the Disney organization as one of those visionary companies that established core values from the beginning. He states that Disney has 4 clearly stated Core Values for their theme parks. And, by the way, these are listed in order of importance: **safety, courtesy, the show** (performing according to a role's requirements) and **efficiency**. He said the following on this: "These core values were evident in every aspect of our visit to Disney. Cast members always ready



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to give a helping hand, "fast passes" give riders a quick jump to the front of the line (what a great idea), plastic cards to use as your ticket into the parks, as well as your meal ticket, shows and rides that were top notch. After talking with some of the employees, as well as observing them, I can tell that most of them really try to live out the values as best they can."

Not only is it important to live these values, but to let others know what you value as an organization. Recently, I visited The **Whole Foods Market** web site. Personally, this is one of my favorite places to shop. I was amazed that the home page on their web site not only explained what core values are, but listed their values as the first indication of who they are as a company. Below is the excerpt from their home page:

The following list of core values reflects what is truly important to us (Whole Foods Market) as an organization. These are not values that change from time to time, situation to situation or person to person, but rather they are the underpinning of our company culture. Many people feel Whole Foods Market is an exciting company of which to be a part and a very special place to work. These core values are the primary reasons for this feeling, and they transcend our size and our growth rate. By maintaining these core values, regardless of how large a company Whole Foods Market becomes, we can preserve what has always been special about our

company. These core values are the soul of our company.

- * *Selling the Highest Quality Natural and Organic Products Available*
- * *Satisfying and Delighting Our Customers*
- * *Supporting Team Member Happiness and Excellence*
- * *Creating Wealth Through Profits & Growth*
- * *Caring about our Communities & Our Environment*
- * *Creating ongoing win-win partnerships with our suppliers.*

So, announcing your core values is a great way for potential clients and customers to know what your company values as an organization, and they generally give a true picture of how you will be treated as a customer or client.

Ignite operates on our own set of core values. We have discovered that prospective clients often want to see if our values match their own. The following is from the **Ignite Philosophy** section of our own web site:

Ignite's Core Values guide the way we operate with our clients and each other. These are the essential and enduring tenets of our organization and help us to deliver on our purpose "To add value to people's lives".

- * **Integrity:** Trustworthiness, honesty, and a commitment to excellence are core to all our relationships.

✱ **Autonomy:** We embrace each other's differences and revel in our ability to be self-directed. This freedom allows us to explore, imagine, and above all, create synergy when we all come together.

✱ **Transformation:** Embracing change, seeing the big picture, and creating something new out of something ordinary are at the core of what we do.

✱ **Making a Difference:** Our passion is making a difference in the lives we touch; our clients, each other and our community. Making a difference makes our lives more meaningful; so in the end, the giving is a gift to ourselves.

If this is the first time your team will be discussing this topic, it is important to realize that determining what your company stands for – what is truly “core” to its existence – will affect the nature of the company and its people, in a positive and powerful way. Listed below are some **basic guidelines to use to make your “values discussion” most effective.**

Be sure that:

1. Everyone understands what needs to be achieved.
2. People listen to each other; and contributions are respected and valued.
3. Disagreements are dealt with openly, so the group gains strength from conflict, rather than weakened by it.
4. There is effective leadership within the group.

5. Decisions are reached by consensus.

6. Time is managed effectively.

Identifying your organization's core values is an extremely energizing, meaningful and collaborative process for any team. Please call us if you'd like to discuss how **Ignite** can assist you with this important initiative.

“It's not hard to make decisions when you know what your values are.”

~ Roy Disney

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