Do You Love Your Work?

By Greg O'Brien

I recently worked with a company I would describe as being values-driven. By this, I mean the company is not only pursuing activities and markets aligned with their inherent organisational values, but the people who work there generally share similar values. There are plenty of examples of companies that are values-driven; for example, The Body Shop and Virgin Blue immediately come to mind.

Virgin Blue stands for 'value for money, quality, innovation, fun and a sense of competitive challenge'. If you have ever flown with Virgin Blue, you know that is normally what you get. In fact, CEO Richard Branson even promotes these values through his innovative approach to marketing, with the open-neck shirt and casual hairstyle as being fun and different. Here is a leader of an organisation modelling the way he wants the entire organisation to be and it works!

Corporations that are able to align their business and their people to the overarching values of the company become attractive to potential employees. This is because employees who share similar values will want to work in a company where their values can be lived on a daily basis. If you have ever worked in a company that shares similar values to yourself, you would probably have been motivated while working there. You can see this when people choose to work for a company, often at lower pay than elsewhere because their values are aligned. Quite simply, it feels good to be living your values.

Before we go much further, let's define what I mean by values. Without getting too complicated, I define values as 'the things that are important to me'. For example, these could include health, relationships, family, success, money and recognition. Now, because these things are important to me, they generally drive my behaviour in order to satisfy my values. If being healthy is a value of mine, I will tend to do things that will make me healthy – exercise, eat well, rest well, and so on. However, just because I have health as a value, does not mean I will definitely do the exercise, proper eating and resting behaviour! Most people would have health high on their list of values, but not everyone is living a healthy lifestyle! So, why not?

You see, our values are formed from a variety of influences, which include our experiences, upbringing, state of mind, our families, work, relationships and society, amongst others. Whilst we all have values, for many people they are neither well defined, nor fully understood. Therefore, it becomes difficult to live your values if you do not really know what they are. When they are not lived, you can have feelings and thoughts of 'I am not happy with my life' or 'I am working hard but not really getting anywhere' or 'I just do not feel like I am on the right track'. This inhibits your ability for personal and professional growth, so if you want to feel more empowered and better about yourself and what you are doing professionally, start living your values!

Living your values in your professional life may prove challenging, as control over your work environment may be limiting. What do you do if your values do not align with those of the organisation you work for? Is it time to quit? Well, that is one option, but resigning might just be an easy way out. Instead, devise ways you can live your professional values by working on your immediate environment and making that your place for growth. Attend training and development, change the people you hang around with, seek out challenges that align with your values, speak to your manager about changing the method in which the work is done, join or even form groups of people who have similar values to yourself.

If you want to feel more in control of your professional life, have more energy and purpose and to truly grow, know your values and change your behaviour to align with them. You will be amazed at the difference it makes! ❖

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How to feel more empowered professionally:

1. Firstly, you need to define your professional values properly. You may find they overlap with your personal values, however, narrowing them down to the top four or five is a good start.

2. Secondly, you need to identify some professional behaviours you can do that will live out those values.

3. Thirdly, notice how you feel when you start to live your professional values at work. You will feel empowered, motivated, have greater energy, be more resilient and generally enjoy life more - and you will grow!

You can email me for a free list of 50 of the most common values and a little exercise to help you define your top five.