

Four Steps to Identifying and Implementing Your Core Values

By Victoria Munro

Clearly identifying and understanding your personal core values, or new values you choose to adopt, will energize and affect all areas of your life and business. These values are the non-negotiables that are truly important to you. **Whether we are consciously aware of them or not, we all have and live by personal values.** The way we live our lives will demonstrate the values we hold dear.

The Benefits of Understanding and Following Your Core Values

In addition to providing a baseline and guide for decision-making and problem solving as you move ahead in life and grow your business, understanding your core values will:

- Energize you and those around you
- Propel you forward in the right direction
- Attract and retain those with similar values to be your employees and clients
- Enable you to successfully create and sustain a meaningful *company culture* that will survive business growth
- Create a greater unity among business associates, clients and employees

When our lives, activities and businesses are aligned with our deeply held core values, we are being true to and honoring ourselves. This will result in a sense of fulfillment, well-being and satisfaction. Companies that state and adhere to their core values **gain a distinct competitive advantage in the marketplace.**

We've all known companies that talk about and display excellent values, but fail to follow them. Perhaps they made a promise to put the customer first, but failed to adequately train and support their sales and service personnel to follow through on this promise. Making a commitment, but failing to follow through reveals a lack of integrity that will quickly erode loyalty among employees and clients alike. Without clearly defined core values, we're also in danger of making reactionary decisions, based on demands of others or our feelings at the time.

Businesses as well as individuals hold core values. If you're involved in a partnership, discuss this and together write a core values statement that expresses your ethical commitments. The statement should be one that you can all *own* and feel strongly about. Talk about your statement with employees and encourage them to follow your values. When hiring employees, look for those who hold core values similar to those of the company.

Defining and understanding our core values is a foundation to crafting a personal or business mission statement and to creating a business plan. With well-articulated core values in place, you will be able to set goals that feel *right* to you and that you'll be far more likely to achieve.

Below, we have included a simple core values exercise. If you haven't done so already, we suggest you take some time to understand your core values. Discovering and defining your core values will prove a worthwhile investment of your time and energy.

Creating *Your* Core Values Exercise

We have listed below some of the **most common values** to help you identify *your* core values, or to discover new values that you would like to embrace. Feel free to add other values to the list that are meaningful to you.

Step 1 Look over the list and circle the top ten values that are most significant to you. Make sure that these are ***genuinely important to you, and not what you feel you should value, nor what you think others expect you to value.*** It may be helpful to think back to your childhood and remember what was important to you then.

Step 2 Whittle down that list to only five values that mean the most to you. Then trim it further until you are left with your core one or two values.

Step 3 Write a brief definition of what this value (or values) means to you in practical terms, and commit to applying this in every area of your life. Consider how this relates to your business.

Step 4 Use this information to craft a mission statement for your life and for your business.

Values

Achievement	Fame	Physical challenge
Advancement	Family	Pleasure
Adventure	Financial security	Positive attitude
Arts	Friendships	Power, authority
Beauty	Fun	Privacy
Calm	Global view	Punctuality
Challenge	Hard work	Quality relationships
Change, variety	Harmonious relationships	Quality of work
Close relationships	Health	Recognition, status
Community involvement	Helping others	Religion
Commitment	Honesty	Reputation
Competence	Independence	Responsibility
Competition	Influencing others	Romance
Cooperation	Inner peace/harmony	Security
Country	Integrity	Self-reliance
Creativity	Intellectual status	Self-respect
Customer service	Justice	Simplicity
Decisiveness	Knowledge	Stability
Democracy	Leadership	Supervising others
Discipline	Location	Teamwork
Diversity	Loyalty	Time freedom
Ecological awareness	Meaningful work	Trust
Education	Money	Truth
Efficiency	Nature	Wealth
Ethical practice	Order, stability	Wisdom
Excellence	Personal development	Work with others
Faith	Freedom	Work independently

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Victoria Munro, along with husband Dave Block are co-founders of Make-it-Fly LLC, a company dedicated to creating success for small business owners through creatively-designed programs and tools. She has started and run nine different businesses. To receive FREE business success articles, tips and sign up for their ezine, "In-Flight Refueling," visit: www.Make-it-Fly.com.

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