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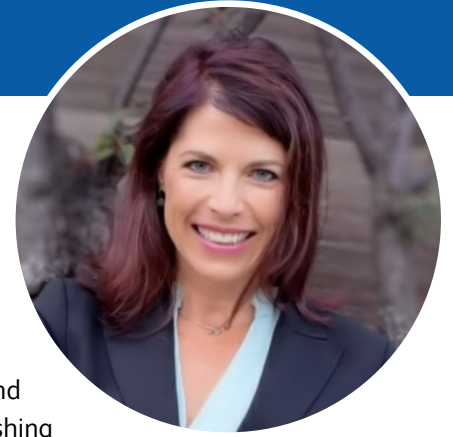


Culture Building: The Power of Values Alignment within an Organization

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approach*

Who Am I and Why Can You Trust Me?

I am Sara LaForest, an entrepreneur, consultant, coach, instructor, and author with comprehensive experience in the private, nonprofit, education, and government sectors.

I am on a mission to empower entrepreneurs, executives and leaders to grow their businesses and help them create flourishing workplace environments. If you share this mission, these articles will introduce my approach. I believe you will find them helpful and pragmatic.

For more than a decade, I have grown, managed, and nurtured my own companies specializing in leadership consulting, organizational development, and executive and performance coaching. My focus is on the critical—yet often overlooked—interdependencies of strategy, branding, culture, and talent necessary to foster and propel growth. My high-touch, personalized approach helps leaders improve company performance and team functioning at all levels, while facilitating a positive and productive workplace culture.

How am I different? What new perspective do I bring? My strength is combining company growth with an emphasis on the personal growth and well-being of the people with whom I work and serve. My deep-rooted commitment to human advancement is my advantage.

This article, along with many other national and international published works, was co-written with my retired partner, Tony Kubica. Our book, *Organizational Gravity: A Guide to Strategically Growing Your Company's Brand, Culture, and Talent*, is available on [Amazon](#).

To learn more about my services, publications, and speaking engagements, please visit [LaForestConsulting.com](#). You can contact me directly at Sara@LaForestConsulting.com or via [LinkedIn](#).

What benefit does an organization gain by having values alignment? And what outcomes can be expected if accomplished?

Values, and alignment of those values across the organization, drive organizational performance and promote growth. Organizational values reveal themselves in two ways:

1. from/in organizational strategy development (the planning process to set goals and vision — the ideal future state you are working towards)
2. through organizational norms that reveal themselves based on behavior (good or bad) in lieu of, or in addition to established and known values, as set in number 1.

Values, (also referenced as guiding principles) are one of the three key strategic visionary elements that establish a business philosophy and set the framework for accomplishing work. The other two are: Vision – “Where are we going? Our ideal scene?” And Mission or Purpose—“What we do, why we exist.” Generally, executives (the leadership team) set the framework, and staff execute it. If the values are not known, poorly understood or not supported (i.e. given lip service), the benefits of the values run amuck. And, as in the case of number 2, if values are not identified and shared, they will be made up and driven by the strongest personalities (both positive and negative), often creating dissonance or worse, a negative culture. As long as this is either tolerated or supported (through inattention), organizational progress will be limited.

The benefits of value alignment are both tangible and intangible. For example, we see 3 common and potent areas of benefits:

1. Increased quality, productivity, efficiency, and/or effectiveness – tangible items like product quality, timing, satisfaction; which are surfaced through values like “excellence”, the “gold standard” or “market leaders” in services and products.
2. Greater morale and cooperation, which are intangibles, are derivative of the values like “respect”, “teamwork”, “trust”, “care”, etc., that all work to ultimately promote better performance.
3. Increased employee engagement is tangible and observed in a person’s direct work output and activities, and reflective of values like “accountability”, “growth”, “individual contribution”, “ownership”, etc. This also crosses into the intangible of positive employee experience at work *and facilitates morale*.

Conversely, a lack of awareness and alignment of the organizational values will result in employee disengagement, competition vs. cooperation, more insular work and territoriality vs. resource sharing, a decrease in morale and ultimately a decrease in productivity—all costly and avoidable. Simply stated, lack of values and organizational alignment can diminish

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performance and impede growth. And often the executive team has no idea why the organization isn't more successful, and argues – it can't possibly be this values fluff.

Organizational values are a foundational element of high performing organizations. They establish what is most important to get work done in an organization. It also serves as a guide to decision making by enabling staff to assess fit and priority of business activities and opportunities, which in turn results in the performance organizational leaders are seeking

