



**VALUES-BASED  
ORGANISATIONS  
ARE STRONG  
ORGANISATIONS**

“Long-term success has to have a solid foundation built on principles and values that act as a centre of gravity.”

*John McFarlane, CEO  
ANZ Bank Melbourne  
Australia*

“If you want your organisation to consistently perform at peak levels, you need to become values-driven --- a company that is characterised by strong alignment between individual values and corporate values; a company characterised by strong alignment between individual and group sense of mission; a place where the ‘walk’ matches the ‘talk’.”

*Grant Kvalheim, Co-  
President, Barclays  
Capital New York USA*

## Aligning Values to Create Greater Employee Engagement

### BUSINESS IMPACT STUDY



### C H A L L E N G E

An organisation headquartered in Switzerland which had recently gone through a restructuring exercise wanted to conduct an internal alignment process in order to create a stronger and more cohesive culture.

During preliminary discussions with the Board and with various employees, it became clear that there were other issues at hand: the organisation was becoming inefficient, motivation was seriously deteriorating and cooperation and communication amongst employees was worsening. This was in part due to a previous restructuring exercise which, while addressing the structure of the organisation, failed to address cultural, interpersonal and competency issues.

As a result, the organisation was struggling to keep employees engaged, energised and focused on fulfilling the

**Challenge:** an organisation not living up to its values is becoming inefficient, unfocused and unproductive, and is at risk of losing key staff

**Solution:** conduct organisational values assessment to pinpoint precisely which values would help and hinder

**Impact:** a concrete roadmap for achieving a values-driven organisation with a culture that fosters greater employment engagement

organisational mandate, while living up to the corporate values and embodying them during their interactions with the outside world.

This state of affairs produced a lack of clarity on strategic objectives, an ineffective decision-making process, insufficient open and transparent communication, a silo mentality and an overall unproductive energy that, if continued, could cause serious damage to the sustainability of the organisation.

The way forward was to introduce a catalyst that would enable the organisation to focus on those values that would best support an environment where everyone would feel engaged and contribute to the corporate mission.



### What Are Values and Why Are They Important?

Values are deeply held principles that people hold or adhere to when making decisions.

Individuals express their values through their behaviours. Organisations express their values through their working culture.

Research shows that there is a strong link between financial performance and the alignment of an organisation's operating values to the employees' personal values.

Who you are and what you stand for is becoming just as important as the quality of products and services you provide.

## S O L U T I O N

Using the Richard Barrett's Cultural Transformation Tools®, a customised organisational values assessment was carried out in the form of an online survey.

The purpose of this assessment was to establish the degree of alignment between the personal values of the employees and members of the Board, the current organisational values as perceived by everyone, and the values that employees and Board members believed were most important for the future success of their organisation.

The survey results would help to create a context where a meaningful dialogue could take place with the Board and the employees about which values would best serve the organisation. It would identify areas of strong synergies and areas of energy drains within the organisation. This provided critical information that would serve as the basis for a concrete roadmap for action.

Once the survey results were processed, a two-day offsite workshop was organised with all employees and the Board to share the outcomes and to engage the group in moving forward on their transformational journey.

## I M P A C T

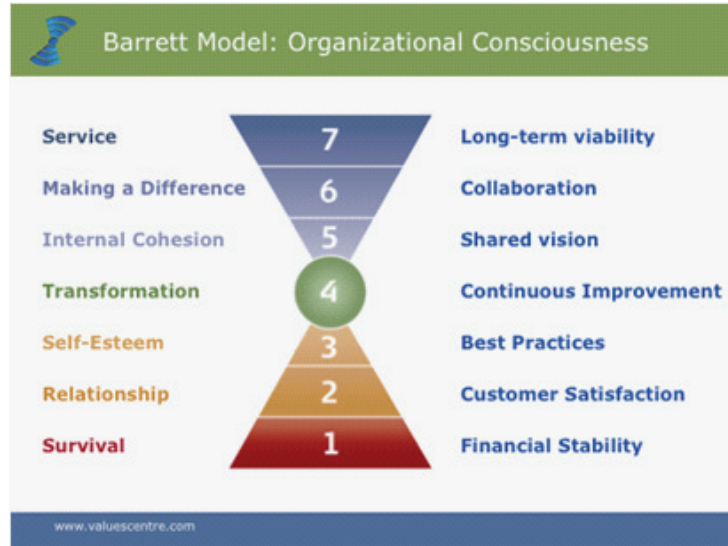
The workshop created an environment of deep listening and understanding of different perspectives. Building on shared values around integrity and accountability, the group was able to take concrete steps toward co-creating a culture where clarity, transparency, teamwork and a shared vision were key values.

The employees and the Board were able to establish new ways of working with each other, underpinned by clear, honest and open communication. Everyone now was operating in a context that encouraged and enabled them to:

- engage in a deep reflection about the meaning of the assessment at an individual and collective level;
- work on personal development goals impacting themselves and members of their team;
- agree and commit to a concrete set of actions to create the desired culture they all aspired to.

In that spirit, every employee and Board member developed and shared with the group their personal action plan and goals. They also agreed to work on developing a culture of regular constructive feedback on performance and were taking concrete steps to implement this. The Board developed an action plan to create more transparency and a greater sense of shared vision amongst the employees. This involved, amongst other things, setting up new communication channels. Also, a buddy system was put in place for everyone to help them live up to their commitments. When we heard back from this client, they were working on their plans and the buddy system had been successfully implemented.

The next step for this organisation is to create a whole system change designed to lead to a values-driven, vision-guided organisation that aims to be a great place to work. This will entail achieving better structural alignment between the values, vision and mission of the organisation with its structures, systems and processes.



The Barrett model has been used across the globe and across all industries by organisations such as AstraZeneca, BP Oil, Deutsche Bank, DHL, Ernst & Young, Ericsson, Ford Motors, IBM, Ikea, ING Bank, Johnson & Johnson, KLM, KPNG, L’Oreal, Microsoft, Motorola, Nestle, Nortel, Price Waterhouse, SAP, Skandia, Unilever, Vodafone, Xerox.

The model uses seven levels of consciousness. Organisations that are sustainably high-performing have shown to operate at a full spectrum across the seven levels and to have high levels of internal cultural alignment.

The Barrett Values Centre, in its 2008 analysis of the top 20 quoted Best Companies to Work for in the USA, described the importance of employee engagement in contributing to the company’s success. Hewitt Associates and the Barrett Values Centre, in their 2008 study of 163 organizations in Australia and New Zealand, conclude that a company’s financial performance is significantly impacted by the extent to which employees are aligned with the company’s culture: ‘... employee engagement significantly influences organisational and financial performance’.

Many companies are not yet full spectrum but many are on their way.



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