

A VALUES COACH SPECIAL REPORT

Free Refills: The Best of *Spark Plug* 2012

Joe Tye, CEO and Head Coach, Values Coach Inc.



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Values Coach Inc.

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Transforming Organizations through the Power of People™**

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We provide the following services:

- Inspirational keynotes for employee gatherings.
- Volume discounts on *The Florence Prescription: From Accountability to Ownership*, the bestselling book that is helping hospitals everywhere transform their cultures.
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Values Coach Inc.

**Transforming People through the Power of Values
Transforming Organizations through the Power of People**

and

Helping You Build a Culture of Ownership on a Foundation of Values

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PART 1: Articles on Personal and Professional Success and Happiness

To explore options for bringing Values Coach to your organization for consulting, training, or creating a high-octane inspirational event, contact Director of Client Services Michelle Arduser at 319-624-3889 or (michelle@valuescoachinc.com).

The Power of Focused Emotion



Remember this scene from *Cool Hand Luke*? Dragline has bet big bucks that Luke (played by Paul Newman) can carry through on his claim of being able to eat 50 eggs. As Luke's energy fails him, Dragline screams "Get mad at them damn eggs!"

Dragline intuitively understood that when it comes to the BIG challenges in life - like eating 50 eggs, or finding a new job after you've been laid off, or starting a new business in an uncertain economy, or putting a smile on your face and walking confidently down the corridor when what you really want to do is crawl under a table and hide - are more a matter of emotional energy than of physical strength. In today's *Spark Plug*, I'll share five practical strategies for enhancing and channeling the emotional energy you need to overcome the inevitable challenges that you will face in striving to achieve your goals.

Strategy #1: Get Your Body into the Act

The science of psychoneuroimmunology has shown that not only does your mind give orders to your body, your body gives marching orders to your mind. When you have a big smile on your face, are standing straight and tall, and are walking rapidly and with a sense of purpose, your mind gets the message that you are up to the challenges, no matter how stern they might be. On the other hand, if you are slouched back in your chair with a pout on your face, your body is telling your mind that the situation is hopeless and you might as well go ahead and throw in the towel now.

Strategy #2: Consciously structure self-talk

Psychologists tell us that for the average person, about 80% of inner dialogue is negative: it's the little voice in the back of our heads telling us that we're not good enough, that we can't achieve our biggest dreams, that nobody likes us, etc. That's why it's so vitally important to consciously

program that inner voice with systematically positive dialog such as the seven simple promises of [The Self-Empowerment Pledge](#).

Strategy #3: Focus negative emotional energy

What are you thinking about if you sit down on a thumbtack? Probably one thing, and one thing only: getting up! That is the power of transforming a negative thought (“Ouch! This sucks!”) into positive action. One reason I’m on a campaign to eradicate toxic emotional negativity is that people who are always whining and complaining about anything and everything are wasting what could be a hugely valuable resource for helping them achieve their dreams - authentic dissatisfaction clearly focused on a desired goal.

Let’s say that you hate the dumpy little house you live in (like Jeff Foxworthy’s redneck, your house has wheels and your car doesn’t). If you allow yourself to be unhappy about nothing else other than that house, I guarantee that you will start taking the actions necessary to change your circumstances - and very quickly. But if you promiscuously complain about anything and everything, it’s like flattening the emotional thumbtack you’ve been sitting on (or living in) so that it no longer motivates you to action.

Strategy #4: Avoid entropy by maintaining momentum

Entropy is the third law of thermodynamics, which states that unless you continuously inject new energy into the system, it begins to fall apart. One of the greatest secrets to a happy and successful life is simply to keep moving. And not just physically – to keep moving mentally and emotionally. Any time you find yourself bogged down, stand up and move; open an inspiring book to a random page and read; pick up the phone and make a call; go for a walk or take a nap (I’ll bet that you didn’t know the acronym NAP stands for Neuro-Attitudinal Positivity!).

Strategy #5: Keep it positive

Some years back there was a fad in the psychiatry profession of telling people that if they were angry, they had to let it all hang out because anger held inside can create stress and make you ill. They don’t give that advice anymore, because what they found is that once it’s unleashed, anger is very hard to control. What starts out as pounding the desk can quickly escalate to a shouting rage and, at the extremes, “going postal.” Emotional energy is a two-edged sword that can work for you or work against you. The challenge is to make sure that even negative emotions like anger, disappointment, and dissatisfaction are channeled in a positive direction. You do this by being very aware (Awareness is Core Action Value #3 in our course on [The Twelve Core Action Values](#)) of your emotional state, and channeling your emotions toward the actions that will help you achieve your goals.

12 Things You Need to Know About Courage

Courage is required to achieve your goals and dreams, and to become the person you are meant to be. Here are 12 things you should know about courage, drawn from the book *Never Fear, Never Quit* and from the *Everyday Courage for Extraordinary Times Workbook*.

1. Fear is a reaction, courage is a decision; perseverance is making that decision day after day after day.
2. Courage is not an emotion, it is an action; people who do courageous things are not feeling courage, they are feeling fear and acting in spite of it.
3. Caring is the root of courage; when you care enough about something you will find the courage to do what needs to be done.
4. Low self-esteem is often just an excuse for cowardice and laziness. The abusive voice in the back of your head wants to prevent you from taking risks and taking action. To achieve your goals and become the person you are meant to be, you must rewrite that inner dialogue.
5. Courage without energy is just a good intention; energy without courage is more likely to run away than it is to stand and fight.
6. Give fear a name and it becomes just a problem - it's easier to solve problems than it is to conquer nameless fear.
7. That's how fear works. First it sends along doubt to soften you up. You begin to doubt whether or not you're doing things right. Then you doubt whether you're doing the right thing. And finally you doubt whether you're even the right person. Once there is enough doubt, once you stop believing in yourself, then fear knows it can defeat you. Its very cowardice is what makes fear such a treacherous enemy.
8. Fear is a liar that misrepresents reality; fear is a prison that holds you back more powerfully than iron bars; and fear is a thief that robs you of your peace and your potential. Fear will never tell you the truth. Fear wants you to be weak, because then it can be strong. When you are strong, fear cannot dominate you. By accepting fear's picture of a bleak future, you become a participant in a fraud - a fraud in which you are also the victim. To conquer this cowardly liar, you must confront it with strength and determination, and with the facts and the hope that it wishes to hide from you in the fog of despair. Do not listen to fear. Attack it.
9. The only way to escape from the prison of fear is action. You cannot wish your way out, you cannot wait your way out. You can only work your way out. Every time you escape the prison of

fear, you grow stronger and more confident. It will always be there, trying to wall you in, but you will eventually grow so strong that you can just step right over the walls.

10. Fear wants to keep out anyone who's different, who makes you feel the least bit uncomfortable, anyone who challenges your established opinions and assumptions. At the same time that your fear is excluding them, their fear is excluding you. Pretty soon, they're not just different, they're worse. And of course, you're not just different to them, you're worse, too. And it's not a very big step from being worse to being wrong. And from being wrong it's not a very big step to being an enemy. Fear excludes and creates enemies. It takes courage to bring down the walls of exclusion and reach out to people who are different from you.
11. Fear is many tomorrows, courage is one today. Fear is worrying about all the different tomorrows. Fear is worrying about the bad days that may or may not come, and even worrying about the good ones because you know they can't last. You can dream of the future, plan for it - those are good things to do - but you can't control all the tomorrows.
12. Don't get crushed between the anvil of yesterday's regrets and the hammer of tomorrow's fears. Define your future by your dreams and not by your fears, by your hopes and not by your memories.

Finding Courage in the Age of Anxiety

Anxiety is the mortal foe of creative thought, effective decision-making, and decisive action. Norman Dixon's 1976 study on the psychology of military incompetence determined that one of the most significant differences between capable and inept commanders was this: the former were able to manage their anxiety and the latter were not. When in the thrall of anxiety, the incompetent commanders were often either paralyzed into inaction or panicked into brash and costly reaction (Norman Dixon, *On the Psychology of Military Incompetence*, 1976.)

Some anxiety can be a good thing. What Robert Gerzon (in *Finding Serenity in the Age of Anxiety*) calls "sacred anxiety" can prompt you to quit the job that's killing your soul and start the business you've always dreamed of building.

And, as Edward Hallowell explains in his book *Worry*, the anxiety-performance curve demonstrates that some anxiety can improve performance, but that at a certain point more anxiety causes a rapid deterioration. But when it gets out of control, anxiety causes mental and emotional malfunctioning. Specifically, three bad things can happen when you are in the grip of anxiety:

Distorted memories: When you are filled with anxiety, past failures loom large in your memory while past successes are written off as flukes or dumb luck not likely to be repeated. This can have a crippling effect on self-image.

Warped perceptions: In a state of high anxiety, you do not see the world as it really is but rather as you fear it might become. You tend to see strangers as enemies, uncertainty as danger, and molehills as mountains.

Twisted vision: Anxiety tends to feed pessimism and poison optimism. The individual who cannot master anxiety has a very hard time imagining things turning out better than could have been imagined, but has no trouble whatsoever in imagining him or herself sleeping under a bridge.

Before we look at why anxiety can be such a serious problem, it's important to understand the difference between anxiety and fear. As philosopher Paul Tillich explained in his book *The Courage to Be*, fear has an object - you are afraid of *something* - whereas anxiety is the vague and formless dread that seems to be an eternal element of the human condition, rooted in the fact that humans are the only species with awareness that their time on earth is finite.

Anxiety, Tillich said, causes great emotional pain precisely because it is rooted in uncertainty, and we humans need to feel a sense of control. Therefore, the mind strives to transform anxiety into fear, since fear has an object - that something you're afraid of. With fear, we feel a greater sense of being in control, knowing the enemy we face.

The problem is that the anxious mind creates enemies where in reality there are none. It's the difference between taking a late evening stroll through a safe neighborhood and walking alone at night in a strange city. In the latter, you subconsciously and automatically transform every noise into a stalking mugger. It makes it hard to enjoy the walk, much less to be thinking creatively about new marketing opportunities for your business (unless your business is selling personal security systems or self-defense lessons).

Anxiety, and the state of chronic fear it breeds, can be a prison more confining than iron bars, because you are being imprisoned both physically and mentally. When you are being held under the thumb of your anxiety, you simply cannot see the options that, if successfully pursued, could free you from the anxiety-provoking situation.

There are four essential steps to freeing yourself from the Anxiety Trap.

The first is simple awareness - paying attention and keeping your mind in the present. The anxious mind will create all sorts of unpleasant scenarios and then play them repeatedly in the theater of your mind, as if they were certain to occur. Of course, the more your mind fixes on those images of doom and disaster, the more likely it is that they will come to pass. Every time your mind takes off on a Fantasized Experience Appearing Real, you need to gently bring it back into the present.

The second step is to take action. Do the thing you fear, said Ralph Waldo Emerson, and the death of the fear is certain. When you feel yourself in the jaws of the Anxiety Trap, it's important to keep moving. Keep moving physically; sometimes simply going for a jog or a walk can help you pull out of the trap. Keep moving mentally; if the source of your anxiety is money, get a book or take a course on personal finance. Keep moving emotionally; if you are stuck in a cloud of dread, go see a friend or check out a funny movie. Keep moving spiritually; if you're overwhelmed by unanswered questions about the meaning of life and death, read a book by M. Scott Peck or Harold Kushner.

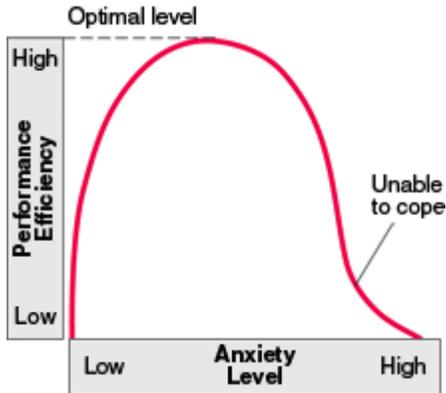
The third step is to be committed to goals that are bigger than you are, and to a mission of vital importance. If you do that, you will soon come to believe that what you are doing is so important, you will simply not be allowed to fail. That will give you a tremendous source of strength in the face of anxiety.

The fourth step is to have faith. The things that cause the greatest anxiety - including our inability to control the world around us and our knowledge that we must one day leave this world --cannot be changed, they can only be accepted. Believe that, whatever happens, you will be supported in ways that cannot be anticipated or explained, and your anxiety will be much more manageable.

Try this:

One of the most powerful and effective antidotes to anxiety is the Be Today, See Tomorrow formula: the secret of happiness is to keep your attention in the present, while the secret to success is to keep your vision in the future. Keep your attention on the positive and beautiful things in the world around you (a baby's smile, the smell of a rose, the satisfaction of doing your work with pride); keep your vision on the world you want to create (the ideal job, your dream house, the vacation to Hawaii). Anxiety will soon play second fiddle to awareness and anticipation.

The Anxiety-Performance Curve



In his book *Worry*, Dr. Edward M. Hallowell describes the anxiety-performance curve, which “shows that as anxiety increases, performance improves, up to a point. Beyond that point, as anxiety continues to increase, performance declines.” If test anxiety sparks the student to leave the bar and head for the library, then it’s a constructive emotion. But if test anxiety causes a mental freeze that blocks the student from accessing his or her knowledge during the test, it has become self-destructive. Hallowell cites studies showing that effective entrepreneurs and business leaders learn to control anxiety by managing worry. They *do* worry a lot (they believe, as former Intel CEO Andrew Grove argued in his book of the same title, that “only the paranoid survive”), but their worry has two distinct characteristics that are different from what most people do when they worry.

First, their worry is focused on the achievement of goals, not concern for personal advancement or the opinions of others. Second, their worry precipitates action that obviates the cause of the worry, thereby freeing the leader’s attention to focus on some other worry. When it is properly focused on important goals and accompanied by a commitment to taking effective action - even at the risk of rejection, failure or humiliation - worry can be a powerful leadership tool. When it is not, worry inevitably degenerates into anxiety, which can be a leader’s worst enemy. As Daniel Goleman wrote in his path-breaking book *Emotional Intelligence*:

New solutions and fresh ways of seeing a problem do not typically come from worrying, especially chronic worry. Instead of coming up with solutions to these potential problems, worriers typically simply ruminate on the danger itself, immersing themselves in a low-key way in the dread associated with it while staying in the same rut of thought.

The Granddaddy of All Fears

All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given us.”

Gandalf (in The Lord of the Rings by J.R.R. Tolkien)

In the years since I wrote *Never Fear, Never Quit: A Story of Courage and Perseverance*, I've thought a lot about fear and courage, and about perseverance in the face of obstacles and setbacks. Lately I've become convinced that the greatest fear of all, the Granddaddy of All Fears, is not fear of rejection, fear of failure, fear of humiliation, or even fear of success (which author Steve Pressfield calls the mother of all fears). No, I'm convinced that the greatest fear is that we eventually and inevitable run out of time. It's a cliché that football coaches say they don't lose games - they run out of time. It's also a metaphor for the Granddaddy of all fears - we don't fear dying so much as we fear running out of time for life. We don't fear failing as much as we fear running out of time to get back up and try again.

When I'm speaking about Core Action Value #9, Focus, from our course on [The Twelve Core Action Values](#), I'll make the (rarely contested) statement that no one on their deathbed says "I wish I'd watched more television." Then I'll ask what people do regret toward the end of their lives (as they realize how close they are to running out of time). The same four things come up, and always in the same order.

Relationships: Without exception, at the top of the list comes family and friends. People know that someday they will wish they had spent more time on relationships and less time on things that were really much less important. Spending time on relationships is always something we intend to do later, but in too many cases later never comes because we run out of time.

Experiences: The second thing I hear is that toward the end of their lives people regret that they didn't travel more, didn't write the book that had been burning up inside of them, didn't quit the job that was killing their soul and start the business doing something they had a burning passion to do. These experiences were always something they'd get around to one day, but that day never came because they ran out of time (Zig Ziglar used to give people in his audiences a wooden nickel with the letters TUIT on it; he'd say you've always been saying that someday you'll get 'round tuit - and now you have a round tuit, taking away your last excuse.

Finances: The third thing people always say is that in old age, people regret that they weren't more responsible for their finances. Because of youthful indulgences, many older people retire to the equivalent of Jeff Foxworthy's redneck retirement community, where the houses have wheels and the cars don't. When people blow ten grand for a week in Vegas or Disney, the implicit assumption

is that they'll have time to make it up before they have to retire; the fear is that they'll run out of time before that happens.

Health: You often hear older people saying some variation of this: If I'd known I was going to live this long, I'd have taken better care of myself. We buy exercise machines and gym memberships and diet plans with the resolution that we'll actually use them - eventually. But all too often, "eventually" never comes because we run out of time.

An Unpleasant Truth

You will run out of time. Period, no exceptions. You might have some warning that your hourglass is about to run out, for example with a diagnosis of terminal cancer. Or your hourglass might run out suddenly, the way an aquarium would drain when the side is smashed in by a rock. Winston Churchill said "courage is the most important of all virtues because it is the one that makes all of the others possible." That especially applies to the Granddaddy of All Fears. Most procrastination is caused by fear of one sort or another. Procrastination causes you to push off what you need to do today into tomorrow with the consequence that you are always living in the shadows of yesterday. It takes courage to act, to conquer the procrastination that robs you of your precious time.

Ralph Waldo Emerson said "do the thing you fear and the death of the fear is certain." Action (the third cornerstone of Core Action Value #4, Courage) is the antidote to procrastination - and the only way to confront the Granddaddy of All Fears.

Determination and Brick Walls

Randy Pausch was living the American Dream. He had a job he loved as a professor at Carnegie Mellon University, a wonderful family, and fascinating hobbies. Then he was diagnosed with terminal pancreatic cancer and given less than six months to live. And as he was dying, he was giving speeches and writing a book about lessons on how to live. This is my favorite quote from Pausch's book *The Last Lecture*:

Brick walls are not there to stop you, they are there to make you prove how much you want something.

As Harold Kushner so cogently tells us in his book *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*, we all sooner or later run into brick walls. When that happens, we need to remember the advice of my friend W Mitchell who wrote the book *It's Not What Happens to You It's What You Do About It*. There are four possible responses to running into a brick wall, each of which is appropriate, depending upon the situation.

The first is to quit, giving up the quest. After a certain number of years, someone who's been toiling away in the minor leagues has to accept that the dream of playing in the Big Leagues is not going to be realized and to find a new set of goals to pursue. I started Values Coach in 1994 after realizing that the brick wall standing between me and my then-goal of being CEO of a large hospital was trying to tell me that my calling in life laid elsewhere.

The second is to keep pounding away at that brick wall, enduring all the pain and frustration of picking yourself up time and again and knowing that it will knock you down many times before you finally crash through. Every spouse of an alcoholic or parent of a child whose gotten into drugs knows the daily anguish of running into a seemingly impregnable brick wall, hoping that this is the day that one last smash-up will lead to a breakthrough. So does every author who has papered the walls of a room with rejection letters.

The third is to find a way over or around the wall. When Bill Hewlett and Dave Packard started the company that still bears their names, their first project was a pin counter for bowling allies. It hit the market and immediately hit an impenetrable brick wall. Rather than pounding away trying to sell the device with brute force marketing, they tried something else - and developed the technology that Walt Disney used for the soundtrack of *Fantasia*.

The fourth is to find a new wall. We recently ran into a brick wall that stands in the way of one of the several roads down which we have been traveling - at a pretty high rate of speed. There appears to be no way through, over, or around this particular wall; that road is now barricaded. We are not going to back off on our mission of sparking a movement for values-based life and leadership - quite to the contrary. We are going to find another road to race down, knowing that at some point that road, too, will offer up brick walls to make us prove how much we want to achieve this goal.

Some years ago I wrote a book called *Never Fear, Never Quit*. "Never Fear" doesn't mean don't be afraid - it means don't allow your fears to paralyze you. And "Never Quit" doesn't mean don't stop - if something isn't working, by all means stop and try something else. What it does mean is don't give up. Sometimes, as Randy Pausch said, brick walls are there to make you prove how much you want something. And sometimes they are there to alert you that you are on the wrong path in life. The challenge is often discerning what sort of wall you have just smashed into, and then facing down your fears and doing what you must do.

Twelve Laws of Adversity

Fear is a reaction, courage is a decision. Perseverance is making that decision every day, day after day, in the face of every obstacle and setback. Understanding the laws of adversity can help you persevere through the inevitable challenges.

Law #1: The rain will fall and bad things will happen to good people - including you. Understand that adversity will come and be ready to welcome it when it does for the lessons it will bring, for the strength and wisdom you will gain from it, and for the people it can bring into your life.

Law #2: You must pass through the valley of the shadow, but you don't have to take up permanent residence in the cold darkness. Life is a motion picture, not a snapshot - your trajectory is more important you're your current position.

Law #3: Whether it's the best of times or the worst of times is defined by what you choose to see. Without the valleys, you won't appreciate the mountains, and there are millions of others who would *love* to have your problems.

Law #4: One door closes, another door opens. There is opportunity hidden in every single adversity if you have the strength and courage to search for it and to pursue it when you've found it. ("Brick walls are not there to stop you, they are there to make you prove how much you want something." - Randy Pausch: *The Last Lecture*)

Law #5: Falling on your face is good for your head. We learn and grow more from our setbacks than we do from our successes. When things aren't working, it forces you to look at more creative solutions.

Law #6: Surviving adversity is a great way to build self-confidence, and to give you a more positive perspective on future adversity (if we survived that we can survive anything!). Adversity prepares you for bigger challenges and accomplishments in the future.

Law #7: What you've fought to gain you'll fight to keep and vice versa - easy come, easy go - but what you had to fight to gain you will fight doubly hard to retain.

Law #8: Don't complain or play the victim and martyr games. All this can do is sabotage your self-esteem. Don't commiserate with other victims and martyrs (co-miserate = be miserable together). If someone else wants to complain, fine. Just don't stick around while they do it, because it's certain to drag you down.

Law #9: Ask for help. There is something immensely therapeutic about asking for help, even if the help you receive doesn't really solve your problem. Perhaps it's the therapy of setting aside false pride and self-sufficiency. Adversity helps prevent hubris, arrogance, and complacency.

Law #10: Help someone else who has bigger problems than you do. "Whatever you most need in life, the best way for you to get it is to help someone else get it who needs it more than you do." (Rafe, from my book *Never Fear, Never Quit: A Story of Courage and Perseverance*)

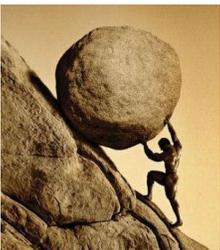
Law #11: Adversity keeps teaching - it provides great stories for the grandchildren! Your setbacks can, if you're committed to learning from them and teaching about them, be the source of great learning for others.

Law #12: Pray. Whatever your specific religious belief or non-belief, prayer is a powerful form of building inner moral strength for dealing with adversity, and is quite often answered in the most unexpected yet magnificent ways - if you are patient in waiting for that answer.

Remember: Every great accomplishment was once the "impossible" dream of a dreamer who refused to quit when the going got tough.

The Self-Empowerment Pledge is a powerful tool for cultivating the inner strength, resilience, and toughness for dealing with adversity. Simply make each day's promise 4 times - morning, noon, afternoon, and evening. [For detailed instructions check out the online slide show.](#)

On Stamina



Sisyphus - condemned to push a boulder to the top of a mountain for all eternity, seeing it fall back to the bottom every time he almost reaches the summit, dooming him to start over again (Greek myth currently being acted out in reality by the Greek economy)

Some years ago I heard a speech by Bill Kinsella, author of the book *Shoeless Joe*, which became the movie *Field of Dreams* ("Is this heaven? No, it's Iowa"). What I most remember is his telling us that being a successful writer requires four things. As I recall, the four things were technique (which he said was five percent of the equation), creativity (another five percent), vocabulary

(another five percent) and stamina (the remaining 85 percent). He went on to define stamina as sitting down to write your 50th short story after having received your 49th rejection letter.

You might have read that eight or nine out of ten new businesses fail. That might be technically accurate (though I do not believe it), but it is not true. The truth is that businesses do not fail - owners quit. For every business that has “failed” there is another somewhere else in the same industry facing the same problems where the owner, instead of throwing in the towel, made one more call, went hat-in-hand to one more bank, made one more personal sacrifice to keep the business from going under. And in the end it was that flirtation with failure, and the commitment to push the rock up the hill one more time, that gave the company the stamina and strength of character to endure, to beat the odds, and become one of the survivors.

Joseph Campbell - author of many books on the power of myth - wrote that we all, one way or another, live out the hero’s journey. At one point in the story, the hero falls off his horse and loses his sword. The dragon hovers over him, breathing fire, and you want to close your eyes because a horrible end appears inevitable. Yet somehow, against all odds, the hero finds his sword, slays the dragon, saves the beautiful princess, and they live happily ever after.

It’s been said that anything can look like a failure in the middle. But it’s only a failure once you quit. This weekend, I urge you to think about the biggest problem facing you and ask yourself what actions you can take to push your rock up the hill one more time. That truly is the path of the hero.

The Simple Promise that Will Change Everything



**I've Taken
The Pickle* Pledge.**

**“I will turn every complaint
into either a blessing or a
constructive suggestion.”**

By taking *The Pickle Pledge*, I am promising myself that I will no longer waste my time and energy on blaming, complaining, and gossiping, nor will I commiserate with those who steal my energy with their blaming, complaining, and gossiping.

* So-called because chronic complainers look like they were born with a dill pickle stuck in their mouths.

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**This is a
Pickle-Free Zone**

**Please leave your gossiping,
complaining, criticizing, and
toxic emotional negativity
at the door. Thank you.**

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The Pickle Challenge™ is taking on a life of its own! All across the country we’re hearing about singing pickles, dancing pickles, pickle piñatas, pickle pledge boards, Pickle Pledge(tm) fundraisers, signs designating pickle-free workspaces (the way we used to designate certain areas as smoke-free zones), and pickle-free pins, buttons, and t-shirts.

I think there are two reasons the Pickle Challenge has gotten such traction. The first is simply that it is such a great visual metaphor. We can all visualize the chronic complainer and gossip who looks like he or she was suckled on a dill pickle instead of a pacifier.

The second reason is far more important – because people are finding that it works. At both the level of the individual trying to cultivate a happier and more positive mental attitude and of the employee group working to foster a more collegial and supportive workplace environment, The Pickle Challenge and the simple promise included in The Pickle Pledge can have a literally miraculous effect.

Personal Change

Of all the techniques I teach, the one that has been most profoundly life-changing for me personally is this simple promise to turn every complaint into either a blessing or a constructive suggestion, and to not allow the negativity of other people to deprive me of the joy of being alive.

When I really started paying attention to the soundtrack in my head, I was appalled at how much negativity there was up there. *I teach this stuff – I should know better!* But sure enough, every time I hit the road (an almost weekly occurrence) I found things to mentally whine about – delayed flights, bad food, the person sitting next to me on the flight: it almost seemed like my subconscious mind was seeking out any excuse to complain as a way of keeping me from thinking about my work.

When I really internalized The Pickle Pledge and committed to making it a part of my life, it was the emotional equivalent of moving from a room filled with cigarette smoke to sitting in the clean air by the bank of a river. And like the reformed smoker, I will never go back to my pre-Pickle thought patterns and am highly intolerant of other people trying to drag me into their emotional toxicity. I've learned to appreciate how wonderful life is when you take The Pickle Pledge to heart.

The Pickle Pledge played a particularly important role in my life after Lasik eye surgery left me with severe double vision, impaired visual acuity, and chronic eye pain. With the help of a very good friend who administered a dose of tough love, I stopped whining and playing the role of victim and instead directed my anger toward helping young people be aware of the serious risks they take if they have the one set of eyes with which they will ever be blessed to be carved up for cosmetic reasons. I'm still angry at the unethical behavior of the Lasik industry, but I like myself as an angry activist much better than I would have like myself as an angry victim. By the way, if you or someone you love is considering Lasik, please read my special report [12 Things You Should Know If You Are Considering Lasik Eye Surgery](#).

Organizational Change

Emotional climate of the workplace is determined by what you expect and what you tolerate, and over time what you tolerate will dominate what you say you expect. A positive workplace culture begins with intolerance for toxic emotional negativity. As I said in my book [The Florence Prescription: From Accountability to Ownership](#): “One toxically negative person can drag down morale and productivity of an entire work unit.”

When everyone on a work unit makes a good faith effort to break the complaining habit (and yes, it is a habit) it changes everything. I know of one 12-person hospital department where someone brought in a pickle jar and, in a good-humored way, they started fining each other a quarter for every instance of toxic emotional negativity. They raised more than \$80 in one month – and you know they didn’t catch them all! Both patient satisfaction and employee engagement went from the bottom quartile to the top ten percent almost overnight.

Wherever you work, I can promise you this: if I could wave a magic wand over your organization and for 30 days there would be no bitching, moaning, whining and complaining (the *other* BMW Club!), you would never go back. Just as we will never again tolerate people lighting cigarettes in the workplace, you would quickly appreciate how nice it is to work in a place that is free of toxic emotional negativity. In fact, you might even use the word miracle to describe the transformation.

One More Thing on The Simple Promise that Will Change Everything

There is one more essential point: people tend to attract - and be attracted to - others who share similar viewpoints and attitudes. If you are a glass-half-empty pickle-sucker, it’s a pretty good bet that many or most of the people you spend time with are as well. If you are a positive and optimistic Spark Plug sort of person, it’s safe to say that the people you attract are as well.

At the organizational level, an emotionally toxic workplace environment characterized by low morale, disengagement, complaining, and gossiping will attract emotionally negative pickle-sucking employees. If by some chance it happens to recruit a positive-spirited can-do sort of person, it won’t be long at all before that person either leaves or gets sucked into the prevalent swamp of emotional negativity.

On the other hand, an organization characterized by a positive spirit and high levels of engagement won’t recruit negative people (they won’t even make it through the interviewing screen) and if any happen to slip through, they will either change their attitudes to become more positive or be rejected by the organization the way a healthy body will reject a mismatched organ transplant.

You have no doubt heard the saying that “attitude is everything.” Attitude is also a choice. It’s the most important choice you make each day (many times a day). It’s the most important collective choice the people you work with every day make (many times a day). Choose wisely.

The 5-A Formula for Creating a Memory of the Future

Define your future by your dreams and not by your memories, by your hopes and not by your fears.

One of the exercises we do at my annual *Spark at Dream at the Grand Canyon Workshop* is have everyone draw a picture of their dream on the front of a t-shirt. For this exercise, no artistic talent is required - just a picture clear enough to remind you of that dream on those days when it feels so out-of-reach. I’ve heard some amazingly wonderful stories back from people who have told me that the simple exercise of drawing their dream, and then wearing it next to their heart underneath whatever costume they happened to wear to work, helped them stay focused on what they had to do in order to transform the dream into reality.

It’s a great metaphor for creating what I call a *Memory of the Future*. If you were about to drive to Tuscaloosa for your sister’s wedding and had never been there before, the first thing you would do is consult a map and plan the journey. You are much more likely to arrive at the church on time than if you simply hopped in the car and started driving in the general direction of Alabama. Studying the map is a form of mental rehearsal that greatly increases the odds you’ll be there for the big event.

In the same way, transforming your dreams into a Memory of the Future is a mental rehearsal that greatly increases the odds you’ll show up on time for your own celebration party. There are five sequential steps to creating a memory of the Future, which I call “The 5-A’s:” Articulation, Affirmation, Asking, Action, and Adaptation. Let’s say that your big dream is having that dream home. Here’s how you can transform that dormant dream into a vibrant Memory of the Future:

Articulation: The first step is knowing what you want, and as specifically as possible. Can you articulate the dream? Instead of just “a big house” can you describe the ideal location (country or city); do you have a mental picture of the ideal floor plan; in your mind, can you feel the brass fixtures with your fingertips, smell the new carpet on the floor, and hear the wood crackling in the fireplace? The more vivid your mental image, and the more different senses and emotions involved, the higher the likelihood of achievement.

Affirmation: This step is vital, because we dream in pictures but we worry in words. You’ve got the picture of the dream house painted in your mind, but the negative little inner voice is saying, “You can’t afford the mortgage you have now, how are you going to pay for that monstrosity?” It’s

essential to counteract this negative self-talk with affirmations that are positive and nurturing. Of course, the next “A” will make the affirmations more believable...

Action: Without action, a dream is just a fantasy. Action is the acid test that determines the difference between a daydream and a memory of the future. But you don't have to do it all at once: small actions consistently applied can yield great results. Every time you do something, *anything*, in pursuit of your dream, even something as simple as setting up a savings account for the down payment on that dream house of yours, you are reinforcing a future reality, *a memory of the future*, in your own mind, which is ultimately where the battle is won or lost. The secret is to do something every single day.

Asking: Any dream of significance will require help from others, and the way you get that help is by asking for it. In the case of the dream house, for example, you will probably have to ask the bank for a mortgage. The best approach is to, very early in the process, go to the bank and share your dream, then ask: “What do I have to do in order for you to give me the loan I need to make this happen?” The bank is in the business of lending money, and your banker would love nothing better than to be in a position to approve your loan request. Let them help you make sure that they can say “yes” when the time comes.

Adaptation: Finally, you must be willing to adapt to changing circumstances. In many cases, that will mean adapting *upward*. When that greatest of dreamers Walt Disney astonished the world with Disneyland, no one - not even him - could have imagined the empire that the Disney company was to become. One of the participants in my Grand Canyon workshop came with a dream of writing a book; once that was successfully accomplished, the book spawned a new business that had not been part of the original dream.

What's Your Memory of the Future?

This weekend, I challenge you to draw a picture of a dream that's important to you. You're not creating fine art, you're crafting a memory of a future reality: you living in that new house, going to work in the ideal job, sending the book manuscript off to the publisher. Then write down at least one thing you can do for each of the 5-As of creating a memory of the future. If you make a commitment to do those things, you will have moved dramatically closer to transforming that dream of today into your reality of tomorrow.

The Yin and Yang of Ego and Soul



For thousands of years, philosophers have written about how we humans are torn by conflicting inner drives. We want to be recognized, but we want to be left alone. We want material possessions, but we want our lives to be uncomplicated. We want to work hard at work that really matters, but we want to spend time sitting on a riverbank with a fishing pole. We are torn between temptation and virtue, almost as if there really is a little devil sitting on one shoulder and a little angel sitting on the other. How we resolve this inner conflict has everything to do with becoming Authentic (Core Action Value #1 in the course on [The Twelve Core Action Values](#)).

I think of it as a battle between Ego and Soul. Ego wants things, Soul wants time. Ego wants fame, Soul wants friends. Ego is insecure yet arrogant, Soul is centered yet humble. Ego is concerned about what other people think, Soul is concerned about others. When things go wrong, Ego points a finger, Soul looks in the mirror. Ego complains, Soul gives thanks. The voice of Ego is loud and demanding, the voice of Soul is soft and accepting.

Ego and Soul are the Yang and Yin of personality. It's not that one is always bad and the other good; they can be complementary. When I start working on a new writing project, Ego is motivated by the prospect of having a bestselling book; Soul loves the feel of a good pen rolling across a clean sheet of paper and the thought that people I might never meet will be inspired by my words. The combined motivation produced by Ego and Soul together is more powerful than just one would be alone.

There are, of course, times when the two are in conflict. Ego might be secretly pleased to see a perceived rival fall on his face, while Soul wants to help him up, dust him off, and give him a gentle push in the direction of the winners' circle. Ego might want to go to Las Vegas while Soul wants to help build a house with Habitat for Humanity. Ego might want to take a nap while Soul wants to go for a walk.

Exercise: Imagine a conversation between Ego and Soul

Imagine that you were an objective third party listening to a conversation going on inside of you - a debate between your Ego and your Soul. What do you think each would be saying? In the space below, write down what you think you'd hear from each. It's important that you write it down - that will help you remain objective and impartial, as if you were a news reporter chronicling a political debate.

Getting a Stone to Smile



I saw this old gentleman while out riding my bike and just couldn't resist taking a picture and then writing about the metaphor. Do you ever have mornings where you feel like this old rock? Do you know people who are about as likely to start their day with a smile as this old rock? Here are five things you can do that will help you put a smile on that rocky start - and to share that smile with someone else who's having a rocky start - to the day.

Say Thank You

One of the most effective ways to change your perspective on life is to start each day making a list of ten things for which you are thankful. Hopefully that list will begin with such things as family and the ability to breathe, but with a little thought you'll find that you can be thankful for all the things we normally take for granted (dental floss, a hot cup of coffee, a shoulder rub).

Laugh for No Reason

Google "Laughter Clubs" and watch a few videos of people getting together to laugh. No jokes, no punch lines - they just start laughing. You cannot be anxious, depressed, or angry when you are laughing. Guaranteed!

Hold a Pen with Your Teeth

In one psychology research project, two groups of people were given a set of cartoons and asked to rate them for funniness. But when filling out the evaluation form, they had to hold the pens in their mouths. The group that was told to hold the pen with their lips (forcing a frown) consistently rated the cartoons as being not funny, while the group told to hold the pen with their teeth (forcing a smile) consistently rated the cartoons as being funny. Just holding a pen with your teeth can profoundly shift how you view your world.

Sing in the Shower

Several years ago I worked with a voice coach who gave me a series of exercises that I have turned into a singing routine that I do in the shower (and nowhere else!). It's amazing! No matter how

grumpy I feel when I climb into the shower, singing lifts my spirits. And the louder I belt it out, the better I feel. Every time.

Get Out of Your Self

About five years ago, I wrote the manuscript for a book that is a radical reinterpretation of what I believe is the central message of the Book of Job. I called it *Pray for Your Friends* because that was the final instruction that God gave to Job - to pray for his “friends” - the ones who had throughout the story been accusing him of having brought his troubles upon himself through his own past evils. From beginning to end, Job’s lament was all about himself. He never once mentions the loss of his children and servants - or his wife, who was also the victim of those losses. It was all about me, poor me. And when God told him to pray for his friends, the implicit message was to stop playing the victim and feeling sorry for himself, but instead to reach out to others. The absolute best way to put a smile on your face on those days when you feel like a stone is to stop thinking about your own problems and to reach out and help someone else who has even bigger problems.

Act Your Way into the Part You Want to Play



The other evening my wife and I watched the movie *Warrior*. It could have been a terrible movie: implausible story line, typecast characters, an ending that was telegraphed from the first moments... This movie had all the makings of another second rate *Rocky* copycat. But it was great! *Warrior* was saved from its inherent flaws by magnificent acting. The actors owned their characters - you could not help but be pulled into the story, and you felt like cheering when the credits rolled. At least I did.

There is a hugely valuable and all-too-often overlooked life lesson here: the importance of learning how to act. In Core Action Value #1, Authenticity, of our course on [The Twelve Core Action Values](#) we talk about “the paradox of authenticity.” In order to grow into being your meant-to-be authentic best Self, you must be willing to go through those awkward “fake it till you make it” moments. You must learn the art of acting out a role that, at least at first, does not feel authentic.

Anyone who has ever stood in front of a roomful of people to give a first speech has done it. So has anyone who’s made a pitch to a skeptical customer or a panel of venture capitalists. So has anyone who’s ever stood up to a schoolyard bully, or confronted an emotional vampire in the workplace.

For that matter, so has anyone who's ever been depressed and acted their way into a positive outlook by putting a smile on their face and a spring in their step. Or who has ever acted in the face of fear, or heard a malignant inner voice tell them they couldn't do something and gone ahead and done it anyway.

It turns out that acting is an essential life skill. You've got to learn how to act the part before you can audition for it. Here are four actions you can take to help you learn to be a better "actor" in your life.

Confront Resistance: In his book [The War of Art](#), novelist Steven Pressfield gives a tough-love solution for the writer who doesn't write, the painter who doesn't paint, the entrepreneur who never starts a business, or anyone else who is blocked from achieving their most authentic goals by inner Resistance (he capitalizes the word the way a historian would capitalize Great Depression or World War II because at a personal level it's just as deadly).

Resistance will come up with a zillion excuses as to why you can't act the part you want to play. You're too young, too old, too broke, not pretty enough, not famous enough, not good enough. Objectively speaking, those things might even be true. But if you don't confront and overcome those inner excuses and act the part you want to play before you're old enough, rich enough, famous enough, or whatever "enough" you're waiting to be before you just start acting, the chances of your being "discovered" are slim indeed.

Rehearse: All great actors rehearse. For the writer, rehearsal means getting that first dreadful draft down on paper. For the athlete, rehearsal is all the lonely morning runs before the day of the big game. For the manager, rehearsal is roleplaying the difficult performance appraisal with someone from HR before going into the room with the employee in question. As Vince Lombardi once said, the will to win is *not* everything - the will to *prepare* to win is.

Learn from other actors: I once put on a conference that featured a famous speaker/author. Before and after his speech, he sat in the front row listening to the other speakers and taking notes. I asked him about it later and he told me that he got some of his best ideas from watching others ("good poets borrow, great poets steal" - T.S. Eliot). Prior to writing [The Healing Tree](#), I'd never written a poem in my life and thoroughly disliked having to read them. But since the story called for my two main characters to be poets, I had to write some poems for them. So I studied the work of great poets. And to my great surprise, found that I really like it (or at least a lot of it - I especially love the work of former poet laureate Billy Collins). I also found that, while I will never be "a poet" in any real sense of the word, anyone willing to put some work into the craft can write a poem.

Go public: You could be the world's greatest singer, but no one would ever know if the only place you ever sang was in the shower. One of the greatest barriers to sharing your gifts with the world is the fear of humiliation. People are not afraid of rejection and failure so much as they are of the feeling of humiliation that goes with having failed or been rejected. The only way of overcoming this fear is to confront it head-on and go public with your work. You go public by sending your manuscript off to the literary agent, by standing in front of a roomful of employees and giving a Churchillian speech on resilience, by standing straight and tall when on the inside you feel frightened and small.

When you make the commitment to act, you never know where it might take you. One of the poems in *The Healing Tree* asks a question about the nature of the universe. That sparked my curiosity so I began reading layperson books on physics. That got me to thinking about how the laws of physics might apply to cultural transformation in an organization. And next month I'll be giving a keynote speech on the subject at an American Hospital Association conference in Phoenix. And it all started with acting a part I wasn't really ready to play. Here's the poem:

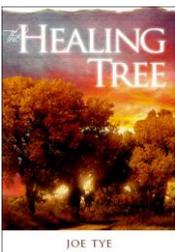
Good Question

*What was before
the beginning of time?
What happens after
she writes her last rhyme?*

*What lies beyond
the outside of space?
What's on the inside of
his innermost trace?*

*Who was the architect?
Who wound the clock?
What keeps it all going
when you'd think it should stop?*

*Is the infinite universe
more than it seems?
Awake I ask questions
that are answered in dreams.*



Getting Out of Stuck



Ever have days where you feel like this – stuck in the mud? Most of us do. And when you’re stuck in “stuck,” it is imperative that you get yourself moving.

Momentum is one of the four cornerstones of Core Action Value #4, Focus in our course on *The Twelve Core Action Values*. In his book *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*, John Maxwell says that momentum is a leader’s best friend. He’s right – and the principle doesn’t just apply to leadership, it’s a law of life. Everything’s better when you’re on a roll. Today I’ll share with you my 6-Get It Formula for Getting and Staying on a Roll.

Get real: When you’re stuck, it’s easy to hope and pray for someone to rescue you – which all too often leads to playing the victim role and blaming other people for your problems. The first step to getting out of Stuck is to accept responsibility for your circumstances and to acknowledge to yourself that the cavalry is not coming and you are not going to win the lottery. You are going to have to work your way out of the problem, whatever it is.

Get the facts: Anxiety and fear breed in ignorance. When you’re stuck in “Stuck” the first step to freeing yourself is often to ask more and better questions, do some research, and get the facts. In particular, the assumptions we make (about ourselves, about other people, about the world) can contribute to keeping us in “Stuck” – challenging assumptions with knowledge is often the first step to gaining freedom of movement.

Get centered: Being stuck can be seriously anxiety-provoking, and when you’re in a state of high anxiety three bad things can happen at a cognitive level: memories are distorted so past failure loom large and likely to be repeated while past successes seem insignificant and unlikely to happen again; perception is distorted so risks seem much bigger and more threatening than they really are while the resources you have to draw upon seem small and inadequate; and vision is distorted to the point that it’s hard to imagine a positive outcome because a bad outcome feels so inevitable. Getting emotionally centered helps achieve the mental toughness and spiritual equanimity that are essential to pulling yourself out of the metaphorical mud.

Get connected: The cavalry is not going to rescue you, but you probably can't get out of "Stuck" all by yourself. Think about the help you most need – counseling, a bank loan, a new customer, the support of a caring friend – and be willing to ask for it. And don't just ask – keep asking. In their book *The Aladdin Factor*, Jack Canfield and Mark Victor Hansen say that the secret is to ask the right question of the right person at the right time.

Get out of your mental box: You've probably heard that one definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different outcome. When you are stuck in "Stuck" because what you've been doing isn't working, it's time to try something else.

Get moving: Tom Peters says the only characteristic of excellent companies that has stood the test of time in the 40 years since his book *In Search of Excellence* was published is having a bias for action. What specific action can you take to help you free yourself from the state of "Stuck"? Just do it – and do it now.

If you want the advanced course, download my workbook [The Winning the War with Yourself Field Manual](#) – which features an appendix of strategies for getting unstuck called *It's Better to be a 3-Legged Coyote than a 4-Legged Fur Coat*.

PART 2: Articles on Leadership and Organizational Culture

To explore options for bringing Values Coach to your organization for consulting, training, or creating a high-octane inspirational event, contact Director of Client Services Michelle Arduser at 319-624-3889 or (michelle@valuescoachinc.com).

Rewiring Your Organization's Brain

Today's *Spark Plug* is a bit longer than usual. It's also one of the most important I've written in the 10-year history of this publication. The most effective work any leader can do is to program the organization (including the organization called family) for a positive self-image, constructive self-talk, and confident self-belief. Today I'll share my ideas on why that's so vital, and a few strategies for rewiring your organization's brain for the mental and emotional positivity that is a non-negotiable prerequisite for lasting success.

One of the most exciting fields of neurobiology today is that of brain plasticity, which has to do with the ability of the brain to rewire itself in response to various stimuli. The first, and probably still the best, analysis of this phenomenon that's also written in language you and I can understand is *The Mind and the Brain: Neuroplasticity and the Power of Mental Force* by Dr. Jeffrey Schwartz (with Sharon Begley).

Dr. Schwartz describes how the brain can rewire itself through the power of directed thought and self-talk - giving a scientific underpinning to the things people like me have been saying for over 2,000 years - your thoughts shape your reality. Shortly after *The Mind and the Brain* came out, I had a long conversation with Dr. Schwartz, the author. I told him about the exercise we teach people to use for re-scripting negative self-talk by visualizing it as mental graffiti, then imaging that graffiti being erased by "The Janitor in Your Attic" who replaces it with something more positive and affirming (and more likely to be truthful).

I asked Dr. Schwartz if it was possible that consistently confronting negative self-talk with a mental cartoon character of a janitor wiping out mental graffiti could actually have the physiological effect of hardwiring out self-abusive dialog. His reply: "Absolutely!" In the years since that conversation, I've heard from many participants in our values training classes that "The Janitor in Your Attic" is one of the most helpful things they've ever done for themselves (I myself have made huge changes in my own inner dialog with the help of my Janitor - a process that is, of course, always ongoing).

That got me to wondering: do organizations have brain plasticity? If you could change the collective self-image, self-talk, and self-belief of a critical mass of people within an organization, would that be reflected in a more positive, productive, and resilient culture?

I now know that the answer for the organization is the same as it is for the individual: Absolutely! Not only that, rewiring the organizational brain is essential if you want to break through the invisible ceiling on your organization's potential.

The Invisible Ceiling on Your Organization's Potential

The collective self-image, self-talk, and self-belief of the people who work in an organization create an invisible - but no less real for being so - ceiling on the potential of that organization. A sales force whose members have a positive self-image will outsell one whose members look in the mirror and see losers. A hospital where caregivers engage in abusive self-talk will never provide the best possible patient experience. A sports team whose players believe they are destined for greatness will beat a team of superior athletes who are filled with self-doubt game after game.

Organizations have spent hundreds of millions of dollars on process improvement techniques - and in many cases the payoff has been significant. But especially as process improvement hits the point of diminishing returns, the greatest payback will increasingly come from a focus on inner mental and emotional processes - teaching people the skills to confront a poor self-image, re-script negative inner dialog, and build a solid foundation of self-belief.

Promoting a Positive Self-Image



What if everyone in your organization started every day like this cat - by looking in the mirror and seeing the lion they could be if they were really living up to their potential, if they were really living their values. Would your company do a better job of serving customers, would your hospital provide a better and more caring experience for patients? Would people who work with you do a better job of supporting each other?

One of the most important - perhaps *the* most important - determinant of a person's self-image is the collective self-image of what sociologists call his or her "reference group," a fancy name for the

people you spend time with. To a far greater extent than any of us care to admit, we never outgrow the influence of peer pressure. With few exceptions, a person's politics, religion, attitude about work, and even their income will be very similar to those of the people that he or she spends most time with.

People do not cultivate a self-image in isolation. If you are in a toxic emotional workplace surrounded by people whose constant complaining, gossiping, and finger-pointing brand them as self-perceived losers, it's only a matter of time before their victim-thinking begins to run off on you, and you start to see yourself as a member of their loser tribe. On the other hand, if you're in a workplace where people are enthusiastic, optimistic, curious and cheerful, that winning attitude will challenge you to change what you see looking back at you from the mirror each morning before you go to work.

In a growing number of organizations across the country, groups of people are gathering each day to collectively recite that day's promise from [The Self-Empowerment Pledge](#). When everyone in a group makes a promise to be responsible, accountable, determined, and resilient, those daily reminders begin to reshape both individual and group self-image. And the work unit begins to take on the characteristics of a support group, where instead of commiserating (co-miserate = to be miserable together) with toxic emotional negativity, they respond with the tough love reminder that a promise is being broken that needs to be kept.

When your people answer that universal icebreaker question "What do you do?" do they use the most unjust word in the English language - the word just - as in... I'm just a (fill in the blank with job title).

In the hospital, nobody is "just a housekeeper." The environmental services team plays a vital role in the healthcare mission of saving lives. If the CEO doesn't show up for a week, the hospital doesn't miss a beat. If every "just a housekeeper" takes the day off, the place will grind to a screeching halt before the sun goes down. When I was chief operating officer of Baystate Medical Center in Springfield Massachusetts (about a hundred years ago), our Environmental Services director was Thom Greenlaw. Thom sparked a virtual renaissance in that department - and one of the first things he did was give everyone a sharp new uniform and help them eradicate the word "just" from their thinking.

Re-Scripting Negative Self-Talk

Psychologists tell us that the human mind will automatically gravitate toward negative, frightening, and depressing thoughts unless a conscious effort is made to steer thinking in a more positive direction. Compounding this hardwired predisposition, from a very early age we are subjected to

negative messages from parents (the first word a toddler learns is “no”), teachers, schoolyard bullies, and abusive bosses (which is what schoolyard bullies often become when they grow up).

There is a dynamic interplay between the self-talk of the individual and that of the group. When Steve Jobs returned to Apple in 1997, it was teetering on the edge of bankruptcy and irrelevancy. The collective self-talk inside the company was depressed, pessimistic, and resigned to failure (at least that’s what people who worked there at the time tell me). But Jobs rolled into town with his famous “reality distortion zone” and in short order wrenched the collective attitude of the company into a more positive direction. The business school case studies will focus on how he streamlined the product line and galvanized innovation, which were clearly important elements of Apple’s subsequent success, but the essential first step was re-scripting the losers’ mindset that had permeated Apple’s corporate culture.

I mentioned above the conversation I had with Jeff Schwartz about my technique for rewriting negative inner dialog by using *The Janitor in Your Attic*. It’s very simple and powerfully effective, especially if a whole group of people is using it. Just telling someone “it sounds like your janitor has some work to do up there” is a gentle reminder of the collective commitment to refrain from listening to the malignant echo of negative self-talk.

Another great tool for creating positive peer influence is *The Pickle Challenge* (so-called because chronic complainers look like they have a dill pickle stuck in their mouths). We encourage people to make a collective commitment to *The Pickle Pledge*. In many organizations, people have a pickle jar on the counter, and any time someone engages in whining or gossiping, they deposit a quarter. The money can be donated to charity, the Christmas party fund, or other worthwhile cause.

The Pickle Pledge

I will turn every complaint into a blessing or a constructive suggestion, and will no longer waste my time and energy on blaming, complaining, and gossiping, nor will I commiserate those who steal my energy with their toxic emotional negativity.

There is an age-old debate within the psychology profession as to which comes first: changes in attitude or changes in behavior. The answer is yes. Toxic emotional negativity is always an outward projection of an inward poor self-image and negative self-talk. Making a collective commitment to *The Janitor in Your Attic* and *The Pickle Pledge* helps people change inner attitudes by holding them accountable for outward behaviors, and over time hardwires more positive behaviors as a result of changed inner attitudes. For more strategies on creating positive attitudes go to: [The Pickle Challenge: 9 Actions for a More Positive Attitude](#)

Building a Foundation of Self-Belief

“Whether you think you can or think you can’t, you’re right” is a quote attributed to Henry Ford - and he was right! Self-belief is one of the four cornerstones of Authenticity - Core Action Value #1 in the Values Coach course on [The Twelve Core Action Values](#). It is heartbreaking how many people give up on their goals and dreams, and end up living inauthentic lives, because they don’t believe they are capable of achieving them, don’t believe they deserve to be successful.

In his book *Leadership A to Z*, James O’Toole asks why so many managers forget to put the “cheer” into their leading. Cheerleading is, he says, a vitally important element of leadership. He’s right too! It’s one thing to set big hairy audacious goals, but quite another to achieve group belief that those goals are achievable.

That’s where cheerleading comes in. I’m not talking about bringing in a “motivational speaker” (which is really an oxymoron - you don’t “speak” motivation into people!) for a pep rally.

Cheerleading is an everyday responsibility for a manager (and for a parent in the organization called family).

Imagine Your Organization as a Support Group

I’ve spent many evenings over coffee and cookies with members of support groups. It’s amazing how often real magic occurs in these meetings. When people leave, they still have cancer, they are still addicted, the child they’ve lost still isn’t ever coming back to them. But they have renewed hope and courage, new ideas and new friends. The problem didn’t go away, but their ability to cope with the problem was strengthened, and they were uplifted in the process.

I often wonder why the workplace can’t be like that. What would it be like to work in a place where there was such a spirit of fellowship that at the end of the day everyone would go home physically tired and mentally drained because they’ve been working hard all day, but emotionally and spiritually uplifted by the support of a caring boss and coworkers?

Wouldn’t it be great to work in such a place? Wouldn’t it be great to work in an organization where the culture encouraged everyone to have a positive self-image, that promoted constructive self-talk, and that inspired self-belief. Take a look in the mirror: the lion looking back at you is the person who can get that started.

8 Essential Lessons for Cultural Transformation

Last year, 32 hospitals and other organizations joined the Values Collaborative and more than 400 people became Certified Values Coach Trainers (CVC-T) who are now sharing the course on *The*

Twelve Core Action Values with coworkers. As you might expect, some of these organizations have made amazing progress and some are moving a bit more slowly. In today's *Spark Plug* I'll share eight of the most important lessons we've learned from the experience of Collaborative participants for bringing about effective cultural transformation.

Lesson #1: Senior Leadership Example

The most common excuse we hear from people as to why they are not buying into any initiative meant to create a more positive and productive workplace environment - e.g. the Values Collaborative - is that they don't think senior leaders are walking the talk. And while in many cases it is just that - an excuse for not getting on board - there are simple things executives can do to take away that excuse. A few strategic symbolic actions can have a powerful impact.

A letter from the CEO to all employees explaining the project and how it reinforces previous undertakings (we call this "initiative coherence") can preempt criticisms of "program of the month" syndrome. In our most successful rollouts, members of the senior management team (sometimes including the CEO) have gone through the training to become Certified Values Coach Trainers themselves. They participate in a daily group reading of each day's promise from [The Self-Empowerment Pledge](#), and in other ways show they are supportive of and committed to the culture change process.

Lesson #2: Middle Management Engagement

This will make or break any cultural transformation effort. If middle managers understand the need for and are committed to the success of the initiative, a positive outcome is virtually guaranteed. On the other hand, if they roll their eyes and present it to their people as another flavor of the month being foisted upon the organization by out-of-touch executives, you're swimming upstream against a very strong current. When we work with individual organizations, one of our first steps is to make sure that we have middle management on-board, because this is where the rubber meets the road.

A note to middle managers: When you accept the job title "manager" or "supervisor," you give up certain freedoms. You give up the freedom to criticize and second-guess the direction that leadership has set for the organization. Before decisions are made, by all means make your arguments for or against the program - but once the commitment has been made, you have an ethical responsibility to do everything you can to assure the success of that program. If you cannot get behind it, then you have a duty to step down from the management role.

Lesson #3: Embrace Skeptics and Marginalize Cynics

Skeptics are the people who ask you why something will work. They ask challenging questions like

“why are we spending money on this rather than something else” and “where else has this worked and why do we believe it can work here?” These are legitimate questions that deserve thoughtful answers. Once their questions have been answered, skeptics often become your biggest supporters. You should do anything you can to engage the skeptics in the process - even those (especially those!) who challenge you with the most difficult questions.

Cynics, on the other hand, are people who don't want something to work. They don't want things to change because they are happy (or more often, comfortable with being unhappy) with things just the way they are. Their biggest fear is that the workplace environment will become so positive that no one will listen to their complaining and participate in their gossip anymore. You should do everything you can to marginalize the cynics, because they will have a toxic influence on the culture change process.

Lesson #4: Plow Through Resistance

Transforming the culture of an organization is a lot like running a marathon, and there will almost inevitably come a point where you hit a wall of resistance. Paradoxically, this is often just prior to the point where the organization is about to make a quantum leap forward. There are many reasons for this, among which is the fact that the people who don't want to see the change are increasingly afraid that it will happen (because they are seeing it happen). It is at this point that leadership commitment is tested, and where the team must be unwavering in its support. That does not mean midcourse corrections can't be made, only that you don't give in to the forces of inertia and entropy. Adapt, always; quit, never.

Lesson #5: Hit the Right Motivational Buttons

As Zig Ziglar says, everyone listens to the same radio station - WIIFM, or What's In It For Me? When we kick off a Values Collaborative project, we encourage the CEO to tell people that it's not really about customer service or patient satisfaction, productivity or the bottom line, that first and foremost it is a course of values-based life and leadership skills that will help them manage their own time and money more effectively, be better parents, and be happier people. Of course, when people make those sort of changes, it cannot but help to promote a more positive and productive culture within the organization.

One specific action that we've seen have a huge impact is when the organization brings in something like Dave Ramsey's Financial Peace University to help people better manage their own personal finances. Organizations are asking people to do more with less, but those people often have the same challenges on the home front. Help them do more with their own resources first and they will more enthusiastically help you do more with yours.

Lesson #6: Achieve Escape Velocity and Critical Mass

Escape velocity is the speed that a rocket must achieve in order to escape the earth's gravitational pull. Effective culture change requires a sense of urgency: you need enough people who are moving fast enough to escape the negativity, pessimism, cynicism, and inertia of the past. A closely-related concept is the notion of critical mass. Research has shown that once about one-third of a given population becomes committed to a change, that change becomes all-but inevitable. A good real-world example is smoking. Once a third of us become intolerant to being poisoned by other people's cigarette smoke, the movement to outlaw public smoking gained irresistible force. With the Values Collaborative, one of our goals is to create the same sort of momentum to foster cultural intolerance to toxic emotional negativity (which is the spiritual equivalent of toxic cigarette smoke).

Lesson #7: Stories are the Vector for Culture Change

At least until recent years, the most celebrated corporate culture in the business world was The HP Way at Hewlett-Packard, which was largely shaped through the telling of "Bill and Dave" stories. Stories are incredibly influential, and the more personal the better. Every year, Catholic Health Initiatives (a large not-for-profit healthcare system) publishes *Sacred Stories* in which employees from their various hospitals share their care experiences. These stories tell me - not to mention prospective patients and employees - more about what it's like to work for or be cared for at one of the system's hospitals than all the advertising money can buy.

Unfortunately, unless there is a systematic process for capturing and remembering stories, like the one used by Catholic Health Initiatives, they are quickly forgotten. People must be encouraged to share their stories. They will often feel like their story isn't worth sharing because they were "just doing the job." And there must be a system for editing and archiving stories, if they are to be optimally used in the cultural transformation process.

Lesson #8: Make it Fun

Southwest Airlines and Zappos have been widely recognized for their amazingly positive corporate cultures, and one characteristic they both incorporate is fun. You can be very serious about the work of cultural transformation, and still make it fun. In the Values Collaborative, for example, we share The Pickle Challenge, a lighthearted approach to confronting toxic emotional negativity in the workplace. There is a story from the early days of the Cray supercomputer company. During a particularly stressful time when the engineering staff could not resolve a difficult technical challenge, Seymour Cray came into the lab and - instead of encouraging people to work harder - took them all to the river to go tubing. When they returned, the problem was quickly solved.

Conclusion: Culture Really Does Eat Strategy for Lunch

Enron had a brilliant strategy; what brought the company down was a fatally-flawed culture. Each of the legendary companies I wrote about in my book [All Hands on Deck: 8 Essential Lessons for Building a Culture of Ownership](#) has, over the years, pursued seriously flawed strategies (does anyone remember the McDonald's hula burger or HP's butterfly personal computer?); what saved these companies time and again was an incredibly powerful culture.

It's ironic that, while almost every organization has a strategic plan, very few have a culture plan. But a great culture will rarely evolve spontaneously. Creating a blueprint for what we at Values Coach call the "Invisible Architecture" of your organization might be the best investment you can make in your future success.

Leadership Lessons from Florence Nightingale



Florence Nightingale Receiving the Wounded at Scutari, a painting by Jerry Barrett (who was there) completed in 1858

National Nurses Week is a wonderful time to reflect upon the life and work of the woman who more than anyone else can be credited with starting it all. While she is widely remembered as The Lady with the Lamp who more than any other person defined what it means to be a nurse and established nursing as a legitimate profession, Nightingale was also the first professional hospital administrator who did more to define that role than any other. She was also in a very real sense the architect of the modern hospital. With the exception of high-tech medicine that has evolved over the past half century, virtually every department in today's hospitals can trace its roots back to innovations first introduced by Florence Nightingale. Today I'll share seven lessons from the work of Florence Nightingale - lessons that she herself would more likely have described as calls to action.

Lesson 1 - Mission

Florence Nightingale something more than just a job to do - she was on a mission. She did not inquire about pay and benefits before leading her team of young nurses off to the Crimea, and endured working conditions that would be considered intolerable in today's world. Yet she never

experienced “burnout,” and through devotion to her calling she changed the world of healthcare forever. Some of the problems in today’s healthcare system stem from the fact that too many hospitals focus more on their business plans rather than on their missions, and too many healthcare professionals have jobs rather than a calling. Nightingale would encourage a re-commitment to the things that really matter, those things that hopefully attracted our idealistic younger selves into healthcare in the first place.

Lesson 2 - Courage

Nightingale was courageous and she was unstoppable. She did not allow opposition from the British aristocracy or the antiquated views of military leaders to prevent her from doing her work. When she ran into a brick wall, she found a way around or over, even to the extent of going directly to the English public for funding support and to the Queen for political backing. I think the most important three words in my book [The Florence Prescription](#) are “Proceed Until Apprehended” because that was Nightingale’s attitude about getting things done. And in most cases you will find, as she did, that if you proceed fast enough, by the time anyone tries to apprehend you, you’ve already accomplished what you set out to do.

Lesson 3 - Discipline

Less well-known than Nightingale’s contributions to hospital and nursing practice was her pioneering work in the field of medical statistics. Her painstaking efforts to chart infection and death rates among soldiers at Scutari gave weight to her demands for improved sanitary conditions first at military hospitals, and later in civilian institutions. She demonstrated that if you want to be effective, it’s not enough to know that you’re right - you must be able to demonstrate that you’re right with the facts.

Lesson 4 - Empathy

Long before Daniel Goleman coined the phrase “social radar” in his book *Emotional Intelligence*, Nightingale appreciated that awareness and empathy are central to quality patient care (and to effective leadership). In *Notes on Nursing* she wrote: “The most important practical lesson that can be given to nurses is to teach them what to observe - how to observe... If you cannot get the habit of observation one way or another you had better give up being a nurse, for it is not your calling, however kind and anxious you may be.” In today’s fast-paced hospital environment, it’s important that caregivers stop for a moment outside each patient’s doorway for a quick mental reminder to really be in that room with the patient, and not mentally off on the next chore. And in the same way, it’s important for managers to apply the “social radar” principle when interacting with the people for whom they are responsible.

Lesson 5 - Respect

Nightingale cared passionately about the nurses under her wing and the soldiers under her care. As one example, she was adamant that in her hospital triage would be performed on the basis of the patient's medical condition and not his rank in the military, social standing, or religion - a precept that was quite radical in Victorian England. Many of the specific techniques in her ground-breaking work *Notes on Nursing* are now outdated, but her absolute commitment to patient dignity and a spirit of mutual respect in the workplace still rings out with crystal clarity. One thing is certain: she would never have tolerated, much less condoned, the gossip and the complaining that is so prevalent in hospital hallways today.

Lesson 6 - Encouragement

In her quiet and dignified manner, Nightingale was a cheerleader devoted to encouraging qualified young women to enter her profession - even though the work was hard and the pay was low. One suspects that she would have had harsh words indeed for doctors and nurses of our era who are telling the next generation to stay out of healthcare because they themselves are working too hard, not making enough money, and not having enough fun.

Lesson 7 - Aspiration

Nightingale never rested on her laurels, but rather continuously raised the bar. After proving that a more professional approach to nursing care would improve clinical outcomes, she helped found the first visiting nurses association, chartered the first modern school of professional nursing, created a blueprint for the modern hospital, and through her writing helped establish professional standards for hospital management. She remained active virtually until the end of her life at the age of 90. Her commitment to never-ending improvement shines like a lamp across more than a century, inspiring us to work our way through the challenges of today and never lose sight of the better world we need to create for tomorrow.

A concluding thought

Charles Dickens was a contemporary of Florence Nightingale; the opening line he penned for his classic novel *A Tale of Two Cities* certainly applies to our world today - it is the best of times, it is the worst of times. Were she alive in our era, Nightingale no doubt would have focused on the best-of-times side of the ledger, and implored us to remember that we can transcend every obstacle, that we can create a better world, if we confront the challenges with courage and determination and refuse to make excuses or to quit trying.

The Blueprint Behind the Blueprint



When someone (customer, patient, visitor, prospective employee) first walks into your organization, their initial impression will be created by the physical surroundings. They will have a very different impression if you're located in a fancy new office building with a fountain in the lobby than if you're located in a rehabilitated warehouse down at dockside. Knowing this, you've doubtless put a lot of thought into the design and furnishing of your space, probably with professional help to make sure you get the details just right.

But lasting impressions aren't created by things that can be seen by the eye, are they? Rather, they're created by the unseen qualities that spark emotional reactions. This emotionality is vital to the future of every business, including that of your organization. You would not so much as remodel a bathroom without some sort of blueprint, yet it is a rare organization that has a cultural blueprint as well thought out as the plans they have for a new addition. And while every organization has a strategic plan, it is exceedingly rare to see an organization with an equally detailed culture plan.

When Starbucks got into serious financial trouble several years ago, they recalled founder Howard Schultz to the CEO office. Since then, the company has staged one of the more impressive organizational turnarounds ever. In an article he wrote for the *Harvard Business Review*, Schultz made this comment:

"The only assets we have as a company [are] our values, our culture and guiding principles, and the reservoir of trust with our people."

Without using the words "invisible architecture" Schultz described the key elements of the approach we take when working with clients to help them define their "blueprint behind the blueprint." Using the construction of a building as a metaphor, we describe the three main stages of building this Invisible Architecture.

Foundation

The foundation is core values, which define what you stand for (and what you won't stand for) as an organization. The most catastrophic failures in business do not come from failed strategies - they come from a failure to live values (as illustrated by the now infamous case of Enron).

Superstructure

The superstructure is corporate culture, which is the personality and the character of the organization. United Airlines and Southwest Airlines are in the same business, flying the same planes and recruiting the same types of people, but the experience of working for or being a customer of the two airlines could not be more different. That is a reflection of their respective cultures.

Interior Finish

The interior finishing of the Invisible Architecture is emotional attitude in the workplace. I once spoke with the head of human resources for one of the largest steakhouse chains in America. He told me that the most important factor influencing whether people became repeat customers was not the quality of the food or the service, but whether they had fun. And the only way to assure they have fun, he said, is to make sure the employees are having fun. And if you've ever eaten at a Texas Roadhouse restaurant, where employees wear t-shirts saying that they "heart" their jobs, you know they take emotional attitude very seriously (which is one reason why they are one of America's fastest growing restaurant chains).

A Great Tool for Building a Culture of Ownership



This diagram is one of the tools we use to help our consulting clients think about what they need in order to promote a stronger culture of ownership - which in today's world is really the only

sustainable source of competitive advantage when it comes to recruiting and retaining great people and earning “raving fans” customer loyalty (for my argument on why this is so, read the *H&HN Daily* articles at the link below).

While I’m sure we would love to work with you and your organization to help you design a blueprint for what we call the Invisible Architecture™ of your organization, this is a tool that you can use on your own. Simply download this diagram and make copies for everyone who is engaged in the exercise. Start with the inner ring and identify the salient reasons why you need to foster a stronger culture of ownership by drawing a circle around it (if your primary purposes are not included here, simply write them in).

Now in the second ring, circle a characteristic that must exist in order for you to achieve that quality of a culture of ownership. Then, in the outer ring circle one or more specific actions that can help you cultivate that characteristic, and discuss how you would go about implementing that action in your organization. Now repeat the process for any of the other reasons you have for wanting to promote a culture of ownership from the inner ring. In the following sections, I will illustrate with an example.

Here are links to the two articles referenced above:

[Why Culture Trumps Strategy](#)

[Building a Culture of Ownership](#)

Defining the “Why” You Need a Culture of Ownership (Loyalty)



Let’s say that you’ve been reading the latest book by Fred Reichheld on the importance of employee, customer, and stakeholder loyalty and decide that is the quality you want to foster in your organization. I’ve highlighted it in yellow on my copy - you can just circle it on your schematic.

Assuming that you’re working with a small group, lead a discussion of why loyalty is important, including the costs and benefits. If you are in a fast food restaurant with characteristically high turnover that conversation will be quite different than if you’re managing the intensive care services

of a hospital where the loss of a single experienced ICU nurse can result in a five-figure cost for recruiting and training a replacement. For the fast food restaurant achieving annual turnover of 25% might be nothing short of miraculous - for the intensive care services department it could well be disastrous. Now consider the factors that are contributing to turnover - both of employees and of customers. Employee engagement and customer satisfaction surveys, results of focus groups, and other data can help you get a handle on what your challenges are, as can comparing your organization with industry benchmarks.

Identifying Characteristics You Need to Promote to Foster that Culture (Pride)



Having identified loyalty as one of the key qualities you want to enhance in your culture of ownership, look at the second ring for the characteristics you need to promote in order to build that quality. An essential ingredient is pride which, along with connection and trust, is one of the three essential variables identified by the Great Place to Work Institute to make such a list.

An essential ingredient is pride which, along with connection and trust, is one of the three essential variables identified by the Great Place to Work Institute to make such a list. Circle that word and repeat the discussion you had about loyalty: how would the proverbial Man from Mars rate your organization on the pride scale? At Values Coach, we think of pride along these four dimensions:

- Pride in your work
- Pride in your profession
- Pride in your organization
- Pride in yourself

Being as objective as possible consider the collective pride in your organization along these four dimensions (keeping in mind that substantial research shows that the higher you are on the organization chart, the more likely you are to overestimate how wonderful things are). Next go to work on strategies that will actually help you to promote pride in your organization...

Taking Action to Promote a Culture of Ownership (Values Integration)



This is, of course, where the rubber hits the road. Action is the difference between wishful thinking and positive thinking, between good intentions and effective interventions. So in the outer ring, circle one or more actions that you can take to improve your performance on the characteristic you circled in the second ring. In my example, I've highlighted helping your people make the connection between their personal values and the values of the organization. Kouzes and Posner, coauthors of *The Leadership Challenge*, have shown that the more clear people are about their personal values, the more likely they are to buy into the values of the organization. That's one reason why our course on *The Twelve Core Action Values* is the core curriculum for the [Values Collaborative](#).

When it comes to action steps, you might well decide that you should take a multifaceted approach. In the case of enhancing loyalty, each and every one of the blocks in the outer ring can apply - as well as others you might think of that are not included in this schematic. But since you can't do everything all at once, the key is to prioritize the most important strategy (e.g. values integration or creating rituals or defining attitudinal expectations) and then specifying the particular steps you will take.

The Values - Behaviors - Outcomes Continuum

"Identifying the core values that define your organization is one of the most important functions of leadership. The success or failure of this process can literally make or break an organization."

- Ken Blanchard: *The Heart of a Leader*

VALUES



BEHAVIORS



OUTCOMES

Values can be a powerful strategic asset and source of competitive advantage. An organization's values should be key to defining priorities and determining how decisions are made; determining the type of people who are recruited and how they are deployed and retained; and to the evolution of organizational culture. An ironclad commitment to the values stated in the J&J Credo sustained

Johnson & Johnson during the Tylenol poisoning crisis; mere lip service to values was the beginning of the end for Enron.

Read your organization's statement of values. Chances are that it, like most values statements, is in fact a blend of values, behaviors, and outcomes. There's nothing wrong with this, but understanding how these three dimensions interact can help you do a better job of operationalizing the values that drive (or should drive) your organization. Let's take a look at each.

Values: Core values are universal and eternal, and they are always personal. When the values statement includes "integrity," what the organization is really saying is that it expects people to be honest and reliable, to act with integrity. Core values create expectations that transcend political or religious beliefs and personal or business agendas.

Behaviors: "Professionalism" is included in many organizational values statements, but this is not a value, it is a behavior. Behavioral expectations can be built into job descriptions, performance appraisals, reward systems, and the fabric of corporate culture.

Outcomes: These are, of course, how we ultimately evaluate the performance of organizations and the people who work there. Excellent customer service, outstanding patient care quality, and superior financial performance are not values, they are outcomes that derive from professional behaviors. Understanding this continuum - from values to behaviors to outcomes - can help you be a more effective leader, and be more successful at achieving your desired outcomes. For example, one reason that so many "customer service" programs fail to achieve a sustained impact is that they seek a desired outcome by focusing at the level of employee behaviors, without tapping into the power of underlying core values.

But as Zig Ziglar says, everyone listens to the same radio station: WIIFM, What's In It for Me? If you really want to improve customer service, show people how being more enthusiastic can help them be better parents. If you really want to improve productivity and financial performance, show people how being more focused can help them do a better job of managing their personal finances; they'll do more to help your organization "do more with less" if you first help them do the same thing on the home front. As workers change their attitudes and behaviors because it's in their own personal interest to do so, they will inevitably contribute to the accomplishment of these important organizational outcomes.

Making Values Beautiful



Several years ago I helped Judy Rich, President and CEO of Tucson Medical Center, and her team revise the TMC statement of values. At the time, while there was clearly a deeply-held intuitive sense of values in the organization, almost no one could say what the stated core values were, much less define the expectations they created. Through a process that engaged hundreds of employees and other stakeholders in the dialog, it became clear that TMC had four foundational values. Defining these core values then made it easier to describe the expectations they established.

Judy wanted something that would both honor the rich traditions of TMC and also look ahead to a positive vision for the future. The 12 statements that give substance to the values were crafted for that purpose. To me, the real magic occurred with the graphic design. It is visually compelling, and captures the feel of the Southwestern community (community being one of the four core values). It incorporates the “Proud to be TMC” slogan, and the rainbow motif visually reflects TMC’s commitment to diversity and individuality.

Take-away lesson

A statement of values need not be - should not be - a boring document tacked up on the wall. As the TMC example shows, it can be deeply philosophical (honoring traditions and nurturing dreams) and graphically beautiful.

The statement of values should create a source of sustainable competitive advantage for your organization. It should be featured prominently on your website (for a great example of this, check out [how Zappos presents its family core values](#)). It should be an integral element of your recruiting and retention efforts (Fairfield Medical Center in Lancaster, Ohio has integrated the eight essential characteristics of a culture of ownership described in [The Florence Prescription](#) into its employment branding initiatives). You should consider ways that you can share it with customers (e.g. include your values in your packaging) and patients (e.g. include it in the patient admissions packet). If the people in your organization really are practicing those values, it will create a competitive advantage: you should advertise the fact.

The Passion-Performance Matrix

		PERFORMANCE	
		LOW	HIGH
PASSION	HIGH	Attending a sporting event	Doing your best on work you love to do
	LOW	Watching sitcoms on TV	Doing your taxes

The Passion-Performance Matrix is a tool we use in courses on *The Twelve Core Action Values* to help people identify their authentic goals and personal identity. You are most likely to be your authentic self where you are engaged in work that you are passionate about, and that you do well and are committed to doing even better. You are least likely to be authentic when you are not engaged and not performing. In fact, the amount of time that you spend in each quadrant each day is probably about as good a predictor of your success and happiness as you will find.

Not only that, understanding this matrix is essential to business success. Organizations dominated by people in Quadrant 4 – High Passion, High Performance – will always outcompete those where employees are less engaged. This is the secret of superstar companies like Southwest Airlines, Zappos, Disney, and the Pike Street Market. Let’s look more closely at each quadrant.

Quadrant 1 – High Passion, Low Performance: This is the cheerleader quadrant. Last night, millions of people around the world watched the Super Bowl. There were a lot of people who were very passionate about the game – wearing cheesehead hats and waving terrible towels and screaming themselves to hoarseness – but with the exception of a handful of people actually out on the field, nothing was expected of them, they were not accountable for any level of performance, and their passionate cheering had no impact whatsoever on the final score of the game.

Quadrant 1 activities play an important role. Bowling leagues, company picnics, dinner and movie dates, kids’ soccer games – bring joy and zest to life. But as everyone for whom college was the highpoint of life knows, they don’t make for a very profitable or rewarding experience of life.

Quadrant 2 – Low Passion, Low Performance: This is the drudge quadrant. Most television watching falls into this quadrant. This is the quadrant where Dilbert and the denizens of his comic strip live out their lives – doing a lousy job at work they hate. Although no one on their deathbed ever says “I wish I’d watched more television,” according to AC Nielsen, that is precisely where many Americans spend the biggest chunk of their “leisure” time – plugged into the boob tube, the plug-in drug. We all need some downtime, and TV can be relaxing and (so I’m told, though I’ve never

personally found this to be the case) rejuvenating. But every hour spent lounging around in this quadrant should be with the acute recognition of what economists call the “opportunity cost” – that time is lost and gone forever and can never be invested in one of the other three, more profitable, quadrants.

Quadrant 3 – Low Passion, High Performance: This is the Rutledge Quadrant, named for the character Sarah Rutledge in my book [The Florence Prescription](#). Sarah was a highly competent nurse who was also a negative, bitter, cynical and sarcastic pickle-sucker. We all know people like Sarah Rutledge, and truth be told have all fallen into this quadrant ourselves. It is, unfortunately, a difficult box from which to escape. According to Gallup, HR Solutions, Press Ganey, and every other company that studies employee engagement, this is unfortunately the quadrant where most people spend most of their working lives. This is really a tragic situation because, as Dr. Edward Hallowell wrote in a recent *Harvard Business Review* article, disengagement is a leading cause of underachievement and depression. In other words, most people would get a lot more done and be a lot happier if they were to just be more passionate about their work.

This is really ancient wisdom. In the book of Ecclesiastes, we learn about a man who tried everything and found fulfillment in nothing. Neither wine, women and song nor scholarly pursuits nor public service nor spiritual introspection brought the man joy or peace. And what, in the end, did he find to be the secret of a meaningful life? Whatever your hand finds to do, he said, do it with all your might. Or as Khalil Gibran wrote in his beautiful book *The Prophet*, work is love made visible, and if you can't do your work with love you might as well just quit and go beg for alms at the city gate.

Quadrant 4 – High Passion, High Performance: This is the sweet spot. People who work to be in this quadrant most often enjoy the experience of optimal achievement, self-actualization, and flow (a word coined by psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi for the state of total absorption in one's work, which he says is the highest form of human motivation and satisfaction).

This is the key: There are three critical choices to be made in reaching Quadrant 4. First is the choice of the work you do. Choosing work that you could never possibly be good at or that you could never bring yourself to enjoy sets the stage for a lifetime of frustration and unhappiness. Second is the choice between continuous improvement and stagnation. Even if you choose work you love, you'll slip back into one of the other quadrants if you aren't consistently working to be better at that work. This kaizen approach to your own work is the source of the confidence and pride that mark every top performer in every field, from parenting and personal money management to sales and leadership.

The third and most important choice is the attitude with which you do your work. In our work with hospitals, I've met housekeepers and food service aides who have clearly chosen to work with pride and passion in Quadrant 4. And I've met senior managers who, despite their generous paychecks, come across as martyrs and victims.

Accountability and Ownership

If you've read *The Florence Prescription*, you know that in one chapter consultant Carol Jean Hawtrey talks about the interaction of left-brain and right-brain qualities in an organization. Left brain is accountability – holding a nurse accountable for giving patients the correct medications, holding a manager accountable for meeting a budget. You can hold people accountable for the performance dimension of the Passion-Performance Matrix. But you cannot hold people accountable for passion, pride, caring, loyalty, trust, compassion, and the other right-brain qualities that characterize all great organizations. These must come from within. The motivation of accountability is extrinsically imposed; the motivation of ownership is intrinsically driven.

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Best Wishes to you for making 2012 your Best Year Yet!

Joe Tye