

 Work & Career Exercise 20 min Client No

Your Core Values at Work

Values are defined as “fundamental attitudes guiding our mental processes and behaviors [that] produce the belief that life is meaningful and serve as a measure of how meaningful one’s actions are, that is, consistent with that person’s value system” [1]. Values also have an affective dimension; they are the primary basis of goal-directed behavior and the stimulus for the development of behavior related to goal attainment [2].

Values have been portrayed as more fundamental traits than interests, and it has been suggested that career counseling should focus primarily on concerns for values without precluding the use of other constructs [2, 3]. Values work is also predicated on the idea that career counseling should, in most cases, center on life-role counseling because of the interaction between life roles and the unlikely outcome that occupation can satisfy all of an individual’s values [2, 3]. Because values focus partially on desired end states, they can be used to explain why people who choose some occupations are unhappy with their choices even when they perform the tasks associated with those jobs in an exemplary fashion [2].

Values clarification is a well-known therapeutic exercise that helps people understand what is important to them in their lives and how well they are currently living up to these important standards [4]. When applied to the work/career domain, values clarification can help people understand where they can derive meaning from at work and how they could live more in line with their values—and consequently feel happier and more satisfied—at work [5, 6].



Author

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Goal

This tool aims to help people clarify their core work values by examining four areas: general, working environment, work relationships, and work activities.



Advice

- Encourage clients to revisit this exercise regularly, as their work values may change over time and in different work situations
- It is important to emphasize to your clients that the purpose of the exercise is to clarify their values, not the values of their current workplace. Clients may find it difficult to separate these two things initially, especially if they have been at their current workplace for a long time.
- This tool would benefit clients who are considering a career change or are unemployed and looking for a job and those who are unhappy at work and have no idea why. It would also be useful for clients interested in knowing how well their values match those of their organization.



References

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Your Core Values at Work

Since we spend (on average) half of our waking hours working, it makes sense that we should know and understand what is most important to us at work (i.e., what our core work values are). People who live in line with their values are happier and more fulfilled.

This exercise involves sorting through an extensive list of values to decide what is most important to *you* at work. When completing the exercise, try to be as true to yourself as possible. Your and your workplace's values may differ, which is alright.

Step 1: Sort value "importance."

Our values at work can be grouped into four categories:

1. Work in general
2. Work environment
3. Work relationships
4. Work activities

Appendix displays a list of values for each category.

Read each value and decide whether it is not important to you, important to you, or very important to you. Keep in mind that we are focusing on what you consider important in the context of work. Place a checkmark in the corresponding box.

Step 2: Choose top values

Review the values that you have marked as "very important." From these values, choose two values per category that are most important to you at this time in your working life. These are your core work values. List your core values per category in the "Core values" column in Table 1 below:



Table 1. Overview of core values

Category	Core values	Value congruence (1-10)
Work in general		
Working environment		
Working relationships		
Work activities		

Step 3: Rate value congruence

Rate how well you live in line with your core values at work on a scale of 1 to 10 (1 = not at all; 10 = very well). Write down these scores in the “value congruence” column in Table 1.

For example, if one of your core values at work is “creativity,” and you feel that you are not currently able to express your creativity at work, you may enter a value congruence score of “5”.



Step 4: Reflection

Consider the following questions.

1. Which of your top values are you currently attending to enough at work (scored 7 or more)?

2. Which values might need more attention or effort (scored 6 or less)?

3. What action(s) could you take to bring you closer to these values?

Appendix: Work Values Sorting

Below are four groups of work values: general work values, work environment values, work relationships, and work activity values. Read each value and decide whether it is very important to you, important to you, or not very important to you in your working life. Place a checkmark in the corresponding box.

Table 1. List of general work values

Value	Not very important	Important	Very important
Achievement: Able to meet my goals.			
Work/life balance: Time for family, work, and play.			
Independence: Autonomy and control across my position.			
Passion: Work that evokes a strong feeling of enthusiasm or excitement.			
Integrity: Able to stand up for what I believe in.			
Honesty: Telling the truth and knowing that others are telling the truth.			
Positive influence: Able to have a positive impact on others.			
Respect: Care and trust of self and others.			
Status: Having a high professional position.			
Making a difference: Work that has a positive impact on others/society.			
Persistence: Continuing to work on tasks despite challenges and until completion.			
Ambition: Strong desire and determination to achieve success.			
Optimism: Hopefulness and confidence about the future or the success of something.			



Value	Not very important	Important	Very important
Good judgment: Careful consideration of the consequences of my decisions.			
Innovation: Creating a new method, idea, product, etc.			
Dedication: The quality of being dedicated or committed to a task or purpose.			
Mastery: High degree of knowledge or skill in a particular subject or activity.			
Curiosity: A strong desire to know or learn something.			
Resilience: Bouncing back in the face of challenge or adversity.			
Work ethic: Dedication and commitment to fulfilling my tasks and responsibilities.			

Table 2. List of values relating to the working environment

Value	Not very important	Important	Very important
Pace: Work that moves or develops quickly.			
Flexibility: Able to work according to my changing schedule.			
Fair Income: Pay equates to output.			
Learning: Work that challenges me and leads to growth.			
Location: Work that is in a convenient place and an easy commute.			
Predictable: Work where you know what is going to happen day after day.			



Value	Not very important	Important	Very important
Flow: Work where there are few disruptions throughout the day.			
Relaxed: Work where there are few pressures to get things done.			
Structured: Work that is organized and has a specific set time.			
Freedom: Work where I set my schedule and plan how and when I work.			
Safety: Protection of the safety, health and welfare of employees.			
Equality: Employees are treated fairly, with equal rights and opportunities.			
Professionalism: Expectation of appropriate conduct, behavior, and attitude.			
Discipline: Adherence to workplace systems, ethics, rules, and procedures.			
Ethics: Appreciation of what is morally right and wrong.			
Pragmatism: Dealing with things sensibly and realistically.			
Sustainability: Consideration for the value and finite nature of resources, including the environment.			
Adaptability: Openness to change and improvements that allow for increased efficiency.			
Diversity: Work where there are people with different cultural backgrounds.			
Community: Recognition that one is part of a greater whole.			

**Table 3. List of values relating to working relationships**

Value	Not very important	Important	Very important
Respect: High regard for the feelings, wishes and rights of workers.			
Consistency: Leadership is stable and reliable.			
Helpfulness: Providing useful assistance or friendliness.			
Friendships: Work where you socialize with your coworkers.			
Leadership: Work where good leaders are managing the organization.			
Management: Work where there is strong management.			
Open Communication: Work where information is not held back from employees.			
Recognition: Acknowledgment of your work and contribution.			
Support: Work where you help and support each other.			
Teamwork: Work where working together is encouraged.			
Trust: Work where you can count on each other.			
Dedication: The quality of being committed to a task or purpose.			
Compassion: Consideration and concern for the welfare of others.			
Empathy: The ability to understand and share the feelings of another person.			

Value	Not very important	Important	Very important
Fairness: Treating others with fairness and without favoritism or discrimination.			
Collaboration: The act of working together to produce something.			
Authenticity: The quality of being genuine.			
Emotional intelligence: Able to perceive, understand, express, and manage emotions well.			
Positive attitude: Maintaining positivity and enthusiasm even when faced with challenges.			
Camaraderie: Goodwill and lighthearted rapport between or among colleagues.			

Table 4. List of values relating to work activities

Value	Not very Important	Important	Very important
Variety: Work where many different tasks are done during the day.			
Quality: Work produced is of a high standard.			
Analytical: Work that requires interpretation of data and information.			
Challenging: Work that is mentally or physically challenging.			
Creative: Work that uses imagination and creative talents to produce results.			
Helping: Work that serves to help people.			
Innovation: Working on new and novel products or projects.			



Value	Not very Important	Important	Very important
Physical: Work that has a lot of physical activity.			
Public service: Work that interacts with and benefits the public.			
Research: Work that searches for new knowledge.			
Diligence: Constant and earnest effort to complete tasks.			
Attention to detail: Sensitivity to the minor details of a task or interaction.			
Contribution: Work that is meaningful and makes a difference.			
Motivation: Having initiative and being self-directed.			
Efficiency: Making the best possible use of available resources.			
Resourcefulness: The ability to act effectively or imaginatively, especially in difficult situations.			
Excellence: Exceeding expectations, maximizing potential, and demonstrating considerable skill.			
Initiative: Ability to begin or follow through with a plan or task.			
Perseverance: Steady persistence in adhering to a course of action, a task, or a goal.			
Wisdom: The ability to make good judgments based on what you have learned from your experience.			