

ALIGNING BEHAVIORS WITH CORE VALUES

Once you've defined your organization's core values, you can reinforce them by incorporating them into your performance appraisals and organizational assessments. In order to do that, you need to identify the specific behaviors associated with each core value. For example, "being flexible and adapting to changes in customers' needs" might be a core behavior associated with customer service.

This tool shows how to articulate a set of behaviors that reinforce the core values. Start by listing your core values and the related performance measures. Next brainstorm the associated behaviors. Talk about which behaviors are most important in supporting the core values. Each core value should have 10-15 related behaviors (see example below).

Once you've got a list, share it with other people in the organization and solicit their feedback. After several iterations, you should have a solid list. Make sure senior management has had a chance to review and refine the list before proceeding further.

Armed with your list of core behaviors, you can incorporate them into your performance appraisals and organizational assessments. An example of such an assessment is included below. Every six months this architectural firm surveys all its employees. After the results are compiled, they ask employees to work in teams and brainstorm ways to improve. The result is an organization whose behaviors are well aligned around its core values.

Core Value: Design and Execution	Score	
	Disagree	Agree
1. We communicate our client's expectations for every project.		
2. We adhere to our project management process.		
3. Every project is reviewed by a senior manager for "executability" and "creative response."		
4. We communicate what meets standards of "creative quality" and what does not for all projects.		
5. We measure client satisfaction for all projects.		
6. We discuss outside projects that meet the firm's design standards.		
7. We identify what people need to learn to meet our standards – and provide resources to mentor them.		
8. We challenge each other's ideas and encourage creative dissent.		
9. We provide people time to explore, research, reflect, and talk about creative options.		
10. We take time to go outside and explore examples of other designs and executions.		

Core Value: Design and Execution	Score	
	Disagree	Agree
11. We communicate with our clients regularly.		
12. We make sure our clients receive no surprises.		
13. We accomplish projects on deadline.		
14. We accomplish projects within budget.		
15. We are flexible and adapt to changes in our clients' needs and desires.		
16. We communicate internally when a client's needs are not being met (e.g. deadlines, project completion, and budget).		
17. We provide adequate time to get projects done.		
18. We respond to all client calls and emails within 24 hours.		
19. We regularly brainstorm innovative ways to serve our clients.		
20. We keep each other informed about our clients' activities.		
21. We keep each other informed about new clients.		

Core Value: Quality Work Environment	Score	
	Disagree	Agree
22. We provide standards for each individual's job performance.		
23. We provide regular performance reviews once a year (twice if requested).		
24. We ensure that everyone has individual development plans.		
25. We provide attractive salaries, benefits and incentives.		
26. We publicly acknowledge exceptional team and individual performance.		
27. We encourage people to suggest ways to improve how the firm does things.		
28. We teach people how to clarify decision-making roles and responsibilities.		
29. We are data-driven in our decision making.		
30. We listen carefully to other points of view – and affirm their importance.		
31. We take the time to detail our concerns – and our reasoning.		
32. We teach people how to manage projects effectively.		
33. We address our conflicts with one another directly.		
34. We quickly communicate information related to the firm's performance.		
35. We provide opportunities for professional growth.		
36. We base our hiring and promotions decisions on adherence to these behaviors.		

Core Value: Ethical Conduct	Score	
	Disagree	Agree
37. We are fair to one another.		
38. We respect one another.		
39. We are honest with each other.		
24. We are honest with our clients.		
41. We assume responsibility for our mistakes.		
42. We assume good intentions – until proven otherwise.		
43. We communicate bad news right away to each other.		
44. We exercise discretion in accepting client work based on consistency with our purpose, values and vision.		
45. We give back to the communities we serve.		

Core Value: Financial Sustainability	Score	
	Disagree	Agree
46. We are effective in generating new business.		
47. We are effective in retaining existing clients.		
48. We are effective in controlling costs.		
49. We take reasonable risks, consistent with our purpose, values and vision.		
50. We provide the resources to sustain and advance the firm.		
51. We share the financial information needed to make sound business decisions.		
52. We provide the training needed for people to understand our financial reports.		

Note: Make sure people's responses are treated with confidentiality when completing this kind of survey. Don't worry about who said what. Your focus should be on discovering the overall strengths and weaknesses of the firm.

You can use a similar approach to create a performance appraisal. Simply change the word "we" to "I" – and you have an appraisal that's well-integrated with your core values. In the same way, you can generate a list of questions to use in interviewing job candidates. After verifying their technical expertise, ask them to recount examples of how they demonstrated these behaviors in the past. You'll quickly get an idea of how well they'll fit into your culture.