

V I T A L
integrities

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Welcome to the Age of Corporate Governance

A national workplace study conducted in 2003 revealed that just 30 percent of U.S. workers are loyal to their employers—that is, they feel a personal connection, are apt to recommend their organizations to others, and are resistant to offers from outside employers.¹ In 2004, a human resources consulting firm found that only half of all U.S. workers, just 51 percent, trust their organization's senior leaders.² Diminishing trust and loyalty levels may in part reflect “fallout” from the many highly publicized corporate scandals of recent years, and how these disgraces have affected employees at all institutions.

We create stereotypes when we base opinions about an entire group on the behavior of a few members, and we seem to be doing that now with business leaders. Newspapers report daily on investigations into corruption involving companies like Enron, Arthur Anderson, Global Crossing, WorldCom, and Tyco. Business leaders face accusations of overstating earnings, hiding massive debt, diverting millions of dollars in company funds for their personal use, using questionable accounting practices, and obstructing justice. Is it any wonder many employees develop biases

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that lead them to associate their leaders with dishonesty and untrustworthiness?

Trust and employee loyalty are interdependent. When employees mistrust their leaders, or are ashamed of their organization's behavior, they are more likely to leave.³ Employees feeling trapped—those who doubt they can find a job that pays the same, feel reliant on a specific benefit, or consider their skills inadequate—might stay, but their fading commitment is damaging to productivity. And crumbling confidence is harmful to the bottom line, whether you measure your bottom line in dollars earned or clients served.

Increasing mistrust and vanishing loyalty come at a challenging time for hiring and retaining employees. According to the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics, employment between the years 2002 and 2012 will increase by 21 million jobs. But the Bureau projects that the civilian labor force will grow by only 17 million people in the same period. That's a shortfall of 4 million workers for the available jobs projected for 2012.⁴

Service industries will account for most of the decade's newly created jobs. Education and health services, as well as professional and business services will grow twice as fast as the overall economy.⁵ And the workforce is aging. The number of workers age fifty-five or older will grow by half, a growth rate four times that of the general workforce, so that one out of five workers will be in that age group by 2012.⁶

An ongoing shift in what workers search for in their employers further muddles the hiring and retention process. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, baby boomers embraced the ideology of the day. Once they realized that principles are good but bills are persistent, the boomers went to work. And they worked hard, putting in long hours, chasing salaries that would allow them to

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improve on their parents' lot. However, now scores of boomers are trying to make up for "selling out" to corporate America. Although they enjoyed the financial rewards of their efforts, countless members of this generation also experienced the downside: they either lost jobs to layoffs, or know someone who did. Trying to salvage some self respect, boomers are now gravitating toward jobs that provide meaning.

Generation X, meanwhile, was the first generation of latchkey kids. Whereas the Industrial Revolution drew fathers outside the home to work, Gen Xers probably grew up in households in which both parents held jobs. Many learned to deal with life issues early, thanks to divorced parents or those living "permissive" lifestyles. Highly spiritual, Gen Xers are determined to resist their parents' example, by placing less emphasis on their own pleasure and more emphasis on doing good things for others. Generation X makes up the largest percentage of volunteers in the country, and this generation of workers is looking for employers who support those efforts.

Generation Y came next, the Internet Generation. Information rich, Netters also reaped the material benefits produced by their baby boomer parents' hard work and dual incomes. Many Netters enter the workforce with an air of entitlement and most exhibit a sense of immediacy. Don't bother explaining your organization's 401(k) plan; Gen Y job candidates want the money up front. But can we blame them? Having watched their parents' employers repay years of loyalty by their eliminating jobs, Gen Yers fully understand the employment-at-will concept. That's why workers from Generation Y scrutinize the values statements of potential employers, ignore long-term promises, and look for values that seem realistic.

When selecting employers, job candidates from all generations are focusing less on the financial rewards and more on the

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values rewards. Today, people seek out employers whose values are consistent with their own, and look for ways to satisfy their interests and needs by aligning with an organization's mission.

In the war for talent, everyone is fighting over your best employees.

Fact is, in the face of waning loyalty and mounting suspicion, there is growing competition for employees. Furthermore, in the war for talent, your best employees are every other employer's brightest prospects. For many organizations, the new reality means reassessing their leadership approaches, flattening their hierarchies, and emphasizing their core values. And they must do all these things quickly, before their organizations become extinct.

Values and Their Organizational Impact

To attract customers and workers, employers must be able to make their organizations stand out from the crowd. It takes more than just goods or services to create the strategic edge needed to market your wares or recruit top talent. Too many competitors make the products you manufacture, provide the services you offer, or meet the social needs you fill, as well. These days, customers "buy" the *people* making the merchandise or performing the services. Employees are more than just cogs in a machine; they are your organization's identity and its character, too. Increasingly, both customers and job candidates migrate toward the whole organization—its products, its people, its culture, and its values.

To convey their message to customers and employees alike, organizations create mission statements. Mission statements identify the organization's purpose, describe its philosophy, and establish a distinctive marketing position. Specifying core values in the mission statement helps inspire a culture and drive the employee

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behavior necessary to achieve the organization's goals, whether that constitutes making money, or serving a specific sector of society.

Mission statements typically include these often mentioned values:

- showing people dignity, respect, and courtesy
- providing the highest quality products, work, or customer service—*excellence in everything we do*
- maintaining morals, ethics, and trust—*the highest standards of conduct*
- community service
- employee appreciation and development—*people are our greatest asset*
- open communication
- accountability
- teamwork
- appreciating diversity, going beyond equal rights and equal opportunities
- religious faith
- protecting the environment—promoting conservation
- profit—*shareholder value*

How did mission statements originate? In the beginning, the board of directors went on a three-day retreat up to the mountains or into the woods. While there, those leaders created the organization's mission statement. Someone undoubtedly said, "Let's say something about people being our greatest asset." Another recommended, "Some of our employees need more training—let's add something about helping them develop." And so on. When they returned, the Board gave their mission statement

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to the marketing department to tweak the language, arrange the printing, and produce the poster that hangs in the lobby today.

A typical mission statement might describe an organization's values with language similar to the following:

We firmly believe that our organization's greatest asset is its people. We encourage and provide for professional development activities that help achieve our goals. We take personal responsibility, are individually accountable, and follow core values that direct our daily actions.

Suppose you are a job candidate with a strong interest in getting ahead. You want an employer who will exploit your current abilities and make an investment in teaching you new skills. Also, you're passionate about accountability. After all, you've labored in companies that tolerated freeloaders and you plan to avoid doing that again. You stumble on a prospective employer with the mission statement above. This company declares its staff as its greatest asset. It supports professional development—heck, it encourages it! And it's accountable: “We take personal responsibility.” At last, you've found an organization with values that match your own. You have discovered an organization to join.

Picture yourself there, working your way up the ladder. The company has sent you to some classes. Perhaps management assigned you a mentor. You're taking responsibility for your work and earning just compensation for your efforts. Sure, you observe some people doing just enough to get by; however, management deals with them fairly, and reserves raises and promotions for hard-working people like you. Now you can fix your attention on doing great work and helping your employer's business flourish. Everything is going according to plan.

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Fast forward. After a few years at the company, as invariably happens, you begin reporting to a different manager. And it turns out your new supervisor is a cost containment fanatic. “No more squandering money on something as intangible as training,” your boss announces. Your new leader also feels awkward discussing performance shortcomings with employees. Some coworkers are slacking, but this boss shrinks from the slightest confrontation. Your manager’s behavior runs counter to the values that attracted you to the company in the first place. Suddenly, you are out of alignment with your organization.

The organization’s values have probably remained unchanged, but your leader’s actions cause you to wonder. You question if this is the place for you, after all. When asked why you are leaving, you say, “Because this place has changed.” But, in reality, you are leaving your manager.

After you go, senior management will inevitably blame the framed mission statement. Seems it stopped working. Fearing workers are immune to the lobby poster, one high-ranking leader suggests printing a copy of the mission statement for each worker’s office. However, that idea proves only slightly effective since it only reaches employees with offices. Next, they try a pocket-sized laminated card version so employees can carry the mission statement at all times. Management can now sit back and watch for signs that employees are living by these pocket-sized values.

But you already knew the organization’s values—that’s why you came to work here. You wanted to contribute to the mission, not read about it on a plaque. Your boss was the one who deviated from the values that attracted you. And that deviation forced you out of alignment.

We create mission statements because we want employees to see our big picture. Question is do we see theirs?

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What Do Employees Value?

In the war for talent, companies compete for employer-of-choice designation. However, organizations are slow to recognize the role of values in leadership. Many depend instead on costly fringe benefit packages to attract workers.

There was a time when the most desirable employers were those who offered such perks as incentive pay, paid holidays and vacations, long-term retirement savings plans, employee educational assistance, medical and hospitalization insurance with dental and vision options, and short- and long-term sick leave. Once reserved for employees in worldwide corporations or associated with powerful unions, we now consider these benefits basic.

Not only are these benefits expected, they are usually negotiable, a benefit in and of itself. Candidates commonly haggle for a higher salary, an extra week of vacation, or a shorter waiting period for enrolling in the company 401(k).

Reluctantly, perhaps, some companies add lifestyle enhancing benefits like fitness centers, in-house childcare centers, and take-home catering. Those corporations are attempting to create one-stop campuses, where employees spend the entire workday and still do all their personal errands, too. At such corporate facilities, you park your car in the company garage, deposit your child with the in-house daycare center, take your clothes to the on-site dry-cleaner, leave some shoes at the on-site shoe repair, and drop off a roll of film to be processed by the on-site photo shop. On break, you visit the company library to skim your favorite magazines, you grab a low-fat, low-cholesterol, or low-carbohydrate lunch in the company cafeteria, and while there, you place an order for your family's dinner. After work, you do some Pilates in the fitness center, pick up your shirts, shoes, pictures, dinner, and child,

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and go home. Carrying everything to your car, you will undoubtedly complain about the lack of valet parking. Companies incur great expense to provide these lifestyle fringe benefits, hoping to retain comparison-shopping employees and attract window-browsing job candidates. However, lifestyles change. Although some employees might find a daycare center meaningful today, its value will diminish as their children get older.

These days, studies have shown that job seekers are paying closer attention to organizational values, and are less interested in having their companies pay for their lifestyles. Applicants are looking for employers who respect the way they live, and also share their personal values. Organizations are beginning to recognize this trend. Here are three examples: At the Timberland Company, management gives employees forty hours paid time off each year to serve in their communities. Employees wanting more time to “give back” can earn paid sabbaticals of up to six months. San Francisco law firm Morrison & Foerster actively demonstrates its strong commitment to diversity. Of the firm’s 871 attorneys, 166 are minorities, including 21 partners. It also has a long history of providing free legal services to indigent persons. In 2003, the firm gave away 102,000 hours of pro bono legal work. Wegmans Food Markets’ motto, “Employees first, customers second,” captures the company’s passion for customer service. How? Wegmans believes that happy employees mean happy customers. It sponsors year-round leagues in sports from softball to volleyball, and arranges admission discounts to movies, sporting events, and theme parks. In turn, employees are encouraged to go to unusual lengths, without seeking permission, to ensure customer satisfaction. Values like these get your company on *Fortune’s* list of the “100 Best Companies to Work For.”⁷

The movement toward values-based benefits reflects a shift in what workers from every generation value in their employers. But

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once they've connected to their institution's publicized values, employees expect to see those same values in the organization's leaders. More importantly, they expect their managers to demonstrate those values.

**People join an organization.
They leave a manager.**

People join an organization, but they leave a manager. Think that's an unfair statement? Granted, some people do resign to go back to school, or because a spouse is transferring. To be certain, some happy people leave. In fact, some happy employees expect even greater happiness elsewhere. However, organizations rarely associate employee turnover with poor managers. Why? In exit interviews, almost all resigning employees avoid "burning any bridges." They spin their reasons for leaving, listing issues like pay, promotion opportunities, or additional benefits. Information garnered from exit interviews is largely irrelevant, and many companies now conduct face-to-face meetings only with departing executives.

Searching for meaningful clues, some companies postpone exit surveys for six months or more after employees have said farewell. The interlude results in feedback that's surprisingly more honest than data obtained in traditional exit interviews. After several months, these same employees are less emotional, because enough time has elapsed for them to weigh objectively their former situations and experiences against their new jobs. Less reliant on positive references from their former employers, they are free to answer honestly when questioned about the reasons for their departure. Not surprisingly, most former employees list poor management as their primary reason for changing jobs.⁸

So, what do people want from their management's leadership?

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Leadership credibility means consistency between an organization's spoken values and its leaders' actual behavior.

The Six Vital Integrities of Values-Based Leaders

It bears repeating: employees are searching for leaders with integrity who prove their credibility continuously. In values-based leadership, credibility means consistency between an organization's spoken values and its leaders' actual behavior. Got credibility? Prove it!

To prove your credibility you must repeatedly exhibit your faithfulness to your organization's values by consistently executing the six Vital Integrities.

Understand these six principles, and lead by habitually demonstrating them in action each day, and your leadership will have far greater impact—all because your can't-miss-it credibility underscores your integrity as a leader.

Accept Challenges and Take Risks

Industries once based their leadership models on the centuries-old notion of organizations as machines, and considered the best-managed workplaces to be those that were machine-like, or orderly and unchanging. In that environment, revered managers held everything under control by keeping their people in line. All hell broke loose if an employee returned five minutes late from a coffee break, or criticized a management decision.

Today, business involves constant change, and to drive change you must leave your comfort zone. Effective leaders must be brave and innovative, try new approaches, and chance failure.

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People can only follow leaders who are moving.

Values-based leaders are risk takers, and more importantly, risk *seekers*, adventurers who position themselves to discover new challenges. They volunteer for the toughest jobs and always question the status quo. Risk seeking separates these leaders from the yesteryear-theory bureaucrats who sit around supervising the work. Why is that important? Leadership is proactive, as people can only follow leaders who are moving.

Values-based leaders courageously question the rules. Why is that a big deal? Let's be honest. The people creating policies are usually the least objective when it comes time to evaluate a rule's effectiveness. So, if the controls have stopped working, if they were bad from the start, or if they conflict with the mission, those rules may need challenging. Who better to question the rules than a leader guided by the organization's values?

Not only must leaders be brave, they must welcome pressure. Take a little risk, add a few challenges, and bake for eight hours in the heat of the workplace: isn't that a great recipe for stress? Most assuredly. But have you ever noticed how some people stress out easily, while others actually seem to embrace the very chaos that causes stress? Research indicates that individual personality differences influence how people appraise and cope with stressful situations. The term *psychological hardiness* refers to a personal attitude that enables some leaders to view challenges as opportunities to learn new things, rather than as threats to fear or avoid. Once you learn to see adversity as an adventure, you will have enough hardiness to weather any crisis.

Values-based leaders teach risk taking to their employees. One way to do that is by celebrating the failures of workers who ven-

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ture outside their comfort zones. By applauding risk-taking setbacks, these leaders create a safe environment for trial and error, while at the same time encouraging employees to take initiative.

Master both Listening and Speaking

Of course, leaders must also communicate well. Yet, in their book, *The Leader's Voice*, Boyd Clarke and Ron Crossland describe four fatal assumptions of leadership communication. When leaders make these “fatal assumptions,” they assume that when they speak, their listening employees will understand, agree, care, and act accordingly.⁹ But what's really happening is that their employees are confused and bewildered by their communication style.

One reason for poor organizational communication is the overuse of jargon, the verbal shorthand intended to streamline dialogue among colleagues. Jargon includes the industrial phrases, buzzwords, euphemisms, abbreviations, and acronyms that compose our professional vocabularies. If all participants in a conversation know the lingo, then using jargon is perfectly acceptable and legitimate. But when jargon is confusing, or used to impress or exclude others, a leader's credibility will be undermined.

Values-based leaders, on the other hand, understand the tremendous power of storytelling. They know that communication is highly effective when they speak to the emotional as well as the intellectual regions of their listeners' minds. Stories are a potent way to reach each listener's emotions while conveying important information. They know that using stories to illustrate the organization's principles allows each employee to absorb their messages in a personal way.

Not only that, but in-person communication occurs visually as well as verbally. Understand this fact and you will master both listening and speaking. As a speaker, you should watch your listeners' body language for signs of comprehension and agreement.

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As a listener, you should be engaged in the listening process, and show through your body language your complete focus on the speaker.

Finally, you should know how to hear and make every effort to block your inner voices, hidden biases, or preconceptions from drowning out the speaker's message. By doing so, you will be able to receive not only advice and warnings, but encouragement, as well.

Live By the Values They Profess

One familiar leadership adage proclaims that managers should assign only those tasks they are willing to do themselves. But integrity and credibility are much too critical to values-based leadership to summarize in trite expressions. If employees detect discrepancy between an organization's spoken values and a leader's actual behavior, they recognize the company's clichés as lip service and their leader as a fraud.

In the hiring process, recruiters introduce aspirants to mutual expectations—how aligning with the organization's values will meet their personal interests and needs. Once on board, employees need constant evidence of compatibility—proof that their leader's values are in alignment with the organization's, and thus, their own. Without frequent confirmation from their leader, employees might decide the organization's values are not what they thought they were.

If they perceive, whether accurately or not, that management changed or somehow misrepresented the values, employees begin to wonder. They may then feel unaligned, lost, and foolish for having trusted the employer. Finally, they withdraw and turn defensive, even cynical. Their initiative diminishes and money becomes their primary motivator. Eventually, they resign.

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By proactively demonstrating the correlation between your personal values and those of the organization, you will simultaneously show your employees an allegiance to their values and validate their trust in you.

Professing to value human diversity is about more than tolerance; it's about appreciating individuals for the very things that make them different. Values-based leaders challenge the melting pot notion, where organizations dissolve employee differences and pour their personalities into an ideal corporate mold. Instead, they envision their organizations as quilts, and individuals as patches joined by the fabric of a common purpose. They confront their learned biases and avoid stereotypes.

Freely Give Away Their Authority

On June 2, 1925, New York Yankee Wally Pipp had a headache. Having played in more games during the previous ten seasons than any other Yankee, Pipp asked manager Miller Huggins for permission to sit out the day's game. In a career that spanned fifteen years, Pipp drove in 997 runs, had six seasons with more than ninety RBIs, and helped the Yankees win three straight pennants. Huggins granted the sick day and replaced Pipp at first base with newcomer Lou Gehrig. Gehrig went on to play in 2,130 straight games. Pipp, despite recovering from the headache, lost his job to the rookie and finished his career with the Cincinnati Reds.¹⁰

**Giving away your authority is a
personal challenge that might
require confronting common
insecurities.**

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Although few leaders know the Wally Pipp story, many worry about facing a similar fate. That's why giving away authority is such a personal challenge. It involves sharing the influence and prestige associated with leadership, and this might require confronting personal insecurities about losing power.

For the most part, people earn their leadership roles by demonstrating other job skills. The promotion brings further scrutiny; in addition to their technical knowledge, new managers must measure up as leaders. As a result, some leaders cling to their old expertise as a safety net.

Once you abandon your concerns about becoming the next Wally Pipp, you will recognize empowering others as its own reward.

In my workshops, someone usually says, "Hey, I'm ready to give away my authority, but my employees are different. They don't want to be empowered." I agree that some employees avoid empowerment. However, when surveyed several months after leaving, former employees cite a lack of challenge, excitement, and flexibility as the second biggest reason they resigned, right behind poor management.¹¹ Therefore, it is naive for managers to say their employees are resisting empowerment, when many employees are leaving to find more challenge.

Employees truly want to feel important and useful. They hope to contribute, helping shape a worthy endeavor's success. Therefore, you must learn how to empower wisely.

But certain leadership styles always have the opposite effect, leaving employees feeling powerless. Micromanagement, for example, squashes empowerment. Micromanagers mistrust their employees, and have low expectations for their abilities and results. So micromanaged employees "live down to" those expectations, thereby perfectly conforming to the micromanager's views of them.

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Leaders never like having their decisions second guessed. But to be effective, leaders need feedback from employees closest to the frontline, even those who challenge authority. Those employees who openly disagree, and risk seeming disrespectful, often bring forth new ideas—or warnings about overlooked problems. Values-based leaders tolerate and embrace mavericks.

Why the emphasis on giving away authority? Giving authority to others demonstrates trust in people. Trusted employees are more effective, creative, and satisfied. And a funny thing happens when you trust people—they trust you back!

Recognize the Best in Others

Banking is a highly regulated industry, with a slew of forms to complete. Commercial lending is an increasingly competitive banking service. While you're busy completing forms, your competitors are soliciting your clients. So hurry through your paperwork, get back on the street, and make more loans. Good strategy, until the examiners arrive to review your loan documentation. They find forms that are missing information, forms that are missing signatures, and forms that are missing other forms. The loans are good, made to companies with solid financial histories, reliable guarantors, and sufficient collateral. The lenders are obviously qualified underwriters. But the paperwork is a mess!

One solution is to take the most detail-oriented employees you can find and charge them with reviewing the lenders' completed paperwork. They can correct errors so regulators get perfect forms. Works for a while, but your obstinate employees grow intolerant of lenders unable to follow instructions. They wonder why management continues to pay lenders for making mistakes. Forget the quantity and quality of loans generated. They convince

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management that the lenders have had enough time to master the forms.

Here's an idea. What if you reduce the lenders' pay commensurate with the number of errors found? Now, the lenders are paying more attention. Forms are perfectly filled-out, just ask the meticulous folks still keeping score. Problem is the lenders now spend their time polishing paperwork. So there are fewer new loans and—with less time spent in the underwriting process—more loans that might go unpaid.

A band-aid approach that's unique to banking? Hardly. By focusing attention on their employees' weaknesses, leaders overlook their strengths and take their skills for granted. What if we pay our lenders to do what they do best—like finding new customers, determining the borrower's capability to repay the loan, negotiating pricing, and schmoozing—and pay someone else to do the paperwork? What if we stop frustrating our punctilious types with redundant work—catching and reporting errors—and just pay *them* to fill out the paperwork instead? In other words, what if we use our employees' strengths and work around any weaknesses?

Too many organizations assume employees can become competent in almost anything, if only they try. Companies structure their performance reviews to show employees how they must improve to get ahead. Corporations misspend training budgets on improving employee weaknesses, when they ought to invest in enhancing existing skills.

Values-based leaders recognize that each person's talents are special, and that a person's best opportunity for growth lies in exploiting those strengths. They identify what individual employees do best, encourage workers to shift their focus to those strengths, and help them refine and fortify those abilities. And

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they show them how to use their talents to bring success to themselves and the organization.

Unfortunately, rather than capitalizing on their employees' strengths, a growing number of organizations are following the latest trends in weakness control, such as ranking, or differentiating, employees into the categories A, B or C, in which A players are their best employees, and C players their worst. Then, all they need to do is fire the C players and hire more A players as replacements. Oh, and did I mention that they must do this every year? Stock analysts love the idea, but human resource professionals—and employment lawyers—detest this systematic method for purging poor performers. And although coveted managers were once those capable of wielding the hatchet without emotion, they will find themselves in higher demand, today, if they can turn those high C or low B employees into valued contributors, instead.

Have a Vision and Convince Others to Share It

We often describe children as having wild or active imaginations. The best leaders never outgrow their imaginative gift. They hold in their minds pictures of what is possible. Vision is the power to conceive a future that's better than the present.

Good leaders have a vision. *Great* leaders convince others to share their vision by articulating it in memorable and inspirational ways.

An old story relates the role vision plays in making work meaningful. Two stonemasons are working side by side when someone asks them what they are doing. The first mason replies, "I'm cutting stone." The second mason responds, "I'm building a great cathedral." The latter gets inspiration from the work's significance. By seeing backward—first envisioning the finished ca-

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thedral, and then the efforts required to create it—the second mason understands how cutting stone contributes to the final goal.

**Most leaders lack
the skills needed to
share their visions.**

The ability to communicate powerfully a vision's significance is critical to values-based leadership, but it requires skills disregarded by almost all business leaders. Why do leaders neglect such important abilities? Because busy leaders find it's easier to read numbers from a financial statement, and conveying information in unrehearsed, jargon-filled language requires little emotion, so they needn't develop dramatic and inspiring presentation skills. However, a workforce increasingly motivated by values needs—indeed expects—inspiration.

A leader might have a unique vision, or embrace a common idea. For instance, many Americans wished for a country free of racial injustice, but the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., vividly envisioned the day when that world would exist. Whether their vision is unique or commonly shared, leaders able to depict a desirable future, like the one King described in his “I Have a Dream” speech, inspire others to follow.

Some people confuse the idea of leaders sharing a values-based vision with the image of prophets, futurists, or renegades attempting to attract followers with radical or extreme ideas. Just the opposite is true. Values-based leaders enlist employees by identifying common interests, and showing them how that shared vision will satisfy mutual needs.

Master the techniques for describing your organization's mission, and you will distinguish yourself as a great leader.

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The Big Muscles

I love golf and, like many avid golfers, I am constantly looking for the secret to lowering my scores. I have attended several golf schools and consulted countless teachers, and although swing theories vary, one thought is consistent among instructors: the bigger a muscle, the more control it exerts in your swing. For example, your arms influence the swing more than your hands, your shoulders more than your arms, and so on. Therefore, execution is easiest when you rely on your biggest muscles. What does that have to do with leadership? I believe that, in leadership, your values are your biggest muscles.

Although it's improbable that every employee's values will match perfectly those of their employer, each person found something in those values that they did connect to, at least in the beginning. So "rehire your employees" every day by showing them, through your values-powered execution of the six Vital Integrities, that your organization's mission statement is more than just a marketing slogan. Do that, and you will help your employees remain aligned and loyal, as well as committed and on board.