Have Your Core Values Become White Noise to Your Team… and Your Patients?

Core values are the road map to success of your company. When correctly applied, they will also help your team members become active participants in achieving the vision you have for your business. Additionally, they can solve 90% of the interpersonal and management challenges that arise in your office.

How often does your office experience office politics, insubordination, lack of productivity, or bad hires? The energy-sucking problems you deal with on a regular basis can be narrowed down to a specific problem… the lack of effective Core Values.

Often times leaders approach their core values by choosing generic words their marketing person told them would look good on their business card or website. In doing so, they create a list of generic core values such as, Integrity, Honesty or Customer Service. Then they put this list on a poster that hangs in a hallway and never speak of them again. These generic core values, more often than not, become meaningless phrases with no real impact on your team members, or strength added to your leadership.

Core values, done right, should touch every aspect of your business. For example, they should be the guidelines of your hiring and firing process and employee reviews, inform your marketing strategy, and even your disciplinary actions.

Over the last three years I have surveyed over 500 team members about their office culture. When asked if they could list their companies *specific* core values off the top of their head, only 7% of participants could recite them correctly. Some team members responded that they did not think their office had any.

This means that the core values of most companies are not leading the daily actions of their team members. Company values aren't being utilized as expectations on how to behave or perform their jobs. It also indicates that the practice owner is not leading their team as effectively as possible.

To stand out amongst your competition, and create raving fans out of your clients, developing **REAL** Core Values is the fastest path to your goals.

R.E.A.L. Core Values are: **R**elevant, **E**ngaging, **A**ction- based and **L**eadership- led.

The generic core values I mentioned earlier, like "Honest", "Integrity" and "Customer Service" are simply the minimum requirements for anyone to have a business. If you want to stand out amongst your competition, and create raving fans out of your clients, developing a list of REAL Core Values is the fastest way to achieve your goals.

How can you tell if the core values you currently have are REAL enough?
Take this simple test I call the, "Well- I- would- hope- so" test.
 If you can say, "Well I would hope so" after hearing it, it's not strong enough.

For example, if you say, "We are customer service focused". Your client will already expect that-it's a basic business necessity, not a determining factor of whether someone buys from you. I guarantee that your competition says they focus on customer service too, so why should the potential client choose you? A stronger statement would be, "We are dedicated to be the best part of our patient's day".
Comparing the two statements, one clearly demonstrates an office striving to raise the bar on their patient's experience.

As a leader, strong core values also become an agreement between you and your team. It's now an emotional contract that guides your team's performance and how to correct negative behavior.

My suggestion-read your core values. Pretend you're a potential new client. Would you say to yourself, "Well, I would hope so!"? If you would, you have evidence that your core values have room for improvement.

Clear, descriptive core values will inevitably elevate the energy and success in your business.

Use the attached guide to create your REAL Values today.

My hope is that you'll challenge yourself to create new or refine your past core values. Allow them to be the foundation of your leadership, and to guide your decisions moving forward. Doing so will be the quickest path to increasing your fulfillment and success in your business.

REAL CORE VALUES TEAM EXERCISE

People support what they create, so schedule a team meeting and follow these 10 steps to creating your REAL core values. It's a fun and engaging exercise that will be a great team builder.

Here are some examples from successful businesses who have created meaningful core values:

Zappos.com: Deliver WOW through service. | Embrace and drive change. | Build a positive and a family spirit.
Google: Focus on the user and all else will follow. | Fast is better than slow. | You can be serious without a suit.
Datwyler Orthodontics: Every patient is a rock star. | Listen more, talk less. | Choose profit-based decisions.
Sheffield Orthodontics: Be efficient and Energetic. | Make great things happen. | Create great memories.

STEP 1
List 5 core values you have personally (Make health a priority, experiences over things, etc.)

TIME: 3 MIN

STEP 2
List 5 core values you would like the company to have.

TIME: 3 MIN

STEP 4
As a group, take turns and share similarities from partners. Write them on a flip chart.

TIME: 10 MIN

STEP 3
Partner up. Share your answers to step 2. List similarities.

TIME: 5 MIN

STEP 5
Find the similar themes or categories. (Ex. Attitude, customer service, work ethic, etc.)
The themes are what are most important to your team and will be the guidelines to your core values. Decide if you are missing any themes that are important to you as a leader/team and add them.

TIME: 15 MIN

STEP 6
Double the partner groups. Using the words on the board, brainstorm together on how to take the values to the next level. End with 5-8 for each group. (Ex. "Customer Service" becomes "Deliver WOW through service", "Honesty" becomes "Radical Transparency", "Have a positive attitude" becomes "We only have good days and great days")

TIME: 15-20 MIN

STEP 8
Combine or eliminate any redundant values. Make sure you have at least one value for each theme. Determine if they all are *Relevant* to your company, *Engaging*, *Action-based* and *Leadership-led*. (*REAL*)

TIME: 10 MIN

STEP 7
Each group chooses a spokesperson to share their new and improved core values with the whole team. Write them on the board.

TIME: 10 MIN

STEP 9
Finalize your core values. You should end up with no more than 12 *REAL* Core Values.

TIME: 15 MIN

STEP 10
Publicly display them! Either in a large poster, vinyl letters on the wall or in different areas around the office. Don't forget on your website as well. Show them off to the world and let them know this is the contract your team is making with each other and them as clients.

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