

Values Quick-Start

**Let the people who are the best
of your culture help you define
your values.**

**WHO
REPRESENTS
THE FUTURE
OF YOUR
CULTURE?**

Spot Your Culture All-Stars

A company's values don't emerge fully formed from a founder's or consultant's head. The behaviors they are based on already exist. Your job is not to create them, but simply to find them. Don't get stuck in your own head. Great value-driven behaviors are all around. With a company full of employees, look for the ones you admire. If you find yourself thinking "if only I could get *everyone* to act just a little more like her" you've struck culture gold. Find your Culture All-Stars and you have found those who already know what your company truly values.

WHY YOU'RE DOING THIS

To identify the three to five beliefs your company holds most dear.

HOW YOU'LL DO IT

A half-day workshop.

WHO SHOULD PARTICIPATE

Up to 5 VPs and/or line leaders from across the organization.

WHERE IT SHOULD HAPPEN

A medium-sized room with lots of wall space and room to collaborate.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

Post-it Notes, markers, and a copy of this exercise for each participant.

HOW LONG YOU'LL NEED

3 hours.

Download this exercise to work on with your team at [greatmondays.com](https://www.greatmondays.com)

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Ask each participant to identify two amazing colleagues—those whom they would consider Culture All-Stars. Think of employees that represent what is good today, and those that exemplify the kind of culture you'd like in the future.

Time: 15 minutes

2. Instruct each person to list three specific behaviors that exemplify why he or she selected that person. Write each behavior on its own Post-it Note.

Time: 15 minutes

3. Have each participant present to the group who he or she chose and why.

Time: 20 minutes

4. After everyone has shared, stick up the Post-it Notes on a worksurface or whiteboard that everyone can see. Group any duplicate behaviors.

Time: 30 minutes

5. Together, talk about what each behavior might mean to the organization's values. For example, if someone described how they really liked the way Dantell asks people outside her department for feedback before her quarterly sales presentation, you might say you value "employees who get out of their own heads," "cross-department collaboration," or "feedback and prototyping." During the discussion write down the ideas that you find compelling and post them on the wall near the behavior. The more the better.

Time: 30 minutes

HINT: *Don't try to write short values headlines at this point.*

Consider these ideas "value themes" to allow room for experimenting and mistakes.

6. Time for some analysis. Observe which values were repeated or are related. Which value themes feel like they belong together? Sort the notes until they are organized in clusters that makes sense. It's okay if you have more than five groups at this point.

Time: 30 minutes

7. Which of the themes seem more compelling, true, or urgent than the others? Try to narrow your choices to six or fewer idea clusters. Mark the value themes the majority of your group agrees should be elevated and move the rest to another wall.

Time: 20 minutes

8. Within each remaining value theme, look for the words or phrases that best capture the entire idea. Move to the top of each grouping one or two notes that can act as a title or write a new one.

Time: 20 minutes

9. Rewrite these value theme titles on a new sheet. This list is the starting point of your new values.

Time: 5 minutes

BONUS: *Once you've completed this exercise, bring in your Culture All-Stars to review what you created. What do they think? Can they spot anything that's missing? What could be removed?*

WHAT'S NEXT

From here it's no small feat to arrive at your company's three to five final values; the key will be prioritizing what is most important. That said, by the end of this exercise you will have most, if not all, of the ingredients you need. The ideas within your value themes are the draft of your description. Write them up into a coherent paragraph that answers the question: "What does this value mean?" The specific behaviors with which you started the exercise should be cited as examples of living the values. Use these to answer the question: "What does this value look like in action?"

What are the one to four words that will be the value's name? Writing pithy, differentiated, and memorable headlines is a job for a pro. Sure the group could come up with something satisfactory but see if you can't find someone from your marketing or brand teams who would be willing to help.

CONGRATULATIONS, YOU ARE ON YOUR WAY TO CREATING YOUR VALUES.

	BEHAVIOR	VALUES THEME
	1.	1.
2.	2.	
3.	3.	

	BEHAVIOR	VALUES THEME
	1.	1.
2.	2.	
3.	3.	

WHAT GOOD VALUES LOOK LIKE

They're brief.

They should be easy to remember, display, and share.

Keep each value title to between one and four words.

They're well-defined.

Each value must be supported by descriptions of what the value means, and what employees should do as a result.

They're unique.

It's easy to come up with generic values like "innovative."

Go farther and identify those values that make your organization special.

They're limited in number.

The more values you have, the less they mean. Keep your list to five or fewer.

They're actionable

Employees should be able to use the company's values to make important decisions.

VALUES EXAMPLE 1: THE FLATIRON SCHOOL

HEADLINE	DESCRIPTION	SUBJECT
Make no little plans.	Build for scale; create for the whole world; execute short-term goals in view of long-term strategy.	(Vision)
Radiate positivity.	Be nice; have fun; find what to love about your work and surroundings.	(Attitude)
Be scrappy.	Get things done; be resourceful; embrace change; thrive in moments of ambiguity.	(Execution)
Pursue mastery.	Be a beginner; always be learning; do a lot better; value feedback.	(Performance)
Work together.	Collaborate; listen intently and over-communicate; embrace transparency; empower others to succeed.	(Teamwork)

WHAT I THINK WORKS ABOUT THESE

Unique, check. Five or fewer, check. Brief, check. The Flatiron School has almost nailed all the qualities that make for good values. Bonus points for identifying categories.

WHAT I THINK COULD BE IMPROVED

While each value's definition says what to do ("be nice"), will these help employees make decisions quickly and decisively? Perhaps. I'd like to see them go further with examples of each imperative.

VALUES EXAMPLE 2: PERCOLATE

HEADLINE	DESCRIPTION	QUESTION
Accelerating	A start-up isn't determined by size; it's a company fueled for productivity, speed, and removing friction. We must keep this spirit alive.	Does this decision move us closer to the company's mission and vision?
Thoughtful by design	We aim for thoughtfulness in everything we do. This should be felt by colleagues, customers, and competition.	Will this interaction leave the person on the other end feeling like I care deeply about their time?
Judge Percolate against Percolate	Know that everyone else has a lower bar than we do; never compromise.	Is what I'm doing truly exceptional or am I allowing it to be watered down by outside influences?
Success is measured in advocates	We are truly successful when our customers, employees, and partners become our champions.	How is what I'm doing helping to drive advocacy?
You own this company	As we grow, it is your responsibility to ensure that we're awesome. If it sucks, make it better.	If I were the owner of this company outright, would I still do what I'm doing?
Constant questioning	Asking 'why?' isn't just for children. Being curious will make you and this company great.	Do I understand the first principles of this problem and can I use them to design a better solution?

HEADLINE	DESCRIPTION	QUESTION
Focused on scale, but willing to do things that don't	Sometimes the best way to reach scale in the long term is to do things that don't in the short term.	If I look back on this decision in the future will I regret doing something that didn't scale?
Led by product	Product is not just what we build, it's the way we are. Everyone in the company should be thinking in, and building, products.	Can I find a way to automate or productize the work I'm doing right now?
Not just a job	We want you to look back and feel that Percolate put your career on a new trajectory. You are proud, and you wouldn't change a thing.	Does this decision move me closer towards my personal mission and vision?
Just	At Percolate you are encouraged to run fast, be fearless, and work hard. If you make a mistake, let's all learn from it.	Am I acting in the best interest of the company's values?

WHAT I THINK WORKS ABOUT THESE

Percolate's values are unique, brief, and actionable. You can tell they worked on these and care about what they say.

WHAT I THINK COULD BE IMPROVED

A set of 10 values is two times too many.