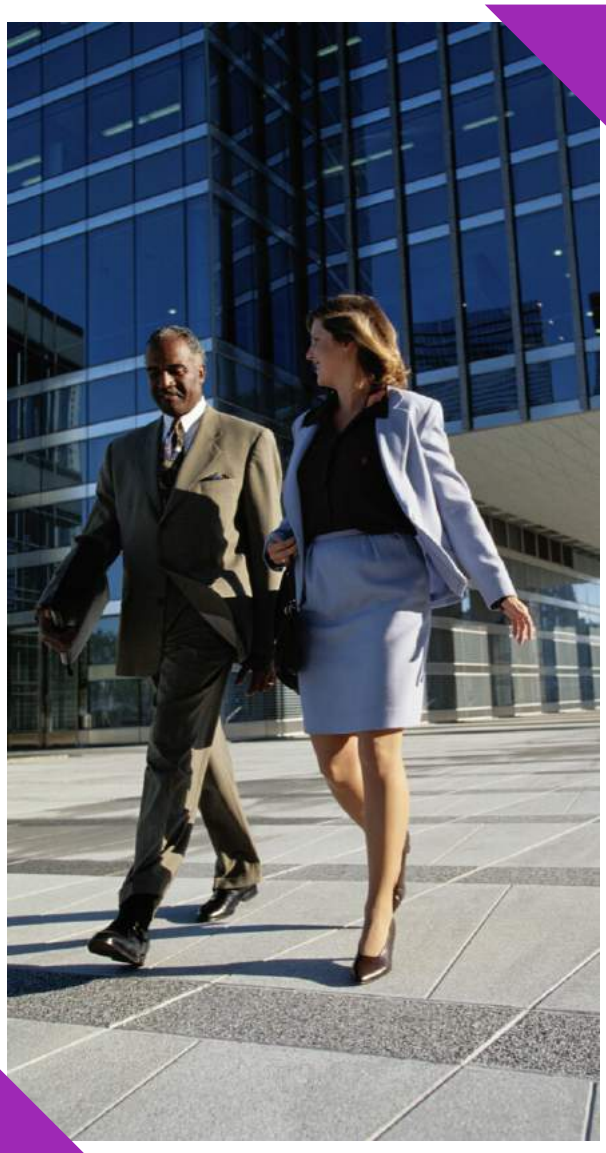
How to Walk the Talk

PRINCIPLED LEADERSHIP TOOLKIT



Introduction

Leadership can be tough. The company looks to you to make the hard decisions and to set an example. You may feel you have no time for one more thing.

But what if that one thing could make your work easier and more rewarding? This Toolkit shows you how to identify and apply your core values in the workplace. Once you have completed this process, decision-making will be clearer and you will set an ethical tone for your organization. Employee morale will improve and your customers will see the difference.

Most importantly, this Toolkit shows you how to maintain your new mindset: how to "walk the talk" as you lead the way forward.

WHAT YOU DO HAS FAR GREATER IMPACT THAN WHAT YOU SAY

Stephen Covey

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Leadership Flowchart

This flowchart maps out the activities in this Toolkit. Feel free to complete these steps over time. It's more important to get principled leadership right than to do it quickly.

EARN YOUR LEADERSHIP EVERY DAY

Michael Jordan

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What is Principled Leadership?

Most people can identify qualities of good leaders. But what makes a ***principled*** leader?

Principled leaders identify a framework of values to guide their decisions. They communicate those values to their organizations and teams, by their words and by their actions.

A principled leader doesn't decide to "do the right thing" in an isolated situation. The "right thing" is part of their character. It's intentional. By practice and habit, such a leader follows relevant industry regulations and standards. Through example, he or she raises the ethical level of their organization.

Hofstra University Professor Victor Lopez defined ten characteristics for principled leaders. These leaders:

1. Put the company's interests first.
2. Define character by how they act when no one is watching.
3. Know that respect is earned over time.
4. Put their people ahead of themselves.
5. Give credit to everyone who contributed to a success.
6. Hold themselves accountable for failures.
7. Show consistency in decisions.
8. Do the right thing rather than the easy thing, even at personal cost.
9. Make and explain unpopular opinions when necessary.
10. Serve institutions that respect their values.

With corporations prioritizing social responsibility and stakeholder interests, principled leaders are in high demand.

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IDENTIFYING YOUR VALUES: THE VALUES INVENTORY

Most people think they know their core values. But could you write yours down without thinking? Being a principled leader requires a deep connection to your essential values. Use these steps to define your list.

- Think, Then Write.

  Think about what matters to you. Use the following values to jump-start your list. You can go beyond these concepts.

Authenticity	Independence	Self-Esteem
Balance	Justice	Service
Courage	Leadership	Stability
Creativity	Loyalty	Teamwork
Curiousity	Meaning	Truthfulness
Faith	Mentorship	Well-Being
Humor	Recognition	Wisdom
	Respect	

- Complete a Values Inventory.

  Many organizations offer online tools to define your most central values. Compare your results to the values you identified. Are there common themes?

- Reflect on Your Actions.

  Consider some major decisions and projects from the last year. Of the values you listed, which match your actions? Which values are you truly living?

- Select Your Core Values.

  Pick your top three to five values and keep a list with you. Review it as you make decisions to develop the habit of a values-driven life.

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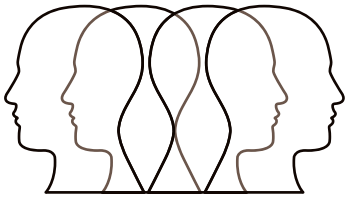
Aligning Values

Principled leaders seek out and create ethical workplaces. This chart connects some individual values to organizational commitments to show how leaders might align their values with those of their organizations.



Individual Values		Organizational Ethics
Trust & Loyalty	→	Career path for employees
Fairness & Empathy	→	Living wages
Service & Teamwork	→	Customer-centric policies
Accountability & Trustworthiness	→	Internal & third-party audits
Mentorship & Recognition	→	Performance reviews including values
Meaning & Teamwork	→	Code of Ethics/ Code of Conduct

INTEGRITY IS DOING THE RIGHT THING EVEN WHEN NO ONE IS WATCHING

C.S. Lewis

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Communicating Your Values

You know your company's values... but does your team?

One of the best ways for a leader to communicate values is to demonstrate them. Set an example by living your values. Make value-based decisions, explaining your reasoning.

Another way to communicate your values is to use moral language. Many managers talk about "transparency" but what they mean is "honesty." Don't shy away from values!

As a company, develop a "code" to guide decisions. A code of ethics (or code of conduct) sets out the company's shared values and priorities. A code helps set the tone for the organization. Make sure that the code is well-publicized at work and that the text is readily available to all.

Train on values. From new hires to annual refresher, including your values and code of ethics in training underlines their importance.

Recognize employees for their ethical achievements. When a team member embodies the company's values, celebrate them!

Bring your values to your customers. Customers who are treated ethically will spread the word.

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Values that Last

Start by identifying, practicing, and communicating your values. But sticking to it is the real test.

Many managers learn principled leadership, but don't commit to it. It takes practice to make principled leadership a habit. It also takes time and effort to bring core values into existing systems. Build momentum through the following actions:

- Talk Values

  Make a habit of bringing up core values in meetings, job interviews, and other conversations. Perhaps a value is the reason for a decision, or a customer shares your values. Soon it will become natural to consider values in everyday situations.

- Update Processes

  Some actions are routine. Hiring employees, filing reports, and delivering reviews are just a few examples. Re-work them to include core values. Ask job candidates how they would deal with an ethics issue, or add a category for "upholding values" on a performance review form.

- Refresh the Brand

  Spend time in meetings and on calls with salespeople and customer service. Speak with customers directly, and coach your front-line people on how to demonstrate values to customers.

- Hire "Valuable" People

  Make sure that new hires understand and appreciate the company's values and will act consistently with them.

- Most Importantly: Show You Mean It!

  You "walk the talk" when you model core values. People learn from watching their managers. Teach them that values are central to what you do.

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