



# Tool

## Defining your Values

**PURPOSE:** Clarify what your values means in practice so they can be more useful

**SOURCE:** Adapted from various team/organisational change sessions I've co-facilitated with Richard Watts from People Make It Work.

**INTRODUCTION:** Values capture 'how we do things around here'; they describe our DNA and also signal the culture we want. They can guide decisions and help us know we're on track. To be effective values need to be true, easy to understand and apply, comprehensive – they need to guide and capture everything you do.

### HOW TO DO THE EXERCISE:

1. Start with a draft list of values (see the IDENTIFYING YOUR VALUES exercise) or your existing statement of values. Limit yourself to between 3-5 values; the fewer the better, so long as each one is sufficiently distinctive.
2. Looking at your list, explore when you do and don't operate with these values and whether anything is missing.
3. Define each value in no more than 1-2 lines – this short definition should capture what the value means to you and for your work specifically.

For example one of my values is Trust and as a coach and facilitator I define this as: 'believing in and supporting others to achieve their full potential; having the self-confidence to take informed risks myself; always being reliable, and honest with myself and others.' Even if Trust is one of your values, whilst there may be some similarities in how we define it, your definition will be unique to you and your work.

4. Ask yourself, will these values take me forward to where I want to go?

OPTIONS:

1. To make even more use of your values, for each value in turn list the behaviours you would expect of yourself in relation to this value. For example behaviours I expect of myself in relation to Trust might include:

‘I act with integrity in all I do’.

‘I am transparent in how I cost and price my work.’

‘I regularly review my performance and seek feedback from others to inform this.’

2. If you want to explore how well you’re currently ‘living’ your values then try this simple exercise. Draw a table with two columns labelled as follows, and for each value in turn think about when you’re at your best how you epitomise that value and thinking about what you’d like to do differently sometimes you might fall short.

How/when do I epitomise this?	When/ how do I want to do/be it more?
e.g. Trust – when I encourage coachees to develop stretch goals and explore their dreams.	e.g. Trust – being willing to try a new tool or exercise with a client knowing it might not go perfectly the first few times.

3. This exercise can work equally well with teams and whole organisations. If you would like an example of one organisation I worked with to develop their values – here is an example from a volunteer-led museum. They developed these values as part of a wider organisational change programme and had these symbols and value definitions printed onto mugs as a reminder.

## Example: organisational values

**Our mission is...** to enrich the lives of all who experience and are inspired by our historic law and order sites and collection so that they gain insights into, and are provoked into thinking about, how the treatment of offenders and the relief of the poor have developed over the last 200 years.

The values that guide how we do this are...



We are **ambitious** – we aim to be the best small museum in England. This means we:

- Achieve high standards including professional standards in our field.
- Always bring a professional approach to our work.
- Invest in sufficient staff capacity and tools to achieve our plans to a high standard.



**Learning** is at the heart of all we do. We offer our visitors, staff and volunteers the very best learning opportunities we can. This means we:

- Develop new ways for all our visitors to learn during and after their visit.
- Try new approaches, learning from others internally and externally.
- Reflect on our performance individually and as an organization in an open, honest and constructive way.
- Identify areas of improvement and making realistic, funded plans to develop.



Staff and volunteers work as a **team**. We achieve more when we work together and involve other people in developing our plans and projects. Teamwork means we:

- Trust one another to deliver and always treat one another with respect.
- Have shared goals, but distinct roles with maximum delegation.
- Make time to communicate with and support one another.
- Value new and diverse perspectives.



We are part of our **community**. This means we:

- Are friendly, welcoming to all and inclusive.
- Seek to reduce our impact on the environment.
- Help our visitors make connections between the past and current social justice issues.
- Maximise social benefits for volunteers, staff and visitors.
- Attract tourists, develop volunteers' skills and work with local suppliers to contribute to the economic development of the local area.