

# Absolute values that go back to the days of Moses



One of the interesting aspects about moving house is that you often come across things that you thought you had lost. This happened recently with regard to a booklet thought lost for over 20 years. The delighted in finding it was increased as it was to be used for an article which had all to do with values.

You see not everyone is convinced that vision and mission statements can give a strategic direction to an organisation, unless they are founded on values, which are clearly articulated and practised. And this applies to individuals just as much as organisations. So if you want to have a life that has purpose and employment that is meaningful you should translate them into personal values.

Often many organisations, which claim to base their business practice on value systems, actually do not do so. Take the public sector as an example. Some years ago Nolan established 7 Principles that set clear standards for the behaviour for those holding public office. Holders of public office are required to commit themselves to:

1. **Selflessness:** They should take decisions solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends.
2. **Integrity:** They should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might influence them in the performance of their official duties.
3. **Objectivity:** They should, when carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, make choices on merit.

4. **Accountability:** They are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.
5. **Openness:** They should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.
6. **Honesty:** They have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.
7. **Leadership:** They should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

Now these are really great principles but if the recent (and indeed not so recent) reports of sleaze, both here and in GB, are anything to go by, the question is how many public servants could repeat them let alone commit to them. But it can be hard to remember them.

Now what is commendable is that at least an effort is being made to set daily standards of behaviour for holders of public office. So here is an absolute value system that was outlined in the booklet referred to above. So here to begin with is a definition:

*“**Values** are the standards that by which basic life and business decisions are made”*

The interesting thing is that we all operate from some form of value system, even though it may not be articulated or even consistently followed. For example if you promised to be home on time one evening, but as you left the office you had an important international phone call that you just had to

take. The result of course was that you were late home. That decision does not mean that you place a higher value on work rather than home life. All it means is that, at that point in time, you put a higher value on taking the call than on being home on time.

It is not the single “late-home-for-dinner” situation that causes the damage. It is the longer-term pattern of giving more importance to work than home that does the damage. Now everyone is for having a home life but our concept of work/life balance seems to have gone too far in the “life” direction. People increasingly seem to feel it their right to the “early-home-for-dinner” situation, rather than the “late-home-for-dinner” situation. But that’s another story.

The point is that our daily business (and personal) decisions can build a pattern, which reveals what an organisation’s (or person’s) true value systems really are.

It is important to remember that values are absolute and do not change with circumstances. They complement rather than compete with each other, and if followed can result in prosperity, productivity, harmony and fulfilment in all aspects of life. The opposite is of course true in that if you persistently break them then “what you sow in the flesh you will reap in the flesh” often results.

Anyway the long lost booklet had established 10 such absolute and complementary values based on the 10 commandments back in the days of Moses. You see what the author had found after extensive research, was that these commandments when expressed in business terminology provided any organisation with an absolute set of values by which business and life decisions could be made.

But values, if they are to be successful, must work in conjunction with at least the following:

- 1. Common purpose:** Organisations must have a common purpose and this is expressed in terms of its vision, mission and corporate plans. Individuals too should not be relying on their employer to provide them with career development opportunities as most organisations today do not have the same sense of commitment to “look after” their employees as in the past.
- 2. Motivation:** Failure to get all the stakeholders to own the vision will inevitably mean that they will not be committed to it. It’s hard to lead a team if members are not fully informed of its mission and their roles in it. Also if you, as an individual, are not prepared to make sacrifices for your career development then you will not realise your true potential.
- 3. Planning:** A plan, by definition, is a course of action that is necessary to achieve a specific goal in a given period of time. Such a plan must also outline the resources that are needed to achieve the objectives.

Then the implementation of the plan requires a logical systematic decision-making process based on facts taking into account all conflicting priorities. And this is where values really come in.

So corporate, and personal, success depends on the extent to which it is driven by absolute values (that don’t change just because circumstances change) just as much as on any vision or mission statement. And don’t we all want to be successful?

**Key Consulting**  
**2 Belmont Office Park**  
**Belmont Road**  
**Belfast**  
**BT4 2AW**  
**T: 028 9076 9900**  
**F: 028 9076 9971**  
**E: [mail@keyconsulting.co.uk](mailto:mail@keyconsulting.co.uk)**  
**[www.keyconsulting.co.uk](http://www.keyconsulting.co.uk)**