

## **STAKEHOLDERS' BILL OF RIGHTS**

Build a set of values and act upon them.

*By H. James Harrington*

Corporate values can be defined as an organization's deeply ingrained operating rules or guiding principles. I like to call them "The Stakeholders' Bill of Rights." Some people might see them as specific cultural attributes that drive behavior. Winning organizations set out to create a specific culture and operating style based on their values.

For example, Owens Corning uses guiding principles in place of values. Their guiding principles are:

- Customers are the focus of everything we do.
- People are the source of our competitive strength.
- Involvement and teamwork is our method of operation.
- Continuous improvement is essential to our success.
- Open, two-way communication is essential to the improvement process and our mission.
- Suppliers are team members.
- Profitability is the ultimate measure of our efficiency in serving our customers' needs.

Values, basic beliefs, guiding principles or operating rules—call them what you will. The important thing is to define and live up to them because they're the fundamentals upon which an organization should be built.

In contrast, losing organizations usually don't have explicit values. Instead, they'll have "hollow" values, or perfectly stated values that only few within the company operate by.

It's extremely important that everyone knows, understands and lives up to his or her organization's values.

It's an essential starting point. All managers have an obligation to model their activities so that they reinforce these values. Managers who can't believe and live up to them have no right to be managers in their organizations. They really have only two options:

1. Get the organization's values changed.
2. Get out of management.

An individual manager may slip up once in a while and not live up to all of the organization's values, but this is an area where Six Sigma error rates are too high.

Also, each individual—especially managers at all levels—should have a personal, documented set of value statements. It's very important that there's no conflict between the individual manager's values and the organization's values. Any manager whose personal values are not aligned with the organizations will be faced with a life of hardship, disappointment and failure.

When I started my business career, my father, Frank Harrington, shared his personal value statements with me and recommended that I adopt the same set. I agreed and still find them good objectives around which to build my life. I suggest that you, as quality individuals, prepare your own value statements and do everything you can to live up to them. To help you get started, I'll share my values with you. They were created originally by Dr. J. L. Rosenstein and modified to meet my personal beliefs.

## **The man I want to be:**

I want to be someone:

- Who is concerned with how he can help others instead of himself, who offers loyalty instead of demanding it, who thinks of himself as an assistant instead of a boss and who thinks it's his job to help others do their jobs better.
- Whose pride is peculiar because it's in his people, who walks around the organization and says: "Yes, it was well done but not by me. I just happen to be lucky enough to have the best team in the whole organization." If something goes wrong, he feels that maybe he wasn't on the ball. Maybe he didn't direct, guide, teach or lead his team properly. He takes the blame for anything that goes wrong.
- Who never makes a promise he doesn't intend to keep; a man who would say: "Let's not wait until tomorrow when it's more convenient for me. Let's sit down right now and go at it. Now is the time."
- Who can get excited about others' ideas and respect them no matter how simplistic they might seem—someone who can pick others up and encourage them when their ideas are rejected.
- Who can handle every grievance right now, unlike the fellow with a 40-room mansion but no garbage pails who says, "We just kick it around until it gets lost."
- Who can respect others but also discipline them if they get out of line—someone who will fight for others every step of the way, even up to the company's president and chairman of the board, if necessary, to see that they get a fair shake and a square break.

I will admit that I have not always lived up to all of these values, but I have tried and I continue trying to meet these high standards.

### **About the author**

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