



Live Your Strengths

Welcome to the July edition of *Live Your Strengths*, the monthly e-newsletter from In Search of Excellence.

In this Edition:

Putting Values into Action (Part 3)

Live Your Strengths Monthly Challenge: Your Moment of Truth Action Plan

Putting Values into Action (Part 3)

In last month's article, I wrote about the importance of clearly defining organizational values and deciding what these values look like in practical terms. It's also helpful to remember that when I use the term 'organization', I am referring to any group of people who are working together for a collective goal. So, the organization may be a workplace, a group of volunteers, or even a family.

I have often found that the first stage of thinking about values results in a list of ideas and actions that reflect the organization's values under normal circumstances. However, the real test is whether the organization can uphold these values under times of stress or rapid change. Think of this as your 'Moment of Truth Action Plan'.

Similar to the emergency drills we practice to avoid physical harm, your Moment of Truth Action Plan allows you to avoid damage to your reputation (and possibly long-term financial bottom line) by having a plan in place to handle foreseeable difficult periods.

When constructing your action plan, consider times in the past when you feel the organization (or you) did not uphold core values during difficult times. This shouldn't be too difficult, since no one is perfect :). Now, use your list of values as a filter in case that circumstance should happen again. Ideally, how would you/the organization react differently to this situation in the future to remain consistent with your values?

It's also a good idea to take a few minutes to do some brainstorming about other possible difficulties in the future (even if you haven't previously experienced these situations) and go through the same process to identify ideal responses that would align with the organization's values.

To make this concept a little more concrete, it may be helpful to provide a couple

of examples. Let's assume 'excellent client service' is a core value in your organization. You know there are seasonal or cyclical times where you experience levels of activity that make it difficult for you to give every client the attention you would like. What action plans can you put in place to help ensure that every client gets superb service, even during these peak times?

I have seen great strategies to handle this common difficulty – a local farm equipment dealer offers discounted maintenance and inspection packages to get harvesting equipment ready to go during the winter months. This approach benefits the customer by giving them substantial savings off peak season service rates and by being assured their equipment will be ready when they need it.

In another example, a restaurant that frequently experiences line-ups on one peak night each week may install benches or chairs in front of their building to allow people to sit while they wait. Or, they may have servers bring customers drinks or appetizers while waiting in line.

For each potential Moment of Truth situation you face, there are a number of creative ways you can address the problems in ways that honour your values and will strengthen the organization over the long-term. The key is to start thinking about these possible solutions now.

Are you ready to create your own Moment of Truth Action Plan? Join me in this month's *Live Your Strengths Challenge*.

“People are like stained glass windows. They sparkle and shine when the sun is out, but when the darkness sets in, their true beauty is revealed only if there is light from within.”

~Elizabeth Kubler-Ross

Live Your Strengths Monthly Challenge: Your Moment of Truth Action Plan

Take some time to think about the ways your organization can honour its values in difficult situations and develop your own Moment of Truth Action Plan. It is much easier to be creative and put plans in place when things are going well, rather than to try to come up with innovative solutions when you are in the midst of challenging times.

1. Begin by identifying situations where you feel it may be a challenge to honour your values.
2. Create some alternatives that may assist either in preventing the challenging situation from occurring, or in allowing you to live up to your values while handling the situation.

3. Where applicable, discuss these action plans as a group with the people who may be affected. Again, it is easier to discuss these action plans when things are going well, as opposed to when you are in the middle of the difficult situation.

4. Once consensus is reached, document the plans and take care of whatever preparations might be necessary to ensure the action plans can be easily followed. For example, are there any items you need to purchase to have on hand? Are there people you need to contact to have on standby in case a certain situation arises?

Good luck with this challenge and we'll continue with the final part of the discussion about values in action next month!

Cheers,
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