



## Research identifies top personal and organisational values

by Linley Watson, Managing Director, Peak Performance International

Values can be described as a shorthand method for classifying beliefs and behaviours. They are deeply held principles which people demonstrate through their behaviours.

Organisations express their collective values through their culture. Research including that from Kotter and Heskett (*Corporate Culture and Performance*) and Collins and Porras (*Built to Last*) has proven that there is a strong link between the alignment of employee and organisational values and financial performance.

Over the past decade it has become possible to quickly and cost effectively measure culture and values alignment. With the help of online tools such as Barrett's Corporate Transformation Tools, leaders can now proactively and purposefully manage their organisational culture as a source of competitive advantage and brand differentiation.

Recent research (Shafer & Mills 2011) investigated the Barrett Values Centre ([www.valuescentre.com](http://www.valuescentre.com)) Cultural Values Assessment data for 2010 and identified the most commonly chosen Personal, Current and Desired Culture values. This extensive analysis provides interesting insights into current organisational cultures and what employees across the globe desire in a high performance culture. The research findings are summarised below.

*"We're going to see companies increasingly assume that what they stand for in an enduring sense is more important than what they sell."*

**Jim Collins - Co-author,  
*Built to Last***

### Research Data

The data analysed represents results from 193 Cultural Values Assessments conducted during 2010 that featured at least 20 participants. These results reflect data from:

- 170 organisations
- 139,430 participants
- 29 different industries
- 32 countries/regions



## Personal Values

Out of 193 surveys, the top 10 Personal Values chosen were:

- |                      |                         |
|----------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Honesty           | 6. Family               |
| 2. Commitment        | 7. Humour/Fun           |
| 3. Positive attitude | 8. Respect              |
| 4. Responsibility    | 9. Integrity            |
| 5. Accountability    | 10. Continuous Learning |

Of interest, the top 13 values (adding Balance (home/work), Adaptability and Trust to the above) represented 63% of all Personal Values indicating that people in organisations across the world are remarkably similar.

## Current Culture Values

Participants were asked to identify the top 10 values evident in their organisation. The most commonly chosen values to represent a current organisational culture were:

- |                           |                    |
|---------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Cost reduction         | 7. Profit          |
| 2. Customer satisfaction  | 8. Accountability  |
| 3. Teamwork               | 9. Productivity    |
| 4. Bureaucracy            | 10. Hierarchy      |
| 5. Continuous improvement | 11. Long Hours     |
| 6. Results orientation    | 12. Silo Mentality |

If these aggregated values reflected one organisation, it would be focused on: reducing costs; looking after customers; encouraging teamwork and improvements; concentrating on results, profit and productivity; and giving people accountability but the culture would be hindered by hierarchy, bureaucracy, long hours, a silo mentality and potentially cost reduction.

Compared to the personal values there was a wider range of values selected for current culture, emphasising the diversity of organisational cultures.

## Desired Culture Values

The most commonly chosen values for a desired culture were:

- |                                  |                          |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>1. Teamwork</b>               | 5. Open communication    |
| <b>2. Continuous improvement</b> | <b>6. Accountability</b> |
| <b>3. Customer satisfaction</b>  | 7. Information sharing   |
| 4. Employee recognition          |                          |



As highlighted, teamwork, continuous improvement, customer satisfaction and accountability flowed through from the current culture to the desired “high performance” culture.

The reason there are only seven values is because there is a dramatic drop in votes for subsequent common values, indicating more diversity.

According to Shafer and Mills, the story behind the Desired Culture findings is that people are saying: “Give us accountability, talk to us, recognise us, and share information to allow us and the organisation to improve. Encourage us to work as a team and ensure all our customers are satisfied with what we do and say, as we know that these values create a high performing culture.”

*How closely do these current and desired values reflect your organisation? How do you know? How are you measuring and managing your culture?*

The research shows that people are calling for connection, transparency and feedback at work and they are asking for recognition, open communication and information sharing from their leaders and colleagues.

This extensive and insightful study was conducted as part of a two year investigation into the desired value of employee recognition. [Read the full article](#) for further information.

Since 1999, Peak Performance International has partnered with business leaders in blue-chip organisations across Australia and New Zealand to develop peak performing people and customer centric cultures. We provide best-practice tools and powerful metrics that present objective insights to more effectively measure and manage organisational cultures.

Contact us to discuss how we can help you to develop your culture as a source of competitive advantage.

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