

## The Conductive Organization

The conductive organization is also a transparent, values-driven corporation

**How do you achieve a customer-calibrated culture? What do you do when it seems that implementation of strategy needs to be accelerated? Or when you hear that trust, self-initiation, and customer partnering is not happening in your organization? And finally, how do you demonstrate transparency within the organization?**

Leaders of organizations continuously face such challenges. Ironically, one of the best overall preemptive strategies is to begin a process of being connected with your stakeholders (employees, business partners, customers, shareholders and the community-at-large) at the deepest and most fundamental level – through their values. This kind of connectedness also happens to be one of the key characteristics of the conductive organization-- “one that effectively transmits quality knowledge throughout the organization as well as with and between customers and employees.”

### Values Advance Transparency

Transparency is defined as ‘openness in every area of business’. It’s also in the title or subtitle of nearly every new business book coming out today. Consider this bold assertion: **By launching a values program in your organization, transparency will become an inevitable condition in an organization that now embraces: 1) Ethical corporate behaviour, 2) Clear principles upon which the vision and character of the organization are founded, and 3) stakeholder-wide accountability.**

### Determining Core Values

Can paying attention to values really achieve all this? Yes, and more, because values shape behaviour at the individual, team and organization level. Values prioritize everyday choices. Once an organization’s leadership undertakes to manage by values, i.e. to champion values-based management, its first step is to determine the core values, those values which are held in common among all employees. This can be accomplished relatively easily by administering a values survey throughout the organization. Once this is done, a systematic interpretation of those values with the active participation of managers and leaders is conducted in order to identify the core values.

### Aligning Core Values with Customer Values

Once these core values are determined, the next step is alignment with the values of your other stakeholders (business partners and customers). This is a time-consuming process that requires firm commitment on the part of the leadership, but once such alignment is achieved, the rewards are great. This kind of values-based positioning elevates the “customer relationship” to another level. In today’s business climate, monumental customer expectations are the primary driver for a new model of leadership that is values-based and customer-centric.

### A New Model of Leadership: Values-Based Customer-Centric

Starting with customers and working back toward the organization – an outside-in perspective – means new challenges for the leadership agenda. To summarize the sequence of four stages:

- Begin by defining the relationship that your organization wishes to develop with its customers and the relationship that customers wish to develop with the organization.
- Identify and nurture the type of culture that will deliver to this customer relationship.
- Convert this culture into an organizational capability by describing and living the set of shared or core values that are also aligned to the values of your customers.
- Identify the type of leadership capability that is required to engender this values-based, customer-calibrated culture – with strong emphasis on self-initiation, trust, interdependence, and partnering.

### Leadership Leading to Higher Levels of Conductivity

Most leaders are not adept at including such leadership capabilities in their succession plans. Publishing statements about values and capabilities is easy and cheap to do; living, supporting and leading the organization with those values is hard.

### Ask yourself the following questions about your organization:

- **What is your culture today, and what do you want it to be in the future?**
- **How will you inculcate self-initiation in your employee base?**
- **How will you create a culture based on partnerships?**
- **By what process will you create the core values of the organization?**

The leader that embraces this new model of leadership will make a determined effort to understand the embedded values of the employees, and will advance those values which will lead the corporation to higher levels of conductivity. This in turn will lead to deeper relationships with customers and partners, give meaning to the corporation’s existence, and allow it to prosper.

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2004, Butterworth-Heinemann  
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