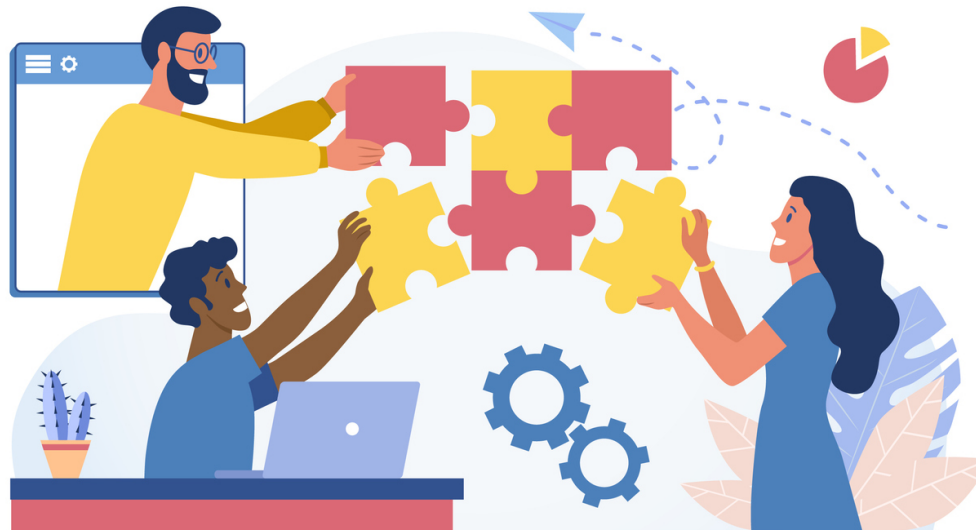# Core Values Exercises

Define your organization's culture with these six exercises

Case IQ

1

Understand Your Company's Image

Determine the image you want your organization to convey, both internally (to employees) and externally (to clients and customers).

In a working group of managers, **discuss**:

- What makes our organization unique?

- What problems do we aim to solve?

- What do people think of when they hear our organization's name?

- How do we define "good work" at our company?

Use your answers to come up with a list of core values. Then, communicate this list to all employees and **ask for feedback** to help finalize your values statement.

Identify What's Important

Select a group of employees from different levels and departments to determine what your organization finds important.

Ask each group member to identify the top five:

- most important qualities in an employee at your company

- qualities that are unimportant or detrimental to performance

- things your organization does to shape employees' careers

Common answers to these questions show both your core values as well as the things you do not value in employees and processes.

3

Focus Your Values

Narrow your organization's values to those you'll never compromise on. Choose a diverse group of employees to **brainstorm 10 words or phrases** they associate with your company.

Then, **separate the words into pairs** based on common theme (e.g. kindness with compassion or balance with well-being).

Select one value from each pair that represents your organization the best.

Finally, **pick three to five words** from this shorter list to use as your company's core values.

Values that come up multiple times are good candidates for your organization's core values.

In addition, consider polling lower-level employees about their personal values. Their choices may offer new ideas and perspectives, as well as reveal values that are shared across the company, as you write your values statement.

Uncover Shared Values

Gather a group of upper management, executives, owners, etc. Ask them to **define their personal core values** for the workplace.

5

Link Values to Behaviors

Core values are often presented as a single word. As a result, employees may find it hard to apply the values to their work.

Write a one-sentence description of what it means to embody each core value. Include a **specific example** of what to do (or not do).

For instance, if you work for an organic grocery store and one of your core values is "quality," you may link that value to behaviors by saying, "We will stock only the highest-quality organic products for our customers."

Ask:

- What values are we falling short on?

- Are there any values that no longer feel relevant?

- Would we uphold each value even if it put our company at a disadvantage?

- Will these values hold up decades from now?

Review Your Core Values

Defining your core values shouldn't be "one and done." Each year, **review and assess** your core values to make sure they still fit with the company culture.

Before you remove a core value from your values statement, though, try to **change employees' behavior to fit it** through training or revisions to your policies and procedures.

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