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By Rick Boxx

VALUES MINUS BEHAVIOR = ZERO

My friend, Roger, recently returned from a six-week Graduate program at a major business college. A comment by one of his professors caused Roger to rethink his personal views on how to shape the culture in his business.

A strong believer in having specific, written values for his business, Roger's thinking began to change after his professor's comment that "values are not the solution." This reminded Roger that if values are not lived out, these unpracticed values can potentially damage the business more than not having verbalized values at all.

As Roger pondered the simple statement, he realized that values must be translated into behaviors, they are meaningless, not worth the paper on which they are written. Sadly, we see this type of dualistic thinking manifested too much in contemporary society. People boldly profess certain values with their words, but their actions show little evidence that they truly believe the ideals they claim to embrace.

A passage in the Bible addresses this: *James 2:17 teaches, "faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead."* This does not necessarily deny the existence of one's faith – or values. It does say that apart from being lived out and demonstrated by how we conduct ourselves in every area of life, including our work, values we express will have little if any impact in our companies or those with whom we interact every day.

Many businesses have written mission or purpose statements, but some companies have also produced values statements that they display in

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prominent areas and discuss periodically. This serves to remind everyone, from the CEO to part-time workers, of the values that serve as a foundation for how the organization operates and how each individual is expected to represent it. In the process, this establishes a corporate culture for guiding decisions and behavior.

Often we can trace corporate values to practices established from the time the business was created. Such values, however, may change or be lost over time unless leaders affirm them consistently, express them in written form, and then practice them consistently. For followers of Christ, values we embrace and demonstrate should be rooted in the teachings of the Bible.

For instance, *“in everything, do to others as you would have them do to you” (Matthew 7:12)*. Is this a value that remains in the forefront of everyone’s mind in the company, or is it practiced only when it benefits the company’s goals? Does everyone emphasize honesty and integrity in all business dealings, even when doing so could jeopardize closing a sale or finalizing a deal? Here is an example of what the Scriptures say about that: *“The Lord detests lying lips, but he delights in men who are truthful” (Proverbs 12:22)*.

We must remember the adage, “talk is cheap.” What enables us to stand out as genuine, fruitful ambassadors of Jesus Christ is living and conducting business in a manner consistent with what we claim to believe. A familiar motto warns us, “Unless you talk lines up with your walk, the less said the better.”

As Roger learned, values are important in business, but not nearly as important as encouraging – and teaching – your team to behave according to those values.

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Reflection/Discussion Question

1. If someone were to ask you to define or describe your company's values, what would you say? Are these values articulated in some manner so that every person affiliated with the organization clearly understands what those values are – and what they mean in a practical sense?
2. Would you say that your business or organization operates consistently with the values it claims to believe in? Explain your answer.
3. Do you think a company can establish a culture of thought and action without communicating its values in a consistent, intentional manner? Why or why not?
4. What about your personal values? What things would you say are most important to you – and how consistent are you in living by them? If you recognize a gap between what you believe and how you behave or perform your work, how might you go about changing that?

NOTE:

If you have a Bible and would like to read more about this subject, consider the following passages:

Proverbs 10:9, 13:6, 16:2,7,11, 18:9, 22:29, 24:30-34, 25:13, 26:24-26, 29:4

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