



# Writing Our Core Values

## Workshop Facilitation Guide

**TOTAL WORKSHOP DURATION: APPROX 2 HOURS**

*Note: Content for this facilitation guide was adapted from Jim Collins' "Vision Framework" and Ari Weinzweig's "A Lapsed Anarchist's Approach to Building a Great Business." See Works Cited on Page 4.*

### **INTRO (15 MIN):**

By **"Core Values" we mean:** Essential, enduring tenets about which we are so passionate that we would never, under any circumstances, give them up.<sup>1</sup> We can also think of our Core Values as our "Guiding Principles."

### **Examples of Core Values:**

SONY (written in 1954):<sup>1</sup>

- Elevation of the Japanese culture and national status

- Being a pioneer—not following others; doing the impossible
- Encouraging individual ability and creativity

HP (written in the 1950s):<sup>1</sup>

- Respect for the individual
- Affordable quality and reliability
- Collaborative creativity
- Community contribution and responsibility
- Profitable growth

### **Guidelines for writing our Core Values:**

#### **1. It's who we already are, not who we want to become.**

People frequently confuse timeless core values—what you truly believe and have always believed at a deep core level—with aspirations of what you'd like to see the organization become in the future... Do not mix future aspirations into your true and authentic core values, as this will create justifiable cynicism and destroy the power of your core values. For example, a group that has never held innovation as a core value should not put innovation into its list of core values, even if it sees innovation as a vital strategy for its future.<sup>1</sup>

#### **2. Write what's in your heart.**

Whatever comes to mind is worth writing down... Don't be afraid to put down ideas that feel like they're common sense. What may seem obvious to you isn't necessarily so to anyone else.<sup>2</sup>

#### **3. Take the "should" test.**

You know that internal monologue we have, where we critique the behavior of the people around us? Let's call it the "shoulds." For example: "people should be on time," "people should have more fun," "people should be more

supportive of each other.” If you have “shoulds” in your head about the way people in your organization ought to be behaving (presumably, these are ways that *you* already are behaving), you probably should include those on your list.<sup>2</sup>

### **ALONE WORKING TIME (20 MIN):**

Keeping the guidelines in mind, spend 20 minutes alone writing what you think are our Core Values. Start with writing a list in your notebook / on paper (writing whatever comes to mind) and then refine it. Once you’ve got a short list you like (max 6), write it up on the whiteboard (big enough for us all to see).

### **DISCUSSION TIME (APPROX 90 MIN):**

Everyone take turns reading their Core Values aloud to the group. Then, as a group, discuss which Core Values are true of our organization (keeping the guidelines in mind). Look for instances where multiple people wrote the same (or similar) thing. Select (and modify as needed) a maximum of 6 Core Values that we can all agree upon and get excited about.

### **NOW WHAT?**

Communicate your core values to your organization! Write them down in a place where everyone else can access them. Refer to them and teach them often. Use them to guide the things you do and the decisions you make every day.

## **WORKS CITED:**

- 1 Collins, James. *Vision Framework*. JimCollins.com, 2001. PDF. Web.  
<http://www.jimcollins.com/tools/vision-framework.pdf>
- 2 Weinzwieg, Ari. *A Lapsed Anarchist's Approach to Building a Great Business*. Ann Arbor: Zingerman's Press, 2010. Print.