



“Values series” Part 1

The value of values – taught and modeled

In society, in companies, in sport, and in many other interactions between people, values provide a foundation for positive exchanges and relationships. Many “old-school” values like respect, loyalty, honesty, and consideration still hold weight to varying degrees in the present day – especially at a time like this, when the world is battling the coronavirus pandemic. The cornerstones for value-based cooperation are laid during our formative years. And that’s quite a formidable task when you think about it!

by Bruno Geiger and Sabine Grebien

Values for positive, cooperative interactions

The shift in values that we’ve been hearing so much about has cast a different light on values such as non-violence, fairness, sincerity, tolerance, and mutual respect. How significant is it that this value shift entails major changes across sectors, levels, and even borders? Is this shift real or are values simply being interpreted anew? And have these challenging times not demonstrated once again just how essential our “old” values are to positive, cooperative interactions?

Establishing values, cultures, or even corporate cultures is a lengthy process. A value system or company culture can only be established or changed through consistency and continuity. The key players are the leaders who need to embody and exemplify the values and behaviors they expect from the other members of the community.

This means that our leaders – entrepreneurs, politicians, parents, teachers, managers, trainers, stars, etc. – are essential role models who model values for young people as part of the process of value formation. The behavior of our role models influences us at every age, but naturally most of all during our young, formative years, when they help shape our value system and our patterns of behavior. That’s a huge responsibility for these leaders to bear. It therefore makes sense to gear the education of our young people towards teaching and internalizing value-based competencies.



Showing courage, seizing the initiative, and being prepared to change – three core, value-based competencies.

The leadership and knowledge elite of today and tomorrow need more emotional competencies than ever before ...

Today’s young people are the leaders, movers, and shakers of the 21st century and will therefore safeguard our shared future. That in itself is reason enough to provide these young people with the best training to ensure they can achieve this task with enthusiasm, engagement, and personal satisfaction – and, of course, to the benefit of the society in which they live and work. The current generation of young people are leading the way in academic achievement and knowledge. However, when we look at the challenges facing us all right now, we must ask whether education in these areas is enough. To withstand global competition, young adults also need training in

more value-based competencies. These include:

- joined-up thinking and acting with the “big picture” in mind
- being respectful and authentic with yourself and others
- strategic self-management and resilience
- allowing yourself to become more sensitive – learning how to follow your nose and your gut
- being able to let go and trust in the process – being brave
- developing a mentality focused on being of service to others
- a strong skill-set in the area of personal effectiveness and self-awareness
- a willingness to change and to become an effective agent of change



- the ability to seize the initiative
- a full set of effective communication skills, including the ability to be a good listener

These and other important skills are essential to dealing with modern challenges, such as digitalization.

Education – a milestone on the road to more humanity

Education – including vocational and professional education and training – has an increasingly important role to play in helping young people develop these skills and values. What implications does this have for our educational institutions, starting with primary school and extending to universities and universities of applied science and other institutes of education and training? What does this mean for everyday education?

Both at home and in formal educational settings at any level, we lay the foundations on which we build the values, morals, and, ultimately, the ethics that govern how we live with one another. And, in every well-structured lesson, there are opportunities to incorporate brief examples to show children (or teenagers, young people, or adults) the consequences of value-based versus unethical thinking and behavior. In our work in educational institutions, we notice time and again that it is hugely useful and beneficial to create a neutral framework for discussions and debates on values – this is particularly true for students of business and management.

Boarding schools as a melting pot of cultures and their values – an example of genuine integration of all skills and abilities

Think, for example, of an international boarding school. Not an elite school, but rather a school that is open to all and which values a sense of community and the development of a combination of academic, creative, artistic, and sporting skills. How can such an institution successfully teach over one hundred pupils of mixed genders and ages, from more than 20 countries in 15 time zones, with diverse religions, culture, and languages?

How can all these young people manage to live and work together without problems arising as a result of their diverse backgrounds? What happens when so many cultures and values are all thrown together?

The underlying philosophy, values, and outlook of the teaching staff and supervisors, as well as the institution itself, are what provide all these young people with the same attention and support. Brand names and the size of their parents' houses have no role to play. "External" characteristics earn no privileges. What about the young people themselves? In a school like this, do they form groups based on "external" characteristics, as they would in a "regular" school? No.

A great deal of emphasis is also placed on daily routines and structures and on the combination of an academic and "humanist" education. Small and large meetings, gatherings, awareness-raising events, and special forums on current topics of interest are also held on a regular basis. This develops the pupils' ability to communicate and express themselves, and also gives them the courage to take clear positions in relation to specific problems and challenges.

This structure is enhanced by the groups in which the pupils live. Pupils are grouped into mixed-aged and mixed-gender "families" who live together and share the responsibility of caring for their accommodation. This, together with the close interactions that take place with the groups, make these citizens of the world more sensitive to and considerate of others.

This "community of values" achieves unity in diversity with relative ease, simply by teaching and demonstrating to the young people that everyone belongs. An essential component is the teaching staff, comprised of individuals who are self-aware and uninhibited and who cultivate a flexible and open way of thinking and acting that is free from taboos. This leads to an open flow and exchange of information and a connection between the various knowledge carriers, management, employees, teachers, and pupils. And to a lasting ability to form open-minded, tolerant opinions.

With this in mind ...

Modern management requires an interplay of soft and hard facts. Effective leadership, teamwork, and the fundamental aspects of personality are formed in our youth through active and reflective engagement.

Successful development as a team player in business and in the private sphere doesn't just happen through the acquisition of knowledge – it also requires guidance and rules and the modeling of behavior and adherence to values by others. Engaged and inspiring value-based leadership and collaboration is enriching. Being a role model for values is fun, refreshing, and contemporary. It meets the needs of our new world. And, by the way, it won't hurt your balance sheet!



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