

How May Values-Based Coaching Contribute Towards Business Performance

Research

Author: Victor Borchers



VALUES AND SUSTAINED BUSINESS PERFORMANCE

*“How may Values-Based Coaching
Contribute towards
Sustained Business Performance?”*

ORAL PRESENTATION

Of the PDF 4860 Work Based Research Project

by

VICTOR BORCHERS

STUDENT NUMBER 2332176

to

I-Coach

Faculty of Middlesex University,
Professional Development Foundation,
National Centre for Work Based Learning Partnerships

OCTOBER 2005

Cape Town



VALUES AND SUSTAINED BUSINESS PERFORMANCE

“Most people loathe talking about value-systems; they regard them as vague abstractions”.

In Search of Excellence Tom Peters, Bob Waterman

“People don’t like talking about values. Values are private, and talking about values is somewhat like talking about sex” *How to Have a Beautiful Mind* Edward de Bono

Their question is: ***“Why talk about Values or Research their Impact?”***

OVERVIEW OF PRESENTATION

- I. **Why** I chose to Research Values and Business Performance
- II. **How** I chose to do the Research
- III. **What** were the Findings and Conclusions?
- IV. **Overall Conclusion**
- V. **Recommendations**

I. WHY I CHOSE TO RESEARCH

Values and Sustained Business Performance

a) Own Experience

I came to understand the Dramatic shift in my business experience was due to the influence of my core values

b) Pro Bono Coaching

Clients who evaluated their coaching experience claimed that the work done on personal values made the greatest impact upon them in their business lives.

c) Business Literature

Certain books played a significant part in my initial interest in understanding of personal values, viz:

- *In Search of Excellence* – Peters and Waterman
- *Built to Last* – Collins and Porras
- *Managing Performance, Managing People* – Ainsworth, Smith and Millership

II. HOW I CHOSE TO RESEARCH

Values and Sustained Business Performance

a) Sample

- 3 Organisation with 7 executive clients grew to 5 with 18 executive clients/ coachees
- Different sectors: Market Research, Fruit Export, Hospitality, Manufacturing, Information Systems
- Executives ranged from Senior Managers to General Managers and 1 MD. All were experienced business people and 4 had Masters Degrees.



b) Project Activity

During December 2004, I approached organisations and requested permission to coach executives with regard to business performance using the Performance Equation Model found in Managing Performance, Managing People viz

$$\text{Performance} = Re \times C \times E \times V(P8 \times Rw) + \text{Feedback}$$

- **12 sessions were held** in Cape Town, Hermanus and a Game Lodge adjacent to the Kruger Game Park
- **Raw data was collected** via taped interviews which were followed by written submissions. I used the same open-ended questions for both the interviews and written submissions
- **Data Analysis:** I selected a qualitative approach with the Soft Systems Methodology
- **In Terms of Reliability,** I employed both taped interviews and written submissions. In terms of Validity I increased my sample from 7 to 18 clients.
- **In Order to Interpret** the raw data, and because of the large sample, I moved from an inductive to a deductive approach in which I compared the findings of the project with Literature review

c) Management of Ethics

I have observed

- The privacy of the participants and the organisations
- The voluntary nature of participation and the right to withdraw from the process
- Maintained confidentiality
- I have not harassed or offered inducements nor placed any pressure upon the participants
- I emphasised that participants were not compelled to answer any or all of the questions either in the interview or in the written submissions
- No “invention” of data has occurred and the data will not be used to advantage or disadvantage any participant.
- The tapes used in the interview will be wiped clean.

d) Creation of a Framework of 9 Questions

In order to compare the Research Project Findings with the Literature Review, I created a framework of 9 questions which I then used to arrive at learning and conclusions

III. WHAT ARE THE FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT?

The findings of Research Projects do not exist in a vacuum. It was therefore appropriate that I compared the Research Project findings with those from my literature review in order to reach conclusions.

WHAT WAS THE EXPERIENCE OF THE INTERVENTION?

Since the project was undertaken to explore how Values-based Coaching may contribute towards Sustained Business Performance, it was also important to establish what the experience, the feelings and the resultant actions were of the participants with regard to the coaching intervention.

a) Feelings, Experience and Actions of the Intervention

- **Feelings:**
 - “I felt emotional and vulnerable in the beginning, but this changed and I became comfortable and I began to look forward to the sessions”
 - “After the sessions, I felt good”
 - “I felt doubtful, but I began to trust and felt content”



- **Experience**
 - “It was a positive learning experience”
 - “I learned about myself”
 - “I found it uplifting and something to look forward to”
 - “It forced me to think”

- **Relevance and Benefits**
 - “It ranged from deep personal discovery to increased insight into performance at work”
 - “It highlighted my work performance and my value system”
 - “Coaching is better than a seminar or workshop which brushes over things”
 - “The result of this intervention was a personal quest to understand my own values”

- b) Advice offered on how to improve the coaching intervention**
 - “It would be helpful if the coach had a library of books to loan coachees”
 - “Shadowing would be helpful. There should be real-life interventions with my superior and my subordinates”.
 - “More work should be done on business principles and on the business context”

- c) Unsolicited Comments:**
 - “The coach must be familiar with business demands – for me, this is significant. I don’t want some young person with book knowledge, but one who has hit the road and walked the turf. It is important for the coach to have a level of experience”
 - “Success is directly related to the relationship between coach and coachee – this must be built on trust and respect”

- d) Actions that Resulted:**
 - “I have restructured my senior management team and I use values to decide whom I will employ”
 - “I have become more assertive and I speak my mind. I have become more confident to say ‘this is who I am’ and ‘this is how it must be done’”
 - “I delegate much more and take care of other matters”
 - “Knowing my values had caused me to change my management style”
 - “It has allowed me to unwrap my gift and share it with others”
 - “I have become a better manager of people and less focused on technical things”
 - “My understanding of E.Q. has been raised – I now understand better the concept of self-control and self-management and how to work with and manage others”
 - “My management style has shifted dramatically. The mood among my staff has changed completely”
 - “I have focused on some of my values that did not measure up to what the company required eg interaction with people”
 - “I am more focused, purposeful and focus on important matters. I am less caught up in urgent things and more focused on important things”
 - “My mantra has become ‘whom shall I hire and how shall I spend my time?’”
 - “I have become more tolerant and approachable”

WHAT WERE THE FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS OF RESEARCH PROJECT?

1. What are Values?

a) Literature Review

- Because values are deep-seated, intangible and lie at the very centre of who we are, they are difficult to define.
- The best definition comes found was
“Values are principles, standards or one’s own judgement of what is valuable or important in one’s life” Oxford Complete Wordfinder
- **“Values are drivers of behaviour. They are coded into our brains”** Fifth Discipline Handbook Peter Senge
- **“Values define each of us as unique and special”** What Matters Most Hyrum Smith
- **“Values are anything but soft – they also deal with hard performance issues and set requirements for leaders”** And Dignity for All Despain and Converse
- **“Values are not chosen, they are intrinsic”** Co-active Coaching Whitworth et al
- **“Most of what one does is directed by values”** Managers for Tomorrow Rohrer et al
- **“Don’t ignore values as every decision we make involves values and every question asks for an assessment of values”** The Six Value Medals Edward de Bono

b) Research Project

Findings and Conclusion

- At the start of the coaching intervention, only 1 of the 18 participants could define the meaning of values viz “it’s my life principles”. However the literature review records much of the body of knowledge that has been acquired and this will enable those who have started this journey to wrestle with what values are to clarify their thinking and deepen their understanding and employment of their values.
- The initial 12 sessions of the coaching intervention is not sufficient to adequately deal with the meaning and importance of personal core values.

2. Are Individuals Aware of their Values?

a) Literature Review

- Both the existing body of knowledge found in relevant literature and the 18 participants agree that values are deep-seated; **“they lie at the centre of who we are, they are a core part of our being”** (What Matters Most Hyrum Smith)
- **“They are deeply held views which are coded in our brains”** (Fifth Discipline Handbook. Peter Senge)
- Because values don’t exist on the “surface”, individuals are not readily aware of them and **“few people have a well articulated system of values”**. (Managers for Tomorrow Rorer et al)
- To get to know and understand your core values, you have to drill down. You need to discover, identify, articulate and define your value drivers. To do this you need to examine your behaviour, ask yourself what is important to you and what gets you up in the mornings.
- **“Values don’t stare us in the face and we are not sensitive to them”** (The Six Value Medals. Edward de Bono)



b) Research Project

Findings

- “I had no idea what my values were, I would never have considered them. I didn’t understand values – I lived more on the surface”
- “Values are like breathing and heartbeat; they are there but you are not aware of them, however they are at work and have enormous influence over us”
- “The Values document helped. Once I began to identify and verbalise my values, they seemed to jump from the sub-consciousness into the foreground”

Conclusion

- Coaching is more than helpful in helping individuals establish their core values. Coaching is not a fad, an option, an extra, a “nice to do” in this area; it can be of vital importance and offers a gateway to the understanding of what drives one”

3. How are Values Formed?

a) Literature Review

- Relevant literature indicates that values are formed from childhood to early adulthood. Family, religion, schooling, peers and circumstances are the main sources. **“The generation of values is often through the need to be loved and approved of, the need to feel we belong as well as for emotional well-being and self-esteem”** (Self Esteem McKay et al)
- **“Many go back to childhood, we take others as adults”** (The Fifth Discipline Handbook Peter Senge)

b) Findings:

- Whereas participants were somewhat aware of the influence of early childhood on the formation of their values, it was the participants who had religious commitment who declared that their belief had strongly influence their moral values.

c) Conclusion

- Neither the literature review, nor the participants raised the possibility of the influence of inherited genes, or of a pre-disposition towards certain values.
- This is an area that is of interest to me and could do with additional research.

4. Do Values Determine Behaviour?

a) Literature Review

- Literature states that values are strong determinants of our actions. Values decide what we will do. **“Inner values strongly influence our outward behaviour. Our natural inclination is for our actions to be consistent with our deeply held core beliefs”** (What Matters Most Hiram Smith)
- **“Logic can tell you what to do but values decide what you will do”** (The Six Value Medals Edward de Bono)

b) Findings

- “My values influence the way I operate and make decisions. I also look at my employees core values before I set new challenges”
- “Discovering my values has changed the way I work with people and I am now more careful with my emails. I engage more with people and I am more flexible”.
- “I focus on my sub-ordinates instead of my superiors. I am also more careful not to say hurtful things”



- “I focus on relationships, I am more approachable and I’ve dropped certain boundaries”.
- “I consider my values when making decisions and they influence how I project myself and communicate”

c) Conclusions

- There is strong evidence that the discovery of values impacts behaviour. This is to be expected as behaviour is a function of values.
- Values, not logic, guides and even determines our actions. Logic may indicate what the best choice is, but values decide what we will do.

5. Do Values Impact on Business Performance?

a) Literature Review

- The relevant literature is unanimous in claiming that the impact of values on the performance of individuals in the workplace is significant.
- Peters and Watterman say **“Values bring out the great energies in people. Beliefs, not organisational or admin skills create resilience”** (*In Search Of Excellence*)
- Elliot Jacques in *Executive Leadership* states **“understanding and employing values makes good business sense. It can unleash a torrent of innovation and support that transforms a business.**
- **“It is our values that move us, bind us together or push us apart”** (*Executive Leadership* Elliot Jacques)
- Despain in *And Dignity for All* says **“Our division was struggling. Values made a significant impact. Values set high standards for performance. When shared values are owned by people you can expect unbelievable, sustainable performance”**

b) Findings

- “Values impacted my management style and it is reflected in my staff. The impact was intense but very clear. It empowered me. It was like a door opening”.
- “The impact has been significant and it gave me an awareness to do the right thing the first time”.
- “I had a breakthrough. Discovering my values has created a craving for knowledge and I have started to study”
- “I was liberated. I feel motivated. The experience has been life changing. Values have impacted upon me and my performance at work. It has given me clarity on personal and work life”
- “The focus on values has enhanced my assertiveness and has definitely impacted my work. Before, I danced on the stage behind closed curtains; now the curtains are open”

c) Conclusion

- This is the very heart of my research project. The response was huge and positive. All 18 participants, without exception, said the impact was more than meaningful. Some said it was significant, life-changing and a break-through.
- Others said it empowered them, drove them and gave them insight. Everyone benefited.
- We can’t measure that the impact is sustainable over a long period as the duration of the coaching intervention is too short for that purpose. But I believe that if the discoveries of core values are at gut level, if they are lived with passion, then the result will be sustained business performance.

6. Should Values be considered before Action is taken?

a) Literature Review

- ***‘It’s better to understand who you are, where you are going, for where you are going will almost certainly change’*** (Built to Last Collins and Peters)
- ***“Before you set goals, identify your values”*** (What Matters Most Hiram Smith)
- ***“Prioritise your values before you act; the rule of thumb is not to do anything which goes against your personal, moral and ethical values”*** (The Six Value Medals Edward de Bono)

b) Findings

- “I consider my values and drivers and then decide accordingly. It helps me make better decisions”
- “I consider the applicants’ values before deciding whom I should employ”
- “I uses values to make future decisions”

c) Conclusion

- The dissonance that comes from within as a result of acting contrary to one’s values is real and is debilitating.
- One must take into consideration and prioritise one’s values before deciding future action. Just working with the pros and cons of possible action is insufficient
- Understand who you are and what your value drivers are before you act.

7. Do our Values Change over Time?

a) Literature Review

- There are two main schools of thought as to whether an individuals values change over time. The authors of Managing Performance, Managing People say that it “unlikely to change a candidate’s value system, not even by “buying” acceptance.
- By contrast, Senge in the Fifth Discipline Handbook says “deep belief and assumptions can change as experience changes”.
- Goleman in *“The New Leaders”* claims that ***“values change throughout life related to events such as marriage, having children and ‘being fired’”***
- However de Bono in *“How to Have a Beautiful Mind’* says ***“fundamental values don’t change with circumstances eg committing murder, telling lies, stealing”*** He goes on to make a very important observation and says ***“values may not change but their priority changes”***

b) Findings

- Participants were uncertain about whether their values change in different circumstance and over time. Most were still wrestling with what values meant to them. The intervention was a voyage of discovery and they were still discovering.
- However one participant said “I felt I can’t change my values and only I can discover them”.

c) Conclusion

- This is the only area where there was disagreement in my literature review. My co-researchers could not, with any certainty, state what their experience was.
- It is my opinion that our gut values don’t change and that, like de Bono, I believe that our priorities may change in different circumstances and over time.

8. Does a Poor Match between Personal and Corporate Values reduce Performance?

a) Literature Review

- The authors of *“Managing Performance, Managing People”*
- Advise that **“what needs to be avoided is conflict between individual and organisational values, there needs to be a reasonable fit between a person’s value system and the values recognised, reflected and practised by the organisation”**.
- Their firm belief is that a **“poor values match reduces performance and the values gap can grow”**.
- Their conclusion is that **“irrespective of the employees’ skills or qualifications, if they lack the necessary commitment to the company values and strategic direction, they’ll never perform to expectation”**.
- Furthermore, they are convinced that **“you are unlikely to change a candidates performance value system, not even by ‘buying acceptance’”**

b) Findings

- “I understand where my values are aligned with those of the organisation”
- “I have looked at both my values and those of the organisation”
- “I must map my values and those of the company and close the gap”
- “If my values are not utilised, I will apply elsewhere”
- “We now need to establish the company value, what we are and what we ascribe to”
- “I recognise how company values affect my own performance”
- “The senior executives need help (with their values); it affects my productivity. I’m rebellious but cautious. Life’s difficult”.
- “There should be one set of company values. These must be embedded in our goals and objectives and be part of our mission statement. Values fashion strategy”

c) Conclusion

- The research project did not focus on company values, but they were highlighted when individual participants discovered their own values. Not only were the gaps identified, but individuals were frustrated by the lack of attention their organisation gave to company values. Some were angry because they could not add personal value to the organisations effort. Nearly everyone said the company’s values were just words on the wall and in that sense, were meaningless.
- For one person, the discovery of his own values highlighted the importance of his organisation employing values as the source of motivation, and as the unifier of all action throughout the company.
- Individual and company values need to be seriously considered when candidates are being considered for appointment or promotion.
- It was essential for employees at General Election to evidence in their actions, decisions and lives, support for the company values. If there was no such evidence, dismissal would surely follow.



9. What is the underlying imperative of these research projects findings?

a) Literature Review

- The *Authors of Built to Last* state categorically that ***“the crucial variable is not the content of core values, but how deeply the company believes, how consistently it lives, breathes and expresses their values”***
- For them ***“core values and purpose must be passionately held at gut level”*** Core values and purpose give not only organisations, but also individuals the stability in a changing world to be able to change and succeed.
- For them the only true reliable source of successful performance for both organisations and individuals are ***“a strong inner core and the willingness to change and adapt everything except the core”***
- Hiram Smith in *What Matters Most* says that individuals can ***“draw upon the power that comes from knowing”*** their core values. He writes that by ***“identifying, clarifying and describing what your values are, you will bring power into your life. This will enable you to change the behaviour that causes you pain”***. His conclusion is ***“by identifying and clarifying our governing values, we can tap into their power and increase our personal effectiveness”***.

b) Findings

- “My values define and differentiate me”
- “I discovered my core values and this has given me perspective and helped me understand why people react to me”
- “By defining my values I have a solid foundation and boundaries”
- “Discovering my values has brought perspective to my life”
- “Discovering my values was a motivating experience and my energy levels have gone up”
- “When I am stressed I focus on my values and this drives me forward. Values give me drive and they revitalise me. They have helped me grow, think and enable me to achieve”

c) Conclusion

- Relevant literature is unanimous that what we value most deeply will move us most powerfully.
- Key value drivers motivate personal and organisational performance and productivity.
- In order to be effective, to deliver, to perform, it is essential that individuals discover, identify, clarify, and articulate what their values are. In doing so, they are able to draw on an inner power that sets them free, gives them direction and empowers them.



IV. OVERALL CONCLUSION

- **The aim** of the Research Project was to gain deeper understanding of the relationship between personal core values and Sustained Business Performance.
- **The objective** of the Research Project was to determine whether Values-Based Coaching contributes towards Sustained Business Performance.

In terms of the aim and the objective above, I submit that

- The Research Project which involved the study of seventeen books for my Literature Review and my coaching at 5 organisations of 18 Business executives, plus the Research that subsequently followed, has enabled me to gain a deep understanding and appreciation of the relationship and influence of Personal Core Values has over Sustained Business Performance.
- In terms of whether Values-Based Coaching contributes towards Sustained Business Performance. My opinion is that it has provided evidence that strongly supports its efficacy. The Findings of the Research Project indicates that the participating clients were able, as a result of the intervention, to verify, classify, and articulate their personal core values and in so doing their work performance was enhanced, in some cases greatly so.

The Overall Conclusion of the Research Projects are:

- Personal Core Values are intrinsic, intangible, hidden from sight and therefore effort needs to be invested in discovering, identifying and articulating them.
- Personal Core Values play an inordinate part in contributing towards business performance. They are the drivers behind, or inhibitors of, personal performance in the work place.
- Individuals and organisations would do well to acknowledge, understand and draw upon personal core values as the prime motivators or inhibitors of personal performance and productivity.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

- Business organisations, business people, and the community of Businesses should ensure that personal and corporate core values be identified and that the intervention of coaching is an appropriate vehicle to be used.
- Individuals and corporates should “live” their lives at “gut level” and not relegate them to words on paper or displayed on walls.
- That business organisations not only enable their personnel to identify and live their personal core values, but that the organisations should enshrine “our corporate values” in the lives of every staff member, that the corporate values be reflected in job descriptions and be a vital part of regular appraisals.
- That “Our Values” be a prominent feature of the Mission and Vision Statements and become the yardstick and norm for all decision making in the organisation.
- That the organisation has as the “boss”, not the CEO, but “Our Values”.

**VICTOR BORCHERS – MASTER COACH
EXECUTIVE COACHING**

17 WORCESTER STREET HOUT BAY
POST NET SUITE 115 HOUT BAY 7872 CAPE TOWN SOUTH AFRICA

TEL: +27 21 790 1544 FAX: +27 21 790 5773 MOBILE: +27 83 628 2247
EMAIL: victor@execucoach.co.za WEBSITE: <http://www.execucoach.co.za>