

The Measurement of Values: the Business Case

How do you excuse betraying thousands of investors who entrusted you with their life savings? How do you excuse deceiving 200 employees who spent most of their working life with you? How do you excuse lying to a brother and two sons who spent their entire lives helping to build a successful business? How do you excuse lying to a wife who stood by you for 50 years?

What values does Bernie Madoff hold that lead to such a disaster? ...

What are values?

When looking at personality, values are terms used to describe an individual¹. The influence of values on our thoughts and behaviours is paramount, as they determine our social attitudes, ideologies and behaviours². How an individual believes they 'should' or 'ought' to behave is specified by the values that they hold³.

The diverse social challenges we experience in life help each individual to develop a system of value priorities, where values are ordered by importance. It is this 'hierarchy' of values within individuals that differentiates people from one another.

Why are values important?

Values influence an individual's behaviour, and importantly, values are relatively stable. By exploring people's values you can also gain insight into their beliefs, interests⁴, attitudes⁵, needs⁶ and preferences⁷.

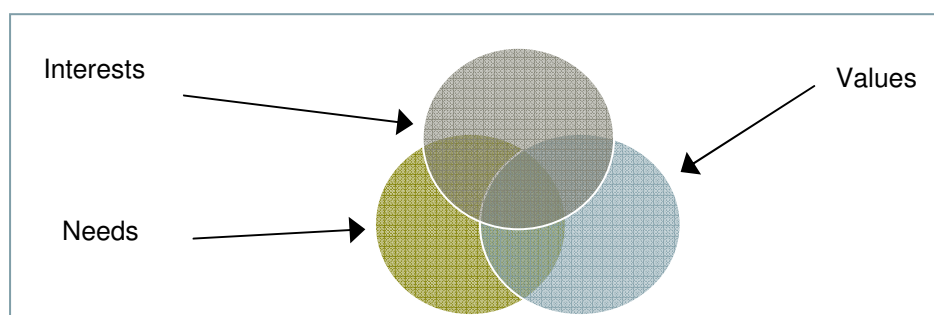
The degree to which an employee fits with an organisation is dependent upon the values of both parties. The perceived and actual congruence of values between an individual and the organisation are positively related to emotional outcomes such as involvement, organisational commitment and job satisfaction⁸ - all important antecedents to high performance.

Why should values be measured?

The measurement of values offers businesses a chance to assess the degree of similarity between the values of the employee, and the values of the organisation or those deemed important for a job. If an employee's values are not in line with the values of the organisation, then they may demonstrate lower levels of productivity or even show increased intent to leave the organisation⁸. The ability to measure values allows recruiters to assess the fit between individual and organisational values.

Values as a personality measure – the challenges.

Values can overlap with other characteristics of personality:



It is therefore important to correctly define what aspects of values are assessed and the relationship between them.

It is possible to categorise values as: **interpersonal values** (what is valued from the interaction with others) and **personal values** (what is valued as a personal motivator) of an individual as separate entities. The relationship between interpersonal and personal values can highlight the unique characteristics an individual holds. For example, an individual who places value on decision making, having structure and conforming yet does not value working independently may well become demotivated when working on their own. Being part of a well structured and organised team may inspire this individual. Looking at the interpersonal values here of independence and conformity can inform us of how that individual is likely to interact with others. Adding such information to your recruitment and development initiatives can provide an additional, yet powerful perspective as to how, and why, individuals operate at work.

Values are stable attributes of personality, particularly those that an individual holds as most important. Those values of less importance are likely to move a little within an individual's internal hierarchy of values⁹. These values are considered to be the most malleable, and can move to meet those values of an organisation.

The verdict?

Values are complex and require careful consideration in recruitment and development. Measured in detail and along side other relevant information such as personality traits, they can provide accurate and in-depth insight into an individual. Recognising the relationship between personal and interpersonal values is paramount in beginning to understand and assess behaviour.

Improving our understanding of both our own and others' value hierarchy is an important step towards improving self awareness and developing appreciation of contrasting values between individuals and within teams.

Many leaders throughout history have been driven by deeply-held personal values. These values may resonate with some but to others they may seem abhorrent. The point is that personal values are incredibly subjective. What one person values may be very different to what another values. **In the context of business, however, many organisations require there to be a level of fit between the cultural or Brand values and those of the individual.**

And finally this is what Bernie Madoff's attorney thinks:

"Mr. Madoff is a deeply flawed individual" - Ira Sorkin (Bernie Madoff's attorney)

What values does Sosie measure?

The Sosie questionnaire from Pearson TalentLens measures three distinct areas:

- **Personality Traits**
- **Interpersonal Values**
- **Personal Values**

Personality Traits

Sosie measures EIGHT key aspects of personality including factors similar to the Big Five. There is a wealth of evidence to indicate that the measurement of an individual's personality traits is useful in a range of contexts which include recruitment and development interventions.

Values

Values are important to both individuals and business. Many organisations have Corporate and Brand values which should be reflected in their products and services and in all interactions with their stakeholders and current and prospective customers. Staff members are, therefore, expected to reflect and demonstrate these values in how they think and behave. From an individual's perspective, personal satisfaction is dependent, to a large extent, upon the degree to which values find expression in everyday life.

Measuring values is seen to be important because values may be instrumental in determining what people do, the effort they put in to what they do and how well they perform. An individual's immediate decisions as well as their long-range plans are influenced, consciously or unconsciously, by their value system.

It is worth noting that values on their own may not predict future job success but measuring them can certainly help formulate interview questions and hypotheses which can be explored in both selection and development interventions. Current research¹⁰ suggests that, in many instances, the **mindset** of someone applying for a role can be as important, or even more important, than their skills. In today's fast moving world many employers cannot say with certainty what skills will be required by their staff in ten years time but they know exactly the sort of people they will want working for them in terms of their mindset.

Measuring values can be useful, therefore, to help both individuals and organisations consider whether a role or organisational culture is aligned in terms of their values.

Measuring personality traits **and** values combined together can provide a richer starting point to explore mindset than personality traits alone.

▪ Interpersonal Values

Sosie measures SIX interpersonal values involving the individual's relationships to other people or their relationships to him/her. These were determined after reviewing the literature at hand which led initially to ten important value constructs. Further research, testing and analysis carried out during the development of the questionnaire and subsequent factor analysing of responses led to six distinct interpersonal values.

▪ Personal Values

Sosie measures SIX personal values, which the author deemed important in determining the manner in which individuals cope with everyday living.

Pearson TalentLens June 2011. For further information about Sosie, please contact TalentLens on 020 7010 2866

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