Defining Our Core Team Values

Turn the words on your wall into behaviors you can see, coach, and thank people for.



Three Words Every Team Uses (and Few Agree On)

Ask ten people on your team what your mission is and you will probably get ten different answers. Every one of them means well.

But when people are working toward ten different missions, the team is not really a team.

Clarity is a leadership job.

Before we write anything today, here is what each word means in this room.

VISION

Where are we going?

The future we are committed to creating.

Your vision is the picture of what success looks like when your organization fulfills its potential and makes the impact it hopes to make.

If it does not stretch people a little, it is a forecast, not a vision.

The future (3-5 years ahead)

MISSION

Why do we exist?

What we do, whom we serve, and why it matters.

Your mission is the purpose behind the work you do right now. It names what you do, who benefits, and the difference you exist to make.

If your people can't say it clearly, you do not have a team mission.

Present and ongoing

VALUES

How do we show up?

The principles and behaviors that guide how we work.

Your values are the standards everyone is expected to live out with each other, with customers, and in every decision you make along the way.

If you cannot see it, coach it, and thank people for it, it is not a value.

Every day

	It answers	It sounds like	Time frame
Vision	**Where are we going?**	A world where...	*The future*
Mission	**Why do we exist?**	We do this for them so...	*Present and ongoing*
Values	**How will we show up?**	We will always...	*Every day*

Part 1: What Matters Most to You?

Great team values start with leaders who know their own. Work through these steps on your own before we talk as a group.

1. Read through the list below. Definitions start on page 9.
2. Put a **star** next to at least three values you inherited from family, mentors, or early jobs.
3. Check your **top ten.** Choose carefully. If everything is important, nothing is.
4. Rank your ten from #1 to #10 on the next page.
5. Circle the **three** that best describe who you are at your best.
6. Share with a partner why those three made your list, and what experiences shaped them.

☐ accountability	☐ efficiency	☐ kindness
☐ achievement	☐ enthusiasm	☐ loyalty
☐ adaptability	☐ excellence	☐ ownership
☐ appreciation	☐ fairness	☐ patience
☐ balance	☐ forgiveness	☐ persistence
☐ candor	☐ fun	☐ reliability
☐ collaboration	☐ growth	☐ respect
☐ commitment	☐ honesty	☐ safety
☐ compassion	☐ humility	☐ service
☐ courage	☐ inclusion	☐ simplicity
☐ creativity	☐ initiative	☐ tact
☐ curiosity	☐ innovation	☐ transparency
☐ customer focus	☐ integrity	☐ unity

My Values

Values I inherited (from family, mentors, early jobs):

My top ten, ranked:

1.	**6.**
2.	**7.**
3.	**8.**
4.	**9.**
5.	**10.**

My top three:

Why these three? What happened in my life that shaped them?

Your personal values belong to you.

Team values are different.

They are the few standards everyone in the room agrees to live out and be held accountable for.

That is where we go next.

Part 2: From Me to We

Now we move from what matters to each of you to what this team will stand for together.

1. Each leader writes their top three values on separate sticky notes.
2. Post them on the wall and group similar values together.
3. Look at the clusters. Which values keep showing up?
4. Talk through the questions below as a team.
5. Vote. Each leader gets three dots to place on the values that matter most for this team.
6. Agree on **three to five** team values. People cannot live out what they cannot remember.

Which values do we already live when we are at our best?

Which value, if we lived it fully, would solve our biggest problem right now?

Which value do we claim but do not consistently live?

Our team values:

Part 3: What Does It Look Like?

A value is just a vague idea until you translate it into specific behaviors.

Don't assume everyone already knows what it means. Define it together, with examples…

Example: *If RESPECT is a team value, it might look like starting meetings on time, listening without interrupting, and disagreeing with ideas instead of people. It does NOT look like side conversations...*

TEAM VALUE #1: _____

What it LOOKS like (specific behaviors we will see and hear):

What it does NOT look like:

How we will recognize and thank people for living it:

TEAM VALUE #2: _____

What it LOOKS like (specific behaviors we will see and hear):

What it does NOT look like:

How we will recognize and thank people for living it:

TEAM VALUE #3: _____

What it LOOKS like (specific behaviors we will see and hear):

What it does NOT look like:

How we will recognize and thank people for living it:

TEAM VALUE #4: _____

What it LOOKS like (specific behaviors we will see and hear):

What it does NOT look like:

How we will recognize and thank people for living it:

Choose more than four values? Copy this page so every value gets defined.

Pressure Test Your Values

Before you call it done, run every team value through these questions together.

- ☐ Could a new hire watch us for a week and name our values?
- ☐ Is every value defined by specific behaviors, not just a nice word?
- ☐ Would we hire, promote, or let someone go based on these values?
- ☐ Are we willing to address it when someone, including a leader, does not live them?
- ☐ Do our values support our mission and help move us toward our vision?
- ☐ Can every leader in this room name all of them from memory?

Make It Stick

Values on a wall do nothing. Values that leaders model, coach, and recognize every day change how a team works.

- **Model them first.** Your team watches what you do far more closely than what you say.
- **Thank people for them.** Name the value and the specific behavior, in front of others.
- **Coach the gaps.** When a behavior misses the standard, address it privately and specifically.
- **Build them into how you hire and review.** Interview questions, onboarding, and performance conversations should all point back to them to define your culture.
- **Tell the stories.** Open meetings with an example of a teammate living one of your values.

Our Commitments

Three things this leadership team will do in the next 30 days to bring our values to life:

1.

2.

3.

A value you do not model is a value you do not have.

Defining the Values

Use these definitions as a starting point.

The most important definition is the one your team writes together in Part 3.

Accountability Owning your results and your misses. You do what you said you would do, and when you fall short, you say so first and fix it. **Looks like:** *reporting a problem before someone else finds it.*

Achievement Getting meaningful work finished. You take pride in measurable results and in seeing goals all the way through. **Looks like:** *tracking progress toward a goal and closing it out.*

Adaptability Adjusting quickly when plans or conditions change, so you stay effective instead of stuck. **Looks like:** *shifting priorities without complaint when a customer need changes.*

Appreciation Noticing what others contribute and saying so out loud. Gratitude that is specific and sincere. **Looks like:** *thanking a coworker for a specific action, in front of others.*

Balance Protecting the energy people need to do great work over the long haul. You respect boundaries, yours and everyone else's. **Looks like:** *holding nonurgent requests until the workday starts.*

Candor Saying what needs to be said, clearly and early. You share honest feedback with care instead of hinting or avoiding. **Looks like:** *raising a concern in the meeting, not in the parking lot afterward.*

Collaboration Working across roles and departments to accomplish what none of us could do alone. **Looks like:** *asking for input from the people affected before a decision is final.*

Commitment Giving full effort to what you agree to do. You finish what you start and keep your promises. **Looks like:** *meeting deadlines, or renegotiating them before they pass.*

Compassion Caring about the people behind the work. You notice when someone is struggling, and you respond. **Looks like:** *checking in on a teammate who seems off.*

Courage Doing the right thing when it is uncomfortable or unpopular. **Looks like:** *admitting a mistake, or questioning a bad idea from someone senior.*

Creativity Bringing fresh ideas and new approaches to old problems. **Looks like:** *offering two possible solutions instead of one.*

Curiosity Asking questions before reaching conclusions. You want to understand, not just be right. **Looks like:** *saying "help me understand" before disagreeing.*

Customer Focus Seeing the work through the customer's eyes and making decisions that serve them. **Looks like:** *following up to make sure a solved problem stayed solved.*

Efficiency Getting results without wasting time, money, or energy, and without sacrificing quality. **Looks like:** *ending a meeting early when the work is done.*

Enthusiasm Bringing positive energy that lifts the people around you. **Looks like:** *volunteering for a new project instead of waiting to be assigned.*

Excellence Doing your best work and caring about the details others might skip. **Looks like:** *reviewing your own work before you hand it off.*

Fairness Treating people consistently, without favoritism, and making decisions others can trust. **Looks like:** *holding top performers to the same standards as everyone else.*

Forgiveness Giving people room to recover from mistakes, and letting it go once things are made right. **Looks like:** *not bringing up an issue that has already been resolved.*

Fun Creating moments of laughter and connection that make hard work feel lighter. **Looks like:** *celebrating a team win together.*

Growth Continuously learning and getting better, and helping others do the same. **Looks like:** *asking for feedback at the end of a project.*

Honesty Telling the truth, even when it is inconvenient. **Looks like:** *giving a realistic timeline instead of the answer people want to hear.*

Humility Knowing you don't have all the answers, and giving credit freely. **Looks like:** *saying "I was wrong" or "that was her idea."*

Inclusion Making sure every voice is heard and every person feels they belong. **Looks like:** *inviting the quietest person into the conversation.*

Initiative Acting on what needs to be done without waiting to be told. **Looks like:** *fixing a broken process instead of working around it.*

Innovation Looking for better ways to do things and being willing to test them. **Looks like:** *piloting a new idea on a small scale.*

Integrity Making sure your words and actions match, whether or not anyone is watching. **Looks like:** *keeping a commitment nobody would have checked.*

Kindness Choosing generosity in how you treat people, especially when you are busy or stressed. **Looks like:** *offering help before being asked.*

Loyalty Standing by your team and your commitments when things get hard. **Looks like:** *speaking well of teammates who are not in the room.*

Ownership Treating the results as if they are yours. There is no "not my job." **Looks like:** *seeing a problem through to resolution even when it crosses departments.*

Patience Staying steady and respectful when things take longer than you want. **Looks like:** *explaining something a second time without frustration.*

Persistence Continuing to take action through setbacks and resistance. **Looks like:** *trying a third approach after the first two fail.*

Reliability Being someone others can count on without reminders. **Looks like:** *delivering what you promised, when you promised it.*

Respect Treating every person with dignity, regardless of role, title, or opinion. **Looks like:** *listening without interrupting.*

Safety Protecting the physical and emotional wellbeing of everyone on the team, so people can do their work and speak up without fear. **Looks like:** *stopping work to correct an unsafe condition.*

Service Putting the needs of others first and making a difference in their work and lives. **Looks like:** *helping a teammate hit their deadline after you hit yours.*

Simplicity Making things clear and easy for the people who depend on you. **Looks like:** *replacing a long email thread with a quick conversation.*

Tact Telling the truth in a way people can actually hear it. **Looks like:** *giving corrective feedback privately and specifically.*

Transparency Sharing information openly so people can make good decisions. **Looks like:** *explaining the reason behind a decision, not just the decision.*

Unity Putting the team's success ahead of individual or department wins. **Looks like:** *celebrating another department's success as your own.*



TALK WITH SEAN ABOUT YOUR NEXT TEAM EVENT!

Sean Glaze is a workplace culture speaker, team building facilitator, author, and leadership coach who delivers experiences that ignite team performance.

As a successful basketball coach, Sean gained valuable insights on turning talent into team performance, and he founded Great Results Team Building to strengthen collaboration, increase accountability, and build Sticky Cultures that inspire more profitable teamwork. His engaging conference keynotes and custom team building programs have helped clients like Cisco, John Deere, the CDC, and Emory University.

Sean is the best-selling author of Rapid Teamwork, What Effective Leaders DO, The 10 Commandments of Winning Teammates, Staying Coachable , and The Sticky 11 Checklist - all entertaining books that provide insights and tactics to accelerate the growth of leaders and teams!



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