Aligning Employee Development With Organizational Objectives: A Case for Value-based Training

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Training and development are often visualized as a means to facilitate learning of jobrelated behaviours in order to improve performance. The focus of training has traditionally been on teaching facts, modifying attitudes and behaviours, and developing skills. Value systems, which form the basis, as it were, of the affective and behavioural domains, have been almost totally ignored. Values, which form part of the cognitive domain, are at the core of our personality, influencing the choices we make, the people we trust, the appeals we respond to, and the way we invest our time and energy. It is time that we started giving values their due importance within the function of training. Value-based training is the key to a greater fit between employees and the organization.

Human personality consists of three distinct domains or components, the behavioural, affective and cognitive (Rokeach, 1968). The behavioural domain consists of the actually perceivable behaviours of human beings. Training on how to treat a skin burn more quickly would primarily address the behavioural domain, since the focus is on modifying certain sets of behaviours. The affective domain is the seat of the mind. It consists of feelings, emotions and attitudes. A training programme introduced to develop a positive attitude and orient a person favourably towards a new technology would primarily focus on the affective domain.

The Cognitive Domain

The cognitive domain is the seat of the intellect. It is that component of the human being that thinks, reasons and evaluates. It is also referred to as the rational part of a person because it evaluates the relationship between ends and means, which is the essence of

rationality. Beliefs form part of the cognitive domain. Beliefs could be broadly classified into three major groups: **descriptive or existential** beliefs that is those capable of being true or false (for example, the belief that the earth revolves around the sun); **evaluative** beliefs, wherein the object of belief is judged to be good or bad (for example, the belief that a particular employee is a good person); and **prescriptive or proscriptive** (prohibitive) beliefs, wherein some means or end of action is judged to be desirable or undesirable (Rokeach, 1968). A value is a belief of the third kind, a prescriptive or proscriptive belief.

Training is traditionally seen as a means to facilitate the learning of job-related behaviours in order to improve performance. The focus has been on teaching facts, modifying attitudes and behaviours, and developing skills. The emphasis of training has generally been more on the behavioural and affective domains than on the cognitive domain, probably because of the relative ease with which attitudes and human behaviour can be directly influenced. Even when

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training targets some aspects of the cognitive domain, it will only be existential and evaluative beliefs. Values have been largely ignored in training .programmes, probably because in general values are relatively more difficult to influence or modify.

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Values play an important role in understanding and predicting the affective and behavioural components of human beings. Since the human being is essentially endowed with the power of cognition or comprehension, the cognitive domain serves as the base, as it were, on which the huge structure of affects and behaviours is built. Values are the results of cognitive processes that take place in human beings. Values are both a powerful explanation of and an influence on human behaviour. Hence it is necessary that the emphasis of training should shift away from mere attitudes and behaviours to values. Value-based training is the key to excellence in organizations.

Values

Rokeach (1973) defined a value as "an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state of existence" (p.5). Thus if a person values freedom as an end-state of existence, it means that he or she believes that freedom is preferable to slavery. Similarly, if a person values responsibility as a mode of conduct, it means that he or she believes that being responsible is preferable to being irresponsible. A belief concerning a desirable mode of conduct is called an **instrumental**

value and a belief concerning a desirable end-state of existence is called a **terminal** value.

A value differs from an attitude in that a value refers to a single belief of a very specific kind, while an attitude refers to an organization of several beliefs around a specific object or situation. A value is a standard but an attitude is not. Evaluations of numerous attitudes to objects and situations may be based upon a relatively small number of values serving as standards. For example, a Likert scale for measuring organizational commitment consists of a representative sample of beliefs all of which concern the same object or situation. When summed up, it provides a single index of a person's favourable or unfavourable attitude towards an organization. Thus a value transcends objects and situations whereas an attitude is focused on some specific object or situation. Individuals have as many values as they have learned beliefs concerning desirable modes of conduct and end-states of existence, and as many attitudes as the direct or indirect encounters they have had with specific objects and situations (Rokeach, 1968). A given attitude held by different persons need not be in the service of the same value or the same subset of values. For example, an unfavourable attitudes towards religion may serve one person's value of being independent and another person's value of being honest (Rokeach, 1973).

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While values are significantly different from attitudes, there is only a subtle conceptual difference between values and traits. Some authors do not even distinguish between values and traits. Chatman and Barsade (1995) treated the personality characteristic of cooperativeness as a

construct that could be compared to the emphasis placed on different values by different organizations. Rokeach (1973) distinguished between values and traits from a phenomenological standpoint. A person's character is seen by an outsider someone other than that person as a cluster of traits that are fixed and unchangeable, while the same is reformulated from within as a system of values. A person identified by others from the outside as an authoritarian individual, can also be identified by himself from the inside as one who gives high value to being obedient, clean and polite and relatively low value on being broadminded, intellectual and imaginative. According to Rokeach, a major advantage of thinking about someone as a system of values rather than as a cluster of traits is that it becomes possible to conceive of that person undergoing change as a result of changes in social conditions.

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Value Systems

Values can be looked upon as being hierarchical in nature, leading to the idea of a value system. Rokeach (1973) defined a value system as "an enduring organization of beliefs concerning preferable modes of conduct or end-states of existence along a continuum of relative importance" (p.5). A set of rank-ordered values is called a value system. This approach uses an ipsative (rank-ordered) design by measuring each value at the expense of the others. For example, a value system in which ambition is ranked above honesty would indicate that the person believes that being ambitious is more important than being honest. Our cognitive

structure consists of a highly interrelated and ordered gamut of values, and so it is only a value system which contains almost all the social values that can do justice to the job of explaining affective and behavioural patterns.

Social values are phenomena that are usually highly socially desirable and, as such, tend to be strongly endorsed by all. All individuals value happiness; they believe that happiness is preferable to misery as an end-state of existence. Hence, simply recording the different things human beings value may not mean much, for that might not convey anything special about a particular individual; since several individuals might have the same set of values. The relative importance of the different values or the value systems might, however, differ as this varies across individuals. That a person values happiness does not say much that is unique about that person, for most human beings value happiness. What matters is how much a person values happiness in comparison with the other things that he or she values. Thus if one knows that a person values happiness more than self-respect, one is able to have a more accurate idea of that person. It is only the ipsative (rank-ordered) measurement model that can capture the unique value configuration of an individual (Ravlin & Meglino, 1987). The structural organization of a value system also reflects the degree to which giving high priority simultaneously to different values is motivationally and practically feasible or contradictory (Schwartz & Bilsky, 1987).

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Predicting attitudes and behaviours that are based on a choice among values such as, whether to be obedient at the cost of being honest is very difficult if a number of values are measured independently of each other. The cognitive structure of a human being is so complex that it is almost impossible to draw valid inferences without noting the relative importance of the values of an individual. Values are heavily intertwined and therefore measuring values separately and independently of one another using a non-ipsative design cannot meaningfully explain attitudes and behaviours. An ordered organization of values as measured by an ipsative design can help explain affect and behaviour in a more meaningful way.

Non-ipsative models might measure the combined importance of the full array of values held, or the total importance of values to an individual. However, even if all the measured values are more intensely held by one person than another, still the influence of the values on affect and behaviour could be the same for both individuals, if the relative importance of the values happens to be the same. Thus two persons who value pleasure more than salvation would make efforts to achieve pleasure even at the cost of salvation, even though both pleasure and salvation are valued much more intensely by one of them than the other. So, what is important is not the total strength of values, but the relative strength of each value in comparison with others. It is not the values by themselves that matter, rather it is the hierarchical value system that matters.

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Rokeach's Value Survey

Rokeach's (1973) Value Survey is the most commonly used instrument that is capable of accommodating all possible social values

(Sikula & Costa, 1994). The Survey uses an ipsative design and has two lists of values arranged alphabetically the first list consisting of 18 terminal values and the second list consisting of 18 instrumental values. The 18 terminal values are a comfortable life, an exciting life, a sense of accomplishment, a world at peace, a world of beauty, equality, family security, freedom, happiness, inner harmony, mature love, national security, pleasure, salvation, self-respect, social recognition, true friendship, wisdom. The 18 instrumental values are ambitious, broadminded, capable, cheerful, clean, courageous, forgiving, helpful, honest, imaginative, independent, intellectual, logical, loving, obedient, polite, responsible, self-controlled.

Rokeach (1973) ended up with these two reasonably comprehensive lists of values after several years of research. Each value is presented along with a brief definition in parenthesis and respondents are asked to arrange the values in each set in the order of importance (from 1 to 18) to them and as guiding principles in their life. Thus the values are organized in a hierarchy from most important (1) as a guiding principle to least important (18), thereby forming that person's value system.

The Rokeach Value Survey, is projective by nature and all the values are socially desirable ones. However, no significant relationship has been found between the tendency to respond in a socially desirable manner and the rankings of the Value Survey under standard instructions. Value system stability and the reliability of single values were tested and found to be satisfactory (Rokeach). Schwartz and Bilsky (1990) did a survey in Germany based on Rokeach's 36-value English version, which lent evidence in favour of the universality of these elements in the content and structure of human values. The selection of articles made by a person while shopping (Homer & Kahle, 1988) and the probability that one could lose weight

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Value Systems and Behaviour

Values form the very core of personality, and they influence the choices people make, the appeals they respond to, and the way they invest their time and energy (Posner & Schmidt, 1992). Several studies have empirically demonstrated how values affect personal and organizational effectiveness (Meglino, Ravlin & Adkins, 1989; O'Reilly, Chatman & Caldwell, 1991). The results of Posner and Schmidt's study highlighted the importance of understanding values, because values make a difference in terms of how people feel about themselves, about their work and about the organization. Values also influence the future course of action; what people carry into the unpredictable future is their values. Perceptual organization plays a role in linking values to a chosen behaviour (Ravlin & Meglino, 1987). Values influence the selection and interpretation of external stimuli, and thus impact one's perceptual process.

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Values are the most abstract of the social cognitions, and hence they serve as prototypes from which attitudes and behaviours are produced. Cognitions, and therefore values, also guide individuals about which situations to enter and about what they should do in those situations. Within a given situation, the influence flows from abstract values to midrange attitudes to specific behaviours. This sequence is called value-attitude-behaviour hierarchy (Homer & Kahle, 1988).

A value system could be seen as an explanation for particular affective and behavioural outcomes, for it forms the cognitive structure that supports the affective and behavioural domains (Williams, 1979). Values occupy a more central position than attitudes within one's personality make-up, and they are therefore determinants of attitudes as well as behaviour (Ball-Rokeach, Rokeach & Grube, 1984; Rokeach, 1973). In specific situations, only a subset of values is made active, those that are seen as relevant to the possible alternative actions. Thus, valuing equality might favour donating to charity and opposing the purchase of a luxury item, whereas valuing a comfortable life might have the reverse influence. Not all activated values have equally strong impacts on behaviour. The strength of impact depends on the importance of the value in the person's hierarchy. The choice of a behaviour alternative is guided by the interplay of the influences of the various activated values. It is the relative importance for a person of the values favorable to and opposed to a particular behaviour that guides action (Schwartz & Inbar-Saban, 1988).

There are two major reasons why an organization would be interested in influencing the value systems of its members. The first reason is to modify certain work behaviours, which can be done through changing the value systems. The second reason is to bring the value systems of its members in line with its own value system, resulting in greater value system congruence between individuals and the organization.

Value System Congruence

Schneider (1987) proposed that individuals may be attracted to organizations they perceive as having values similar to their own. Also, organizations attempt to select recruits who are likely to share their values (Chatman, 1991). In this way, organizations make an expressive appeal to the values and beliefs of prospective members (Wiener, 1988). The congruence in the value systems of individuals and the organization affects a wide variety of attitudes and behaviours in the organizational context such as overall satisfaction with the organization (Feather, 1979) and actual turnover (Chatman).

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Organizations do consciously and unconsciously try to produce greater value system congruence between individuals and themselves. Recruitment, selection, training and socialization are appropriately designed to ensure better value system congruence. A major function of the selection process is to choose individuals who have value systems compatible with the organization's value system. Value system congruence is also directly related to the process of socialization in organizations. Organizational socialization is the process through which a newcomer comes to understand the norms and values of an organization, and learns the behaviours and attitudes necessary for assuming roles in the organization. Training has a major role to paly in causing and sustaining value system congruence between individuals and the organization.

Organizational values exist when the members of an organization share values (Wiener, 1988). Chatman and Jehn (1994) suggested that almost every organization has some core or pivotal values concerning organization-related behaviours and concerns that are shared across the entire organization. The values of an organization provide a broad and generalized justification both for appropriate behaviours of members and for the activities and functions of the system (Enz, 1988). Organizational value systems could be placed on a continuum from weak, in which key values are not broadly and intensely shared by members, to strong, in which they are. It is possible to measure the strength of an organizational value system for even though all the members of an organization may not have the same values, a majority of active members would agree on the most important (Wiener).

Value system congruence between an individual and the organization could be defined as the extent of agreement between the person's value system and the organization's value system. While organizational values are defined as the values shared by the members, it is possible that every member of the organization does not share all the values to the same extent. Thus value congruence is the extent to which a specific member of an organization agrees with the commonly shared values of all the members of the organization.

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Value congruence could be conceptualized in two distinct ways perceived value congruence, and latent value congruence (Enz, 1988). The first approach treats value congruence as a purely perceptual construct that captures the espoused, recognized, explicitly stated, and socially defined levels

of consensus defined by departments and executives. This is called perceived value congruence; this assumes that values are conscious and explicitly articulated to serve normative or moral functions.

Using this conceptualization, Posner (1992) found that perceived value congruence between an individual and the organization was directly related to positive work attitudes. The values of individuals and those of the organization were not separately measured and then compared; but the perceived agreement between the two was directly surveyed. Value congruence was assessed along three dimensions: clarity, consensus and intensity. Clarity indicated the extent to which the respondents understood what the organization's core values meant. Consensus was measured by getting individuals' responses about each of the organization's core values with the statement: "There is a great deal of agreement among people at my level of the organization about what this core value represents." Intensity referred to the individual's emotional attachment to, support for, and feeling about the importance of the value (Posner).

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The second method of estimating value congruence provides for the values of individuals and the organization to be separately obtained and then compared to see the congruence between the two. This less direct method measures the latent value congruence. This does not require the groups or individuals to speculate on similarity, but rather allows for the possibility of a lack of awareness of the similarity. This captures the underlying, unrecognized, but similar values of the organization and its members.

Implicit in discussing value congruence is the logic of a person-organization fit drawn from an interactional psychology perspective in which aspects of both individual and situation combine to influence a focal individual's response to a given situation (Chatman, 1989). Empirical results have typically supported the hypothesis that congruence between individuals' personalities and the demands of their occupations are associated with a positive affect (O'Reilly et al., 1991). Since values are a fundamental and enduring aspect both of organizations and of people, value congruence is a good measure of the fit between a specific individual and the organization.

Posner's (1992) finding that perceived value congruence was directly related to positive work attitudes is understandable because the congruence of values between an organization and its members indicate an overall sense of happiness and satisfaction on the part of the members with the organization (Feather, 1979). O'Reilly et al. (1991) found that a person-organization fit predicts job satisfaction. It has also been significantly correlated with employee performance, commitment, intention to remain with the organization, and actual turnover (Chatman, 1991).

The pervasiveness and importance of values in organizations are fundamentally linked to the psychological process of identity formation in which individuals appear to seek a social identity that provides meaning and connectedness (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Socialization is the process through which an individual comes to understand the norms and values of an organization; this process starts at the point of entry into the organization and continues thereafter. The impact of socialization would thus be greater on one who has been with an organization for a longer time. The longer the time since one's entry into an organization, the greater the chances are of getting one's value system

attuned to the value system of the organization.

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The extent to which the value systems of followers are similar to the value system of the organization is a central theme in a number of areas of organizational research and practice. One reason for this is that values are relatively enduring constructs that describe the characteristics of individuals as well as organizations (Chatman, 1989). Thus comparisons of value systems can apply to a wide variety of individual and organizational phenomena, at both affective and behavioural levels.

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Changing Value Systems

One of the primary objectives of training should be to change the value systems of individuals so that the congruence between their value systems and that of the organization increases. Studies have demonstrated that the relative importance of different values to a person can be changed (Rokeach, 1973; Schwartz & Inbar-Saban, 1988). To be sure values are enduring beliefs, and therefore very difficult to change. One who values obedience is unlikely to start believing that it is preferable to be disobedient than to be obedient. Value systems, however, can be changed with·

relatively greater ease. Change in a value system requires a rearrangement of the relative importance given to various values. For example, one who values pleasure more than self-respect could be convinced over a period of time that self-respect is more important than pleasure.

The method of value self-confrontation can be used to change people's behaviour by changing their value systems. This method has been successfully applied to influence such behaviours as contributing money to social welfare programmes, and supporting anti-pollution measures. Schwartz and Inbar-Saban (1988) demonstrated that people's behaviour can be changed by changing the value priorities underlying that behaviour. Using an experimental manipulation, they found that an increase in the relative importance of wisdom over happiness (both terminal values) resulted in a person losing a significant amount of weight.

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The first step in value self-confrontation is to get people to become aware of their value systems. Learning that there is a contradiction between one's value priorities and one's ideal self-conception based on the value system of a positive reference group as a moral or competent person gives rise to self-dissatisfaction with one's value rankings. To reduce self-dissatisfaction, people often change their value systems and their value-related attitudes and behaviours. They try to make these elements more consistent with the self-conceptions as moral and competent person that they have learned to prefer (Schwartz & Inbar-Saban, 1988).

Conclusion

Training programmes need to give less emphasis to teaching methods and skills, and focus more on the value systems of individuals. Changing the value systems of individuals could help in increasing value system congruence between individuals and the organization which could help modify work behaviours where needed. Changing the value systems would, of course, require efforts that are not confined to classrooms. Much more intensive socializing and interactive actions will be needed, since value-based training focuses on the whole person rather than just on disseminating conceptual knowledge or imparting skills.

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