

ARE OUR VALUES THAT IMPORTANT? AND WHO CARES?

by Glenn Williams



When was the last time you engaged in a discussion or read an article on the values leaders believed to be most important? Unless you dive into scholarly research, this topic does not typically occupy our daily thoughts.

However, their significance is undeniable. Values play a crucial role in shaping the trajectory of our lives. And it's not simply about creating a list of values to project a certain image or meet the expectations of others. They must align with what we say and do. In marketing terms, this is akin to saying we want the client or customer to experience our brand at every touchpoint.

However, did you know there is a difference between values and virtues? When a deeply cherished value becomes ingrained in our character, it transforms into a virtue. Violating it would feel like betraying our essence - our identity, the DNA woven into the fabric of our being.

For many in leadership, the issue has been that we reduce the intrinsic meaning of our values when they don't allow us to achieve what we want. If they get in the way, we ignore them, only to reinstate them later and rationalize to ourselves and others that we have a consistent, reliable framework that can guide our decisions and foster relationships built on trust within and beyond our workplaces.

Alexandré Havard, author of *Virtuous Leadership: An Agenda for Personal Excellence*, suggests virtues are more evolved, mature, and grounded in a leader's character and identity than an intrinsic value we believe is important¹. In his book *The Trial of Socrates*, I.F. Stone goes even further and states that when a leader is virtuous, it is this essence of being grounded and rooted, ingrained, and branded, where virtue has "cut its pattern into the person."²

What happens when we neglect our core values?

Recently, Warwick Fairfax interviewed me for his [Beyond the Crucible](#) podcast and asked me to unpack how values often appear in organizational and personal settings, something I explored in my book [When Leaders Are Lost](#). For nearly everyone, this stems from their view of the world, belief system, or faith.

"We're used to looking at core values and the importance of alignment in a business context. While they might look impressive on a wall, that doesn't mean they're informing the business or being fulfilled, carried out, or demonstrated daily.

Similarly, we as individuals have values, but we don't necessarily think about them. We look at integrity, honesty, and other character aspects and believe they are important, but we don't consider them in the context of our daily lives."

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The crux of the matter is that while we may think values should be flexible— violating them can have dire consequences. We can't expect to go against our core beliefs and come away unscathed. Recent history provides ample examples of how such value conflicts adversely affected businesses, from the scandals at Tyco International in 2002, and the contributions of major financial institutions such as Morgan Stanley, Lehman Brothers, Goldman Sachs, and Bank of America to the Global Financial Crisis in 2008, to News Corporation's phone hacking scandal in 2011, FIFA's corruption scandal in 2015, and other controversies surrounding Kobe Steel Group, United Airlines and Uber in 2017.

Moreover, the Australian Royal Commission's involvement in the banking and finance sector in the same year underscores the importance of aligning our actions with our espoused values.

Ultimately, actions speak louder than words, and when our behaviors contradict our stated values, people lose trust in us. And if we can't lead ourselves, how are we to lead others? That's why it's important leaders take the time to identify their values and how they inform and transform their priorities in life and business.

Resilience is shaped by your values

Your values shape both your behavior and your decisions, serving as a blueprint for how you wish to be perceived and what you aspire to be recognized for. As a business leader, these values are foundational to your personal brand and the organizational culture you strive to create. At a deeper level, one must consider the resilience of a leader's values in the context of performance.

Resilience is indispensable to a leader's success. It extends beyond recognizing your priorities and what is important to you; it's your ability to stand on that importance when you're under pressure to compromise those things. When your character is called into question, it not only raises doubts about your reliability but also underscores the importance of your resilience.

Building a resilient character is not a simple task; it's a lifelong process that requires continual effort and commitment. As leaders, you know how hard it can be to make decisions that impact those close to you, the people you work with, and the organizations you lead. That's why courage is a cornerstone virtue in building resilience within one's character.

A commitment to developing integrity and personal character not only contributes to your professional and personal resiliency but helps others to place greater confidence and trust in you as a leader. Take a few moments to undertake a personal audit to assess what is most important to you. It might also help you to see your circumstances and personal and business challenges in a new light.

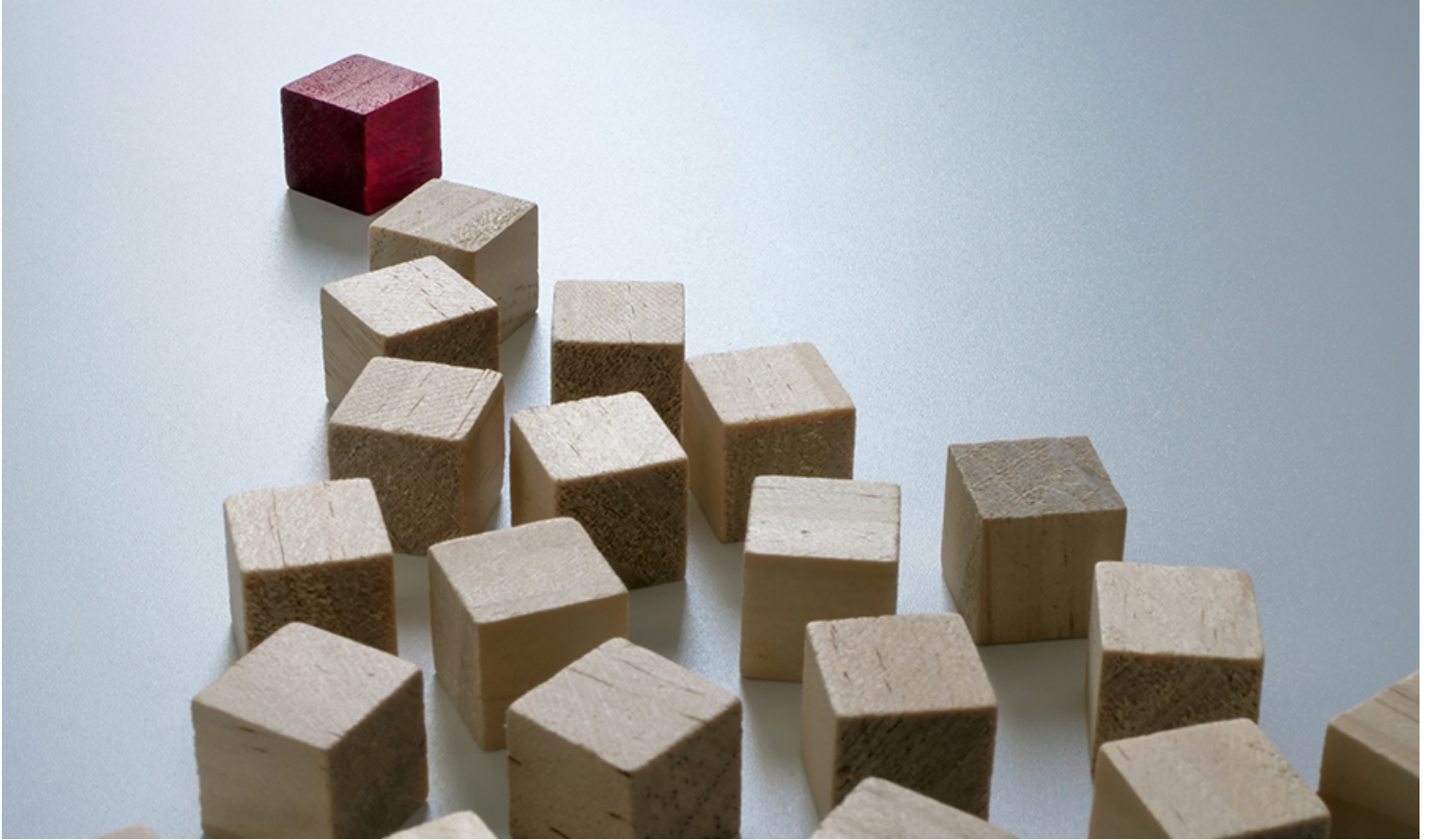
Where's your focus?

It's critical to be proactive in making time to reflect. And yes, it will take some planning to manage your time differently.

In working with C-Suite and executive leaders worldwide, I've noticed some common practices among those whose values have become virtues—ingrained into their DNA!

They have learned to ask questions rather than only focus on what might have been lost. When faced with setbacks, they take ownership of their role instead of shifting blame onto others. They evaluate what they could have done differently in contrast to staying fixated on a poor outcome. They look at how they can invest differently into their teams rather than manage someone out. They see failure, disappointment, and hurt as catalysts for evaluating how they can improve their own well-being, productivity, definition of success, and resilience.

When I coach leaders, I encourage them to pinpoint one strength they can leverage that will make a significant difference to the outcomes they want to achieve. Often, I will ask them to select a core value—such as courage or generosity—for the next month and decide how they want to see it expressed in their lives—work, family, and relationships. Then, we focus on making that a reality. Even the act of concentrating on this single aspect yields positive results for both the individual and everyone within their sphere of influence.



The 5 Leadership Anchors™

Our mission at [LCP Global](#) is to help leaders achieve their goals without sacrificing what's important to them. The link between their core beliefs and values to achieving those outcomes is undeniable.

[The 5 Leadership Anchors™](#)

- 1. The quality of your relationships
- 2. A clear definition of success and an understanding of motivational drivers
- 3. A commitment to personal character that builds resilience and confidence
- 4. Training your personal script so you can make better decisions
- 5. Creating a new success trajectory, personally, professionally, and corporately. These goals are not mutually exclusive.

Being intentional about leading ourselves and others from values and virtues has payoffs in every area of life, and it's never too late to start.

For more on leading yourself and others from your core beliefs and values, grab your copy of [When Leaders Are Lost](#), also available on Audible.

References

¹ Havard, A. (2007). *Virtuous Leadership: An Agenda for Personal Excellence*. Septer Publishers.

² Stone, I. F. *The Trial of Socrates*. Anchor Books, 1989. p. 63.

³ <https://lcp-global.com/beyond-the-crucible/>