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**FYI:** Hilary McGuire

## HR and the value proposition...

Often, business leaders fail to spot the difference between real and perceived values within an organisation and so creating new ways of working through implementing better, clearer business values has become a key HR strategic role. Hilary McGuire, Director of Tyler Mangan, reports.

HR can challenge the business more objectively to define and embed tangible business values that will drive performance through changing behaviours. A lack of trust within an organisation can generate self-interest and an entitlement mentality. What the business may actually need to underpin performance and deliver strategic goals may be values relating to collaboration, innovation, and a commitment to ethical behaviour. Tackling this type of misalignment will allow HR's broader business contribution to be evident. We all know change can take a lot longer to implement than people expect,

behaviours. Why do we exist as a business? Where are we going and how are our business values going to help get us there? How do we want our people to work and treat each other as colleagues? What values do we want to embed in the organisation? What key metrics should be affected? How will the values impact on profit, customer satisfaction, innovation and performance? This will define the business case and will create a platform to reinforce strategic change, demonstrate its breadth of business knowledge and clearly link the change to the bottom line.

There is also a need to identify conflicts in values and areas lacking in clarity, as well as to provide real examples to show how the new ways work better. We must also consider how to challenge underlying assumptions and influence pockets of resistance by giving people the opportunity to be successful in the new ways of working. Business values come from the top and employees will watch for signals more carefully than most executives assume. Building business values needs to be treated like any other investment in organisational change. It is a time for strong, integrated leadership from all functions, not just HR, but HR plays a vital role in creating a consistent leadership voice to guide the change.



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particularly changes in values. A client from a technology company once lamented: "It is not enough to paint the place a new colour and have a big party. No one will change their ways based on that. We have to work harder at it, and for longer than we really would like."

The foundation for building business values is treating this change like any other business investment: start with the business case. The answer seems logical but HR is not often renowned for using hard, tangible measures when implementing behavioural change. You would not invest in, say, new technology or a restructuring programme without a clear view of the potential impact on cost, revenue and margin. The same diligence has to apply to initiatives intended to instil new values or

Having developed the business case direction, it is then vital that you define the new capabilities and infrastructure that will help embed the business values by leveraging knowledge and relationships across the organisation. What pockets of best practice already exist within the company? How can we showcase them? What new skills need to be learnt to enable everyone to understand and embody the business values? What supporting structures need to be put in place to make people behave differently and make our business values tangible? Then it is time to mobilise by developing a programme to build the new capabilities and infrastructures which has clear commitment and buy-in from the business. This needs to be grounded and focused on mobilising the employees to achieve goals and impact business performance.

Develop a business case, establish the basic principles and provide the infrastructure and capability to behave differently, grounding the whole programme in clear business objectives. It should not be viewed as an HR initiative, rather as a business critical programme which is key to achieving enhanced performance and has the commitment of the broader organisation. It has to be so much more than that coat of paint and a party. As Lou Gerstner, writing about his time with IBM, said, 'Culture isn't just one aspect of the game - it is the game.' HR can be the key to winning that game if business values create sustainable, predictable success and positive performance results.



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