

**Five Ordinary
Reasons
*Why Corporate
Values Fail***



By Joseph Tan
Good Monday Consulting

Executive Summary

Companies have long recognized that it takes more than just bottom-line profits to sustain their business model – ironically, there is a need for non-monetary focus areas in order to keep the money coming in! This is an issue of *value-based sustainability*.

In this special *Monday Insider Report*, five areas of common and ordinary failures are highlighted as to why corporate values start off with plenty of good intention but fail to deliver when it comes to daily employee attitude and behavior. These failures are so ordinary that many organizations have accepted them as “ground reality” but it need not be!

Ordinary Reason #1: STRATEGIC PLANNING RETREATS

Matters of strategic importance are usually debated and discussed within the confinements of senior leadership – usually held in an island resort over 3 days and 2 nights. What normally happens is a predictable sequence of events :

1. Plenty of flip-charts and slogans are created.
2. There might even be a “battle-cry” or catchy phrase invented.
3. The process of merchandizing then takes place – badges, posters, campaigns, etc.
4. Everybody gets excited ... for a while.
5. Gradually, the old ways start creeping back in.
6. Time to plan for another retreat!

Strategic retreats fail for the simple reason that leaders are *disengaged* from their employees throughout the year. So, what is tabled and discussed during the strategic sessions are favourite “hobby horses” and “pet ideas” with no grounding in grass-root reality! Everyone leaves the wonderful retreats feeling good but not feeling the ground.

Here’s the tip : Before you plan for the next breakthrough strategic retreat, spend time to know your troops. Get to know their stress, pain, struggles and challenges. When you are able to connect their core pain with your core values – then you have a powerful work culture coming your way!

Ordinary Reason #2: REGULAR TEAM MEETINGS

There is a difference between communication and *conversations*. Much of what is happening is the boss communicating to the employees on assigned corporate expectations without addressing the possible responses from *individuals*. All corporate values rise and fall upon the attitude and behaviour of the individual. No corporate memo is going to change the way employee works unless steps are taken to *converse* with them i.e. talk *with* them rather than talk *to* them.

While there is nothing wrong with regular team communications, you ought to consider that matters of attitude and behaviour require that the leader speaks to the *heart* of the employee. Hence, the need for *Character-Wise Conversations* - <http://www.goodmonday.com/conversations.html>

Here’s the tip : In addition to focusing on preparing great motivational speeches in team meetings, take time to have one-on-one *conversations* – especially with high potential employees. Conversations allow the exchange of ideas, thinking and most of all – it affords you with the space to listen. Being attentive to the individual is one of the greatest gifts of appreciation one can hope to receive. The saying is true – *people don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care*. Conversation is a way to communicate not what you know but to show how much you care.

Ordinary Reason #3: BEING A NICE MANAGER

The person in authority has two important and equal mandate :

1. To reward those who do well.
2. To reprimand those who do not.

Many managers are comfortable with the first role but when it comes to confronting non-performers or those who do not adhere to stated corporate values, it is not done *immediately*. When leaders do not uphold high standards, *they get what they tolerate*.

When non-compliance is tolerated, then a negative message is sent out to those who do comply i.e. the leaders have double standards – in short, there is hypocrisy.

Here's the tip : As a leader, you must be comfortable with both recognizing and reprimanded your employees. Do not wait till the performance appraisal to have that conversation, Remember, culture and morale is affected by *daily* leadership actions, not spurts of motivational speeches.

Ordinary Reason #4: CREATING MORE POLICIES

Policies are great – it shows that planners are working hard! That's it.

The reason why policies are needed is because people do not have enough motivation and strength of character to “self-police” their own behavior. While there will always be a need for policies and guidelines, we ought to realize its limitation because while policies spell out the boundaries, it does not inspire people to stay within those boundaries.

Here's the tip : Before you come up with another rule, remember that matters of value and character is more *caught* than taught. For example, do not set a rule for punctuality until you have demonstrated it *consistently* yourself. Then when the rule is introduced, it is a confirmation of what you have already been doing.

Ordinary Reason #5: TEAM BUILDING PROGRAMS

Team building programs are great fun! It creates a lot of energy and enthusiasm during the training period but it rarely address the one vital principle necessary to connect values with behaviour.

People follow those whom they admire.

The wise organization is one who puts priority to enhance the reputation of those in leadership. In other words, leaders are equipped and trained to “get their act together.” Are leaders in your company trained to resolve conflicts, hold courageous conversations, motivate for performance and coach for excellence? Without these basic skills in people management, then the team building program rests on a weak foundation.

Here's the tip : Before you think about rolling out a mass team-building program to communicate corporate values, plan for the training of all people managers first. Without their personal commitment, there exist that critical “execution gap” and the team-building program ends up being more of a holiday trip rather than an opportunity for self-improvement.

Many organizations have benefited from the *Character-Wise Leadership* program as a key enabler for value-based leadership transformation. <http://www.goodmonday.com/leadership.html>