

## The Value Placed:

You can tell a lot about an organization from the principles it propounds and the virtues it holds dearest. For any organization, be it public or private, it is important to enunciate and promote the core principles from which it operates. This is the trusted foundation from which it expects its people to do their work.

Most of today's top organizations are very careful about mission statements. It has long since been regarded as a given that successful ventures lay out purpose, direction and the preferred means to getting there. And they rightly expect their people to follow policy. The founders, directors, managers and top employees know very well what is expected from each team, division and individual. This attention to mission, this adherence to the vision is one of the single most important factors in achieving success, rising to the top of the crowd.

The list of core principles is as varied as the organizations that espouse them. There are corporations which value enthusiasm above all. Come to work energized and ready to go. When you get to work we'll start you off with a group cheer, some exercise and a feel-good pep talk from the motivator. Report to your station with a smile and a kind word or don't report to your station. Wal-Mart has made jillions with this philosophy.

Some organizations value innovation more than anything. You are hired because you are a thinking human. You probably have a history of self starting and going wherever that good idea takes you. Academic paper isn't all that important. Lot's of the brightest lights can't spell and they found school boring. Apple and Virgin come to mind. The next right idea is their currency. It's the way they win.

Attention to detail is the mainstay in lots of successful operations. IBM is an amazing example of a company that has remained atop its field in spite of the blistering onslaughts of dozens of whiz kid competitors. The organization seems as plain as can be. Even its nickname, Big Blue, is a nod to the stodginess of it. But their people have an unnerving ability to stay on track, to pursue what they are best at and to leave no stone unturned in pursuit of profitability. Did you know that, after a certain level, IBM employees can take as many personal days as they want? Vacation, sick, tired, stressed out, blissed out, call it what you want. If you need the day(s) you can have it. It works because IBM knows that its detail oriented people would never leave a job unfinished, would never leave early when there was more to do.

In their world, you just focus on the details and the big picture will take care of itself.

I have a friend in Chicago who has built one of the foremost game software development studios in the country. Their work is top of the top and the money they bring in follows suit. They design phenomenally complicated games for Xbox and consistently manage to come up with hits. Their leader is unflinchingly enthusiastic about good work and brutally honest about the mundane. You can't fake it at Day One Studios. But if you've got the goods and are willing to work there is no limit to how far you can go. I guess you could call their core value, honesty.

There are so many models. I haven't talked about communication or competition or teamwork or entrepreneurial spirit as the core value. I'm sure you can name a dozen more qualities and match successful organizations with each of those qualities.

But there is one additional value that I do want to mention and that is loyalty.

It has recently been all over the news. There's a tell-all book from the former Press Secretary to President Bush. In it he talks about deceit, misinformation, disinformation, cover ups and crimes, serious accusations about important matters. They go to the heart of the Iraq War, FEMA, environmental denial and a dozen other rather weighty issues. But Mr. McClellan is not under fire because of the content of his book; he is held in contempt because he snitched. He broke ranks. He violated the code. He talked outside the family. Sound familiar?

There are organizations which value loyalty above everything. There are indeed organizations where keeping your mouth shut is vitally important. It's vitally important because when someone talks the whole thing starts to unravel. Two high powered organizations come to mind, although they are now in decline. They both value loyalty above all else. Ethics, truth, common decency, everything takes a second seat to loyalty. Because loyalty will keep you going when there is no righteous reason on earth that you should keep going.

I'm referring to, of course, the Current Administration and the Mafia.