



Giving the Elves Values

In which Santa discovers that getting the Elves to adopt his well crafted and well meaning Corporate Values is not as easy as he thought it would be!

Santa was not a happy man, despite being fat and jolly by nature.

6 months ago his good friend the Tooth Fairy had put him touch with a very expensive consulting group specialising in Corporate Values. Santa and the lead consultant (Ebenezer Scrooge) had spent many expensive hours since then drafting and re-drafting the Key Values, linking them to Core Competencies in the Elf Evaluation Process and crafting a detailed communications plan using multiple media platforms and effective core messaging.

Ebenezer had developed a great FLA (four letter acronym) for the program and it seemed the success of **JUMP** was ensured.

But 2 weeks in to the program things were not going well , nobody was excited about the Values at all! Santa had found many of the JUMP posters defaced, often with the phrase *"Just Unlimited Management Propaganda"* scrawled under the catchy pictures of elves **JUMP**ing in the air.

When he actually talked with groups of elves about the values most of them agreed that they sounded about right. There had been some really good discussions about what should happen when two Values seemed to be pulling in different directions e.g. when Jolly conflicted with Productive (which usually happened every December 24).

But it was all taking so long and every elf seemed to think they had to individually think through and consider each value – why couldn't they just agree and sign on to them!

As he had before (see the [website](#) for previous articles) he decided it was time for him to visit his retired Chief Executive Elf Dobby for some guidance.

What Dobby had to say

Dobby looked at the perspiring, white whiskered, red faced fat old man in front of him and thought "I have to get rid of the mirror in my home gym".

Santa had been bringing him up to date while he worked off the mince pies with his regular session on the ElfSelfHelp Thin-o-Gym (as shown on Good Morning North Pole), turning to Santa he said "Nick, you have got to stop putting your faith in expensive consultants and start applying some common sense to these things".

Santa's Workshop Values

Jolly – we have fun

United – we work together

iMaginative – we come up with new ideas

Productive – we are outcome focussed

JUMP



He then set out the 3 common sense things about Values that we often ignore.

3 Common Sense things we ignore about Values:

1. **Time.** If it takes the CEO and the Executive Team 6 months to get comfortable with a set of Values it is unfair to expect the rest of the organisation to do it in 2 weeks.
2. **The Right to Disagree.** If you want people to truly sign on to a set of values you have to give them the right to disagree with them as well. But at the same time it is the executive team which has the authority and responsibility to set the Values of an organisation - finding a balance between those competing pressures is essential.
3. **Conversations.** Values die as soon as they are committed to paper. The only way to keep them alive is to keep having conversations about them.

“OK” said Santa, “that all makes sense but what can I do to get the Values adopted in the workshop?”

“There are three things you can work on to put Values in place” replied Dobby.

“Firstly your own *behaviours* – I think we can agree that **J**olly is not one of the descriptions that fits you in the weeks leading up to Christmas. Cantankerous is closer to what most people think! Remember, the elves pay more attention to how you behave than what you say”

“Secondly *symbols* – you say that you want everyone to be **U**nited but you just cancelled the whole of office ice cream party in favour of a number of more easily organised departmental celebrations. It may not seem like much but elves read a lot into things like that.”

“Thirdly *systems and processes* – **I**Maginative may be what you are after but your suggestion system requires a 10 page application form and having the Elder Elves judge the applications doesn’t bode well for new thinking – some of those guys are still struggling with giving up the one stocking per child rule! You need to align your processes and systems with the new values.”


“Dobby” said Santa, “why do I waste money on these consulting firms when I can get such good advice for free from you!”

“Well now that you mention it” replied Dobby reaching for the Christmas stocking with the built in credit card reader he just happened to have hanging on the desk behind him.....

Best Wishes

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