

Instructions for Building a Values Hierarchy

What you will need for this activity

1. A pack of post it notes
2. A large flat surface such as a kitchen or dining room or board room table
3. The preparation from the Values Reflection activity
4. Time to iterate the process

Step by Step Guide ;

1. Have your raw list of words in front of you.
2. Double check your list against the 400 words in the preparation pack – one last time to ensure you’ve covered everything –or if something has struck you since the preparation. If in doubt add them .
3. Write each word onto one post-it note each.
4. Lay them all on a flat surface so you can see them all at once
5. Group similar or aligned values (in your mind) together. Just cluster them into distinct groupings on the surface so you can see them all
6. Reflect on each group one by one, select one value that most resonates – or if you really can’t decide – conjugate them on another post-it note, (only do this if you really can’t decide – you may also later on define your value to include all the others you have not chosen)
7. Or leave those that you see as being important to stay together as separate and not conjugated.
8. Place the others aside as we will come back to them in the checking process. Those that are put aside are support or contributing values.
9. It is with these we will build our values map or hierarchy. The words chosen are a result of your own personal world view and the meaning you give to them. There is no right nor wrong.
10. If at any point it dawns on you through your deliberations, that something is missing – you can add it – if doing so, determine however whether this might be a key value or a supporting value / contributing value. The next step will figure out if it survives the cut or not.
11. Now we look at what we have and identify the values that are either cause values (means values) or effect values (ends values) Let’s illustrate using two related values from the last step. Doing this we will determine which is higher in the hierarchy. We will use Freedom and Adventure to illustrate.
 - Ask – “when I am on adventure ... how do I feel – what does it bring me?” The answer is FREE! Therefore we can safely say the Freedom is the ‘end or effect value’ and adventure is the ‘means’ or cause’ value. End values are generally higher in the values hierarchy. This is because there may be a range of other ‘means’ that create the same end.
12. We build the final hierarchy by moving our post-its around on the surface. This will be an iterative process – until you get it looking like the true reflection of the order of things. There are two rules of thumb when doing this:
 - The more abstract the value the more important it usually is and thus the higher up in the hierarchy it will appear
 - Test each value in order to get an order. **EG.** If you have FAMILY as a value – we ask the question “What is it that FAMILY brings to me? Family is quite tangible as it names a ‘thing’ which creates something within ourself, within our experience. ”What does family bring me? ANSWER MAY BE Love, happiness, belonging, security. And these are the END values which are more intangible.

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13. It is a matter of shuffling them around into what will look like an organisational chart.
14. At the very top will be your primary value – This is in answer to the question ‘if I could only keep 1 value – which one would it be?’
15. Then to form the second line – you look to see, which is the next one you would choose if you could only choose 1, and so on. NOTE: Ideally a maximum of 6 in the top line.
16. By sorting out the Cause and Effect / also the Tangible and the Abstract values – you will find that the hierarchy will gradually form
17. Then we look for cross linkages and see how in fact our values end up being more like a mesh work
18. A last check against the stack of values you left aside to see if any jump out at you – and you are done.

NOTE : be careful with these relationships. If MONEY ends up as being a top value in your hierarchy for example – money is a means value as it allows all sorts of other things such as freedom, security – which are ends values. AND having money as your top value – will likely end up in a pile of cash that means nothing.

AND note this is an iterative process – not a straight line. Meaning as you work through it you may find that wording shifts, you may go back to your pile, and as with the accountability example you may find another value pops up or gets deleted.

AND Just take it all in your stride. This is NOT a process to be rushed. It is an immersion – a discovery of the self .

NOTE: Values will change overtime.

- What is important to you at 18 years will be different at 45 or 88 years old. So, don't hold onto a value because of loyalty – it once served but as we move through life, things change and so do our values.
 - Secondly you may find that a value you've chosen isn't actually yours. It is one you've taken on due to the expectations of others. Seriously consider whether you want to retain it. This is not about being disloyal – it about finding your own North Star (Or if you live in the Southern Hemisphere – Your own Southern Cross)
19. Once it's 80% - look for linkages between the values. We recommend that you leave it aside for a couple of days and then come back and do a final review before cementing it in place. Remember that there should be a maximum of 6 values in the top line.
 20. You will find a completed chart for illustration on the next page

Competed Values Hierarchy

Example

