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Toward collective organisational values:

A case study in UK construction

Abstract Values have held a prominent place in business ethics and organisational theories in recent years. Some organisations now aim to integrate values into their business practices, which requires a thorough understanding of the organisational values. However, whilst many believe organisational values should reflect the collective values of the staff, the majority of values statements are generated by senior management with little examination of employees' personal values. The difficulties surrounding the development of an organisation's values are exacerbated by the dearth of literature offering practical guidance. The case study presented has been conducted in a UK construction company using Schwartz's theoretical framework of human values as a starting point and framing device. Employees' values profiles were collected and analysed through an organisational-wide values survey. Follow-up workshops and post workshop activities facilitated the sharing of common values and helped staff representatives develop their own organisational values statements, independent of the senior management, before a final stage of negotiation with them. The findings support the argument that the shaping of collective organisational values should be based on a clear understanding and communication of employees' personal values, and Schwartz's circumplex model of values and associated survey instrument are helpful framing devices to initiate and structure such a debate. Compared to the usual management-imposed approach, this bottom-up process could make organisational values explicit in a more understandable and useful way, and improve values congruence between individuals and host organisations.

Keywords Case study, Management, Organisational values, Personal values, and Values statements.

Comment [A1]: See Response 10.

INTRODUCTION

Over recent years values have held a prominent place in both business ethics and organisational theories, and there is a detectable shift in focus from management by instructions and objectives to management by values (Blanchard and O'Connor, 1997; Dolan and Garcia, 1999), or values-based management (VBM) (Pruzan, 1998). VBM aims to create conditions under which all employees can perform independently and effectively toward a single objective (O'Toole, 1996). It has three purposes, to: a) simplify organisational complexity created by the need to adapt to changes; b) guide strategic vision towards future destination of the company; and c) secure commitment of every employee to deliver a high quality work performance (Dolan and Garcia, 1999).

In response to these changes, many organisations have instituted decentralized structures, i.e. changed from top-down management and closed departmental functions, to more horizontal structures of open and cross-department communication, which rely more on a shared understanding of their core purpose and core values (Vogelsang, 1998). Some organisations now devote significant energy to integrating values into their business practices, and many of them (e.g. General Electric, Microsoft and Levi Strauss) have achieved enduring success.

Nevertheless, VBM is by no means a quick win for organisations. It requires a clear and thorough understanding of organisational values in the first place, and continuous efforts to instill them into organisational behaviour in the long term. Many believe organisations should have values that both reflect collective values of all employees and align with individual values (Sawhney, 2002; Peat, 2003;

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Comment [A2]: See Response 3.

Jaffe and Scott, 1998), however, most corporate values are generated by those in a leadership position, which often fails to address employees' personal values. Whilst there persists considerable confusion about how organisational values should be developed, there is a dearth of literature offering guidance and suitable approaches.

This paper presents the process and findings of a values study conducted in all the UK offices of a global construction management services organization. The change from partnership to Limited Liability Company challenged the company to establish a cultural identity compatible with its new legal status, and offered opportunities to set a vision for its future. Meanwhile, the traditional, hierarchical organizational structure inherited from the previous partnership culture was found to be acting as a barrier to internal communication and collaboration, which prevented the organisation from responding quickly to external demands. These cultural and related structural changes called for a set of authentic organisational values to bond people to the goals of the organisation.

Comment [A3]: See Response 1, 13, 21

The study adopted a bottom-up approach which focused upon characterising organisation's values by surveying and consulting the values of its members. Schwartz's values survey (SVS) instrument and values theory are, for the first time, applied extensively in an organisational context, as opposed to the comparative intercultural research conducted at the national/cultural level during the past decade. The work done in this case involved the application of this theory to UK construction. It offers practical guidance on how to identify employees' personal values and hence formulate collective organisational values

statements. It also asserts the importance of linking personal and organisational values, and aims to improve values congruence between individuals and host organisations.

Comment [A4]: See Response 2, 20 & 26.

LINKING PERSONAL & ORGANISATIONAL VALUES

PERSONAL VALUES

Many theorists, including psychologists, sociologists and anthropologists view values as the criteria people use to select and justify actions and to evaluate people (including the self) and events, and claim values as the deepest and most powerful motivators of personal action. Table 1 lists a few examples of various definitions.

Table 1 Examples Of Definitions / Thoughts On Values

<u>Author(s)</u>	<u>Definitions of Values</u>
<u>Parsons (1951)</u>	<u>An element of a shared symbolic system which serves as a criterion or standard for selection among the alternatives of orientation which are intrinsically open in a situation.</u>
<u>Jacob et al. (1962)</u>	<u>The normative standards by which human beings are influenced in their choice among the alternative courses of action they perceive.</u>
<u>Rescher (1969)</u>	<u>Things of the mind that are to do with the vision people have of the good life for themselves and their fellows, which motivate people to achieve satisfactions and avoid dissatisfactions.</u>
<u>Rokeach (1973)</u>	<u>An enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state of existence.</u>
<u>England (1975)</u>	<u>A personal value system which is a relatively permanent, perceptual framework that shapes and influences the general nature of an individual's behaviour.</u>
<u>Posner et al. (1987)</u>	<u>General standards by which we formulate attitudes and beliefs and according to which we behave.</u>
<u>Hofstede (1994)</u>	<u>Broad tendencies to prefer certain states of affairs over others.</u>

Insert Table 1 here.

Further, Schwartz (1992) and Schwartz and Bilsky (1987, 1990) summarised five formal features of values recurrently mentioned in the literature: Values are beliefs; they are a motivational construct; they transcend specific actions and situations; they guide the selection or evaluation of actions, policies, people, and events, and they are ordered by relative importance. He therefore defines values as 'conceptions of the desirable that guide the way social actors select actions, evaluate people and events, and explain their actions and evaluations' (Schwartz 1999). Similarly, Argandoña (2003) defined values in a broad sense as 'central desires or beliefs regarding final states or desirable conducts that transcend specific situations, guide the choice and evaluation of our decisions and, therefore, of our conducts, becoming an integral part of our way of being and acting to the point of shaping our character.'

The definitions above represent the multitude of various values theories and thoughts. A central theme emerging from the literature is that personal values serve as relatively stable standards in one's life, which ultimately motivate and guide his/her behaviour. However, this is not to suggest that personal values are purely self-oriented. Indeed, values serve not only to reinforcing our self-image, but also function in the interests of society. Rokeach (1973) claimed that values have either a 'personal focus' or a 'social focus', and are 'self centered' or 'society-centered'. England (1973) refers to values as being 'individualistic' or 'group oriented'. These are supported by Schwartz and Bilsky (1987; 1990), who argued that values represented three universal requirements of human existence: a) needs of individuals as biological organisms; b) requisites of coordinated social interaction; c) survival and welfare needs of groups. Hemingway (2005) shared the same view by claiming that the dual purpose to the function of values can be categorised as 'individualistic' or 'collectivist'.

It can be concluded that personal values operate at both individual and social level. Therefore, the investigation of personal values will be important in understanding individuals as well as the organisational groups in which they are involved.

ORGANISATIONAL VALUES

Human beings have strong and fundamental need to belong and be accepted by others (Baumeister and Leary, 1995). For the majority of people, a work group forms an important part of their social relationship. People bring their values into the work setting (Robertson, 1991), and these work-related values are considered to be ~~'the protestant work ethic' (Furnham, 1984), or~~ 'the evaluative standards relating to work or the work environment by which individuals discern what is 'right' or assess the importance of preferences' (Dose, 1997). They are important in people's working life by fundamentally shaping their attitudes towards job, colleagues and their workplace performance.

Comment [A5]: See Response 4.

As such, it is not surprising that values have held a prominent place in both business ethics and organisational theories. Many believe that organisational values are characterised as having organisation-wide consensus, consistency and clarity between the intent of the organisational and employee behaviour, with the exclusion of ambiguity (e.g. Porter, et. al., 1974; Peter and Waterman, 1982; Meglino and Ravlin, 1998). Hence organisational values are often referred to as the shared values of all employees. They are relatively stable, enduring and serve as 'rules of life' (Gad, 2001) for making decisions about priorities in the organisation (Christensen, 2001). These widely shared, yet distinctive organisational values with resulting behaviour and artifacts are held to be a

critical feature of organisational culture and cultural differences (Hofstede, 1980; Schwartz, 1992; Schwartz and Bilsky, 1987, 1990; Whitley and England, 1977).

Many authors have proposed that superior organisational performance will result from strongly held shared values, and believe companies with positive corporate values can experience a significant reduction in counterproductive behaviour. Collins and Porras (1996) researched many successful companies and found they all adopt the premise of shared organisational values as an underlying philosophy. On the contrary, companies concentrate on the physical aspect of their being, and ignore their emotional, mental and spiritual needs may struggle to survive (Geus and Senge, 1997). Similarly, Pant and Lachman (1998) claim that management will have a hard time implementing a strategy incompatible with organisational core values. Further, Sillanpää (1998) argues that companies 'need to listen, to process and to respond positively to the values and beliefs of their stakeholders... Failure to do this will reduce competitiveness and increase the risk of corporate demise'.

Therefore, many believe it is the organisational values that drive the business. They help clarify a company's identity and rally employees (Lencioni, 2002). Competitive demands call for profoundly conscious organisations which rely on clear, consistent communication of a shared but not imposed core value set (Edgeman, 1998), upon which the edifice of value creation must rest (Sawhney, 2002). Hence it could be argued that manifesting organisational-shared values is a viable approach to achieve ultimate organisational success.

Unsurprisingly many organisations have expended significant time, effort and money on composing organisational values statements, which are then meant to become a benchmark for employee commitment and behaviour. These values were often established by the founders (explicitly, if not implicitly) and compounded further by the personalities and transforming activities of their inheritors (Anthony, 1994; Collins and Porras, 1997; Dearlove and Coomber, 1999). However, in a mature organisation there is a danger that values and practices espoused by the current leaders may not be aligned with those of the followers/employees. Meanwhile, employees may subscribe to a value without knowing why they should stick to it and how to live and breathe it. Such values are difficult to enact in situations that challenge them (Maio and Olson, 1998; Maio et al., 2001). This could be solved by articulating employees' personal values and linking them with organisational values, which is explored below.

THE IMPORTANCE OF LINKING PERSONAL AND ORGANISATIONAL VALUES

The preceding argument makes clear that values are fundamental and enduring aspects of both people and organisations, and it illuminated areas of value congruence, where individual values coincide with values at the organisational level. According to Schneider (1987), people are attracted to organisations precisely because they perceive them to have values similar to their own. Research has also shown that where there is overlap between organisational and employees' values, the employee tends to demonstrate a preference for, and commitment to that employer (Sen and Bhattacharya, 2001). On the other hand, organisational values, when interact with facets of situations (e.g. incentive systems and norms), can affect the individuals' attitudinal and

behavioral response. Understanding an organisation's values can enhance people's adjustment to their jobs (Wanous 1977), their subsequent level of satisfaction and commitment (O'Reilly et al. 1991). The study conducted by Hyde and Williamson (2000) provided empirical evidence that there is a direct correlation between values congruence and employee satisfaction.

Unfortunately, managers and employees of many organisations maybe unaware of the values they and their organisations possess and may tend to misjudge them. The lack of respect for their co-workers' values could cause friction, while the confusion on organisational values could impair their performance. A 1995 study of 580 UK companies concluded that organisations could only empower people when everyone shares a very strong organisational vision, which requires organisations to be explicit about their values (Industrial Society, 1995). Therefore, research on understanding personal values and linking them to organisational values may provide a legitimate insight into improving people and organisational development in the long term.

Nevertheless, identifying organisational values is not an easy task. As previously addressed, there is considerable confusion about how organisational values should be developed. Little attention has been given to the importance of employees' personal values and as a result, such values are difficult to enact and sustain. Lencioni (2002) claimed that many values statements are 'bland, toothless, or just plain dishonest' which 'create cynical and dispirited employees, alienate customers, and undermine managerial credibility.' Sillanpää (1998) argued that 'articulated top-down or cast in tablets of stone values are non-inclusive and would inevitably become ossified', and proposed that organisations should align personal and organisational values. Further, Dearlove and Coomber

(1999) claimed that the key to define organisational values is to 'capture what is authentically believed, not what other companies select as their values or what the outside world thinks should be the values'.

The most effective way of developing the powerful connection between the values of a company and its employees is to encourage employees to clarify their own personal values and to link them to the organisational values. It is believed that individuals at all levels should have the understanding and skills to make value judgments, consciously informed by their individual and organisational values. The study presented in the following sections aims to establish this 'true' linkage and guide the organisation to develop collective organisational values.

METHOD

Despite the importance of values, few structured methods have been derived from theories which facilitate the alignment of individual and organisational values. Brainstorming is often used by many practitioners to identify organisational values. However, because of the difficulty in involving large numbers using this approach, only relatively small groups of individuals (often the senior management of the organisation) are involved in the process to identify the core values they personally bring to their work. As a result, such organisational values can only describe an organisation's high-level priorities from a limited perspective. Meanwhile, the values statement identification process is often unstructured, so the range of values is often limited. What is more, if employees have not been included in the definition process they may not be as motivated and committed to the resulting statements.

Where a more inclusive approach is taken, the advice given in the literature is usually focused on a high-level process rather than robust supporting techniques. For example, Argandona (2003) propose four stages to identify individual values, and then progressively foster those shared, adopted and finally held by the group. He takes a pluralist position, recommending that the organisation seek unity in fundamental ends values but gives individuals freedom in their degree of adoption of supporting means values. No advice is given in how to undertake each step beyond mention of lists, statements and discussion. Similarly, Jaffe and Scott (1998) outline a process used with multi-national companies, but make reference to the use of 'value cards' as a starting point to initiate the discussion. The content and origin is not disclosed but is described latter in the paper.

Different from the aforementioned approaches, the study presented in this paper adopted a bottom-up approach which focused upon characterising on organisation's values by surveying and consulting with most of its members. Based on a universal values framework, the study involves 411 employees of the organisation. The next section explains the rationale for the selection of research methods, techniques ~~within the positivist paradigm~~ and the theoretical framework adopted.

Comment [A6]: See Response 33.

RESEARCH METHODS

In the domain of organisational values research, there is a long history of debate on the merits and demerits of qualitative and quantitative methods. Since neither method is flawless by itself, in recent years, some researchers suggest that combining methods ~~within a positivist paradigm is~~ could be a valid approach to research design (e.g. Yin 2003, Visala 1991). Dainty et al. (1997)

Comment [A7]: See Response 33.

argue that the two methods are not mutually exclusive. Meanwhile, Edum-Fotwe et al. (1997) contend that both perspectives could complement each other to produce a more balanced research outcome. As such, both methods were combined in this research to supplement the quantitative studies with some in-depth qualitative inquiry, therefore create a more realistic picture of the organisation's values profile.

In order to collect qualitative and quantitative information for this research, the following techniques were adopted.

Questionnaire survey

An organisation-wide questionnaire survey was conducted to capture employee's personal value priorities. Since there were 456 employees within the organisation, questionnaire survey becomes the most efficient and economic way to gather factual data, and offers advantage for cross-sectional study.

The measurement of values has long been of interest to researchers. Among the most notably instruments are the Rokeach value survey (RVS), Hofstede's value survey module (HVSM), the Competing values framework (CVF) and Schwartz values survey (SVS). Although widely used, each embodies unavoidable difficulties. Some argue that the RVS is too open to interpretation and not specific to actual behaviours (Feather 1988, Gibbins and Walker 1993, Johnston 1995). The HVSM has been increasingly criticised as being non-exhaustive, not reflecting the full spectrum of national cultures, not representative of the general population of their respective countries, and value items not necessarily conceptually equivalent across cultures (e.g. Brett and Okumura, 1998; Schwartz, 1994; Steenkamp, 2001); some consider it as out of date and too

condensed to capture culture (McSweeney, 2002, Shenkar, 2001; Smith et al., 2002). Meanwhile, as an ipsative¹-type instrument, CVF has been criticised when scores generated by it have been used as independent variables in analyses (Cornwell and Dunlap, 1994).

Comment [A8]: See Response 17, 20.

The Schwartz Values Survey (SVS) (Schwartz, 1992) is another instrument which defines a comprehensive typology of cross-cultural human values. It measures individuals' opinions of the relative importance of 56 generic values. It has a normative format (Chatman, 1991), designed to avoid inadvertent introduction of bias. Subjects were asked to indicate, using a nine-point Likert scale from -1 to 7, the importance of each item (with '-1' being 'opposed to my values' and '7' being of supreme importance) in their lives. Respondents were asked to rate one supremely important value 7 and one least important value -1, 0 or 1 on each sheet before rating other items. This anchored the response scale for them. Thus, values were assessed independently of one another, which made it possible to capture differences between value items.

The SVS instrument is different from the others because it asks respondents to assess how important these values are as 'guiding principles of one's life' rather than as desirable end states or ideal behaviours. This can help eliminate the chance of situational variables having a strong impact on the respondents (Dahl, 2004). The values within the SVS are theoretically derived, have a more comprehensive set of value dimensions, and have been tested with more recent data. The samples of SVS were obtained from more diverse regions, including socialist countries (Ng et al, 2007), and the rating rather than ranking scale measure does not force individuals to choose between values they may hold equally important.

Comment [A9]: See Response 17, 20.

The survey questionnaire used in this study was adapted from the SVS. Through the survey quantitative data were collected and analysed statistically. As individual may differ in their use of the response scale, a scale use correction process were conducted by using the individual's mean rating of all value items as a covariate to center each participant's responses (Schwartz and Littrell, 2007). These centered value scores (CVS), rather than the raw scores, were then used in the analysis. The results as they relate to theory are discussed in the following section.

Workshop

Rekom et al. (2006) argue that the well-known standard instruments for measuring values, such as the RVS and the SVS suffer from some drawbacks when establishing the core values of a specific organisation. They claim that it is methodologically difficult to sort out socially desirable answers from values effectively underlying respondents' concrete behaviour; and there is no guarantee that these lists include the specific core values of the organization. Schwartz (1992) also pointed out that, because people express values in real-life contexts, much will be gained from methods that embed values in concrete everyday situations. Therefore, a follow-up workshop was held to discuss the survey results, and provide good opportunity for employees to relate values to their everyday work practice. It focuses on the subjective experience and perception and involved direct interaction between individuals in a group setting. Qualitative data were collected, which helped to gain deeper insight into people's shared understandings of organisational values.

Pilot study

Prior to the major research, a pilot values study was carried out in one office within the case organisation to test whether the main research design is sound and research protocols could be followed, or whether proposed methods or instruments are appropriate.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study examined values through the lens of Schwartz values theory (Schwartz, 1992). From samples of more than 60,000 individuals from over 60 nations, and based on universal requirements of human existence, Schwartz values theory identifies ten motivational distinct values (Figure 1). Schwartz (1992) claimed that the framework has a circular, two-dimensional structure, which addresses the dynamics of conflict and congruence among these values. He pointed out that within the circle, adjacent value types are postulated to be most compatible, and a greater distance between values types indicates decreasing compatibility and greater conflict. Value types that emerge in opposing directions from the origin are postulated to be in greatest conflict. The ten categories could be grouped into four higher order groups, which demonstrate two bi-polar dimensions, where 'openness to change' contrast to 'conservation' values, and 'self-transcendence' contrast to 'self- enhancement' values.

Eliason and Schubot (1995) claim that Schwartz's framework provides an extensive coverage and analysis of values and is the most widely used instrument for measuring personal values. Moreover, Brett and Okumura (1998) argue that it is superior to Hofstede's because it is based on a conceptualization of values; it was developed with systematic sampling, measurement and

analysis techniques; and its normative data are recent. We therefore conclude that Schwartz's values framework is a useful, well-researched and tested vocabulary to communicate values between individuals and those of their organisation, and hence an appropriate theoretical framework for this study.

Comment [A10]: See Response 17, 20.



[Figure 1_A universal values system/structure adapted from Schwartz \(1992\)](#)
(Source: Mills et. al., 2006)

~~[Insert Figure 1 here.](#)~~

THE STUDY

THE ORGANISATION

The study was conducted in all the UK offices of a global construction management services organisation. As discussed above, in 2005 the organisation faced the challenge to establish a cultural identity compatible with its new legal status, as well as the opportunities to set a vision for its future.

Meanwhile, the traditional hierarchical organizational structure inherited from the previous partnership culture prevent the company from responding quickly to the changing customer and market needs, and act as a communication barrier between its 16 UK offices. The rivalry between these offices forced them to make decisions which benefited themselves rather than the business as a whole. The Group CEO set out the intention to move the business towards a more client-centric approach and break the office silo structure, which stress the needs of a set of strong, concise and meaningful values that 'live and breathe' throughout business operation. However, although the company had formal vision and mission statements, they were compiled by senior management, and there was little emphasis on organisational and human values. Senior management accepted the desirability of establishing a set of authentic organisational values that are formulated around the commonly held values of the people working for the organisation, and endorsed an organisation-wide values study which involved a questionnaire survey and follow-up values workshops as discussed next.

Comment [A11]: See Response 5.

Comment [A12]: See Response 13 & 21.

ORGANISATIONAL-WIDE QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY

Key stages

Initial Impetus and Preparation

The impetus for this study stemmed from the challenges and opportunities that the company was facing. Prior to the survey, presentations were given to the management board, the company's two UK based strategic business units (SBU) management meetings, head office, back office (including finance and human resource departments), and several big regional offices within the company, to brief the background information of the upcoming survey and get as many

Comment [A13]: See Response 6.

people involved as possible. It was found that the face-to-face contacts enhanced the understanding and communication.

Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted in one of the company's UK offices a few months before the rolling out of an organisation-wide study in UK. A values questionnaire was sent to every employee of the office, and a total of 25 responses (100%) were received and analysed. This was followed by a half-day workshop to discuss the survey results and link them to organisational values and workplace practices (see Zhang et al., 2006). The pilot study facilitated the development of a set of office values statements. Further refinements were made to the analytical method and instrument, including the need for a longer workshop. The results of the pilot study were presented to the management board which approved the rollout across the organisation.

Comment [A14]: See Response 18.

Organisation-wide Questionnaire Survey

The values questionnaire was sent to every UK employee (456 in total) of the company based in its 16 UK offices in mid-2005. Within three months time, respondents completed the questionnaires anonymously and returned them to the researcher for confidential analysis. A total of 411 (90%) responses were retained for analysis, which can be considered as offering excellent coverage of employees' perceptions and hence should give a representative picture of the organisational values profile. Sample characteristics of the survey are displayed in Table 2.

Comment [A15]: See Response 13.

Comment [A16]: See Response 13.

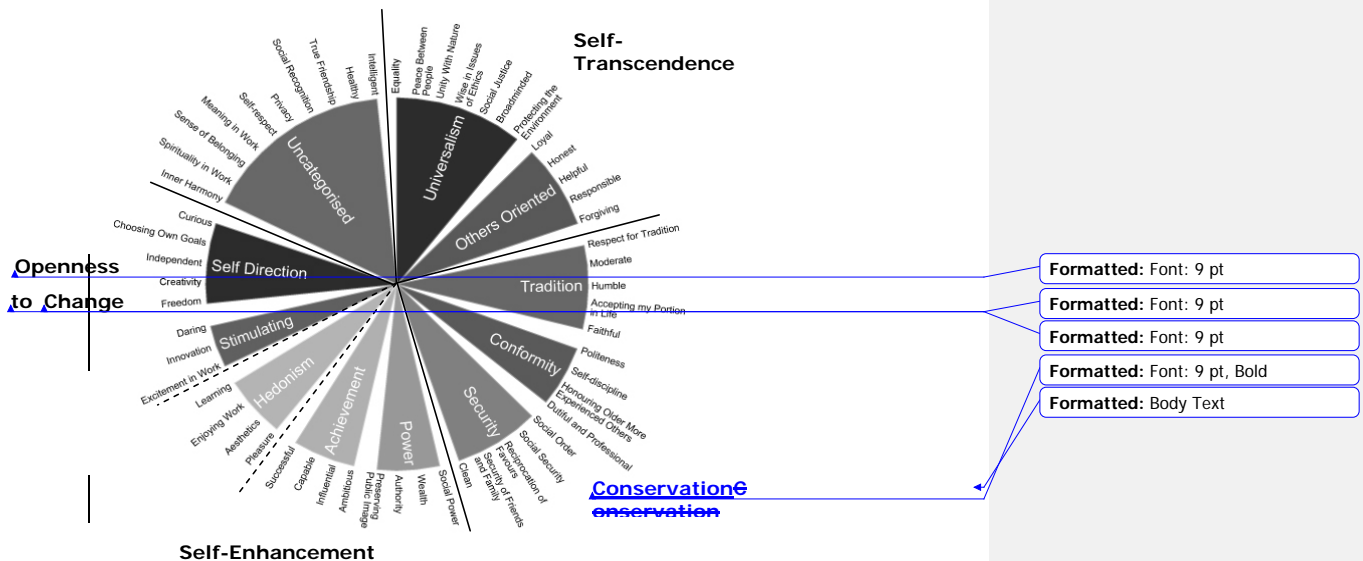
[Table 2 Survey sample characteristics](#)

Categories	Number of Responses Received	Percentage of Total Responses	Percentage of the Subgroup in Organisation
Age Band			
<26 years of age	34	8%	10%
26-35 years of age	111	27%	27%
36-55 years of age	198	48%	46%
>55 years of age	68	17%	17%
Gender			
Female	92	22%	32%
Male	319	78%	68%
Management Level			
Directors	27	7%	6%
Divisional Directors	27	7%	7%
Associates	49	12%	11%
Others	308	75%	77%

[Insert Table 2 here.](#)

The questionnaire responses were analysed through calculations in an Excel spreadsheet within a framework based on Schwartz's value theory as shown in Figure 2. The results are discussed in the following section.

[Insert Figure 2 here.](#)



[Figure 2 Values framework used in survey analysis. \(After VALiD, 2005\)](#)

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Values Survey Results and Discussion

To present the survey result, the CVS of each respondent, the mean CVS and standard deviation across the whole organisation were plotted in a radar diagram (Figure 3). Similar values charts were produced by comparing Mean CVS of each office to those of the organisation. These were emailed to each participant with notes to facilitate understanding.

UNIVERSALISM

TRADITION

CONFORMITY

~~Insert Figure 3 here.~~

■ Standard Deviation ■ Participant 009 □ Organisational Average

[Figure 3 Example of an individual's values chart](#)

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Data analysis also revealed the values priority and consensus among organisational members. They are indicated by the organisational mean CVS and standard deviation of CVS. Table 3 and 4 present the prioritised results respectively.

[Table 3_Very/supremely important values by individuals \(Mean CVS>1\)](#)

Rank	Value Items	Organisational Mean CVS	Organisational Standard Deviation of CVS
1	HEALTHY	1.55	1.12
2	HONEST	1.51	0.94
3	SELF-RESPECT	1.40	1.01
4	SECURITY OF FRIENDS AND FAMILY	1.36	1.32
5	ENJOYING WORK	1.30	1.07
6	CAPABLE	1.21	0.91
7	RESPONSIBLE	1.13	0.85
8	MEANING IN WORK	1.09	1.05

[Table 4_Least important values by individuals \(Mean CVS<1\)](#)

Rank	Value Items	Organisational Mean CVS	Organisational Standard Deviation of CVS
7	PLEASURE	-1.05	1.72
6	MODERATE	-1.13	1.48
5	UNITY WITH NATURE	-1.50	1.57
4	RESPECT FOR TRADITION	-1.56	1.54
3	ACCEPTING MY PORTION IN LIFE	-2.05	2.06
2	SPIRITUALITY IN WORK	-2.20	1.70
1	SOCIAL POWER	-3.03	1.75

[Insert Table 3 here.](#)

[Insert Table 4 here.](#)

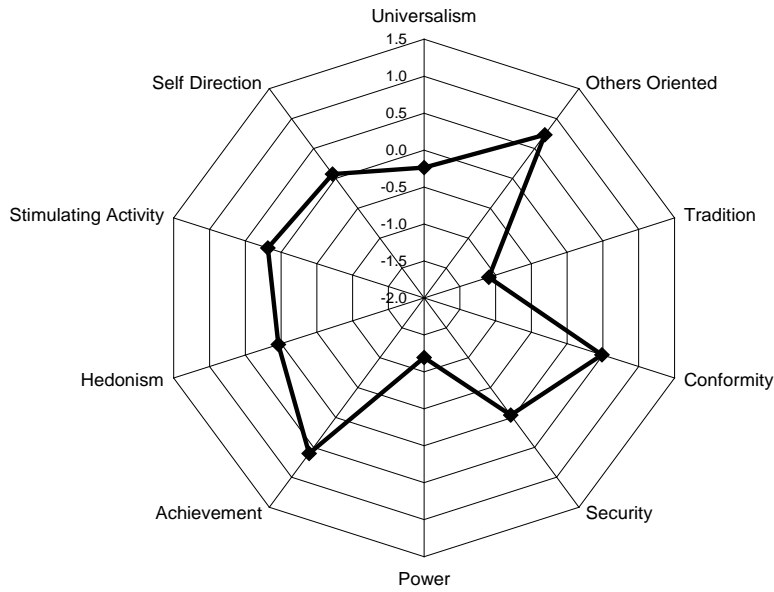
While the majority (73%) of values have a mean CVS between –1 to 1, Table 3 listed the top 14 percent (eight out of fifty-six values) important values viewed by individuals, which have a mean CVS above 1. Table 4 demonstrated seven

(12.5%) value items that have a mean CVS below 1, which can be considered as the least important items across the organisation.

Table 3 and 4 suggests that the organisation is typical of a professional organisation, where employees have heavy emphasis on achieving high ethical and professional standards in their work. They were happy to conduct work that is interesting and meaningful, which enable them to develop themselves, make a contribution to, and find reward from, their work activities. More importantly, it is noted that 'healthy' and 'security of friends and family' are ranked very high in the survey, which highlighted the fact that employees preferred a friendly atmosphere where they can retain the work-life balance. It was also found that social power was not strongly desired by these people and they had less interest in soulful matters and tradition. However, as an organisation in an industry that has a big impact on the environment, it is of some concern that employees regard 'unity with nature' as of very low importance.

In addition, the mean CVS of Schwartz's higher-level values categories are calculated and prioritised as shown in Figure 4 and Table 5. Table 6 presents the mean CVS of Schwartz's bi-polar dimensions.

[Figure 4 Organisational mean CVS of values categories](#)



[Table 5 Importance of values by category.](#)

Rank	Value Categories	Organisational Mean Score Per Values Category
1	Others Oriented	0.73
2	Achievement	0.58
3	Conformity	0.51
4	Stimulating Activity	0.14
5	Hedonism	0.05
6	Self Direction	0.04
7	Security	-0.03
8	Universalism	-0.19
9	Tradition	-1.06
10	Power	-1.26

[Table 6 Importance of values by dimension.](#)

Rank	Values Dimensions	Organisational Mean Score Per Values Dimension
1	Self Transcendence	0.20
2	Openess to Change	0.07
3	Self-Enhancement	-0.21
4	Conservation	-0.25

[Insert Figure 4 here.](#)

[Insert Table 5 here.](#)

[Insert Table 6 here.](#)

With respect to values categories, Table 5 suggests that respondents perceived 'stimulating activity', 'hedonism', 'self direction', 'security' and 'universalism' to be of moderate importance in the organisation. There was a substantially more positive feeling about 'Others Oriented', 'Achievement' and 'Conformity', together with a considerably negative feeling about 'tradition' and 'power'. Perhaps this is indicative of construction organisations in the UK where teamwork, mutuality are required, where acting according to certain accepted standards are essential and forced by the government, and where achievements are pursued but acceptance of authority and tradition are questioned by the typically highly educated professionals. However, it is found that 'others oriented' and 'achievement' are in opposing directions in Schwartz's values framework, hence are postulated to be in greatest conflict (Schwartz 1992, 1994). As they were both viewed by individuals as very important, the company will have to pay more attention in decision making process to ensure that any decision encourage one of them does not suppress the other, and it is also necessary to provide training and guidance to help people make the right choice when conflict occurs.

In terms of the values dimensions, Table 6 indicates that 'self-transcendence' and 'openness to change' are of relatively greater importance. This suggests that employees within this organisation preferred a united organisation where people work together to improve the company performance. They were not very conservative and ready to welcome changes.

Further analyses were carried out to investigate the values differences between various sub-groups. Due to the fact that some respondents chose not to provide certain background related information, the total numbers of the valid responses for these group comparisons are slightly lower than the previous analysis. The responses range from 378 to 381, which represent 83 to 84 percent of response rate. The mean CVS of different groups were calculated, and further one-way analysis of variance test (ANOVA) revealed the statistic significance of the results and highlighted the major differences.

Comment [A17]: See Response 18, 19, 22, 31.

The variations across the age groups are shown in Figure 5 and Table 7. Generally speaking, the mean scores of these groups follow the similar trend. The ANOVA test reveals that there were no significant values differences between these age groups with regard to the values categories of 'universalism', 'other oriented', 'conformity', 'achievement' and 'self direction'. Statistically significant differences are found in values categories listed in Table 7. It appeared that the older employees (>55 years old) gave a significantly lower score to 'hedonism', 'power' and 'stimulating activity' than their younger colleagues, and gave much higher scores to 'tradition' than the 26-35 age group. This indicates that the older staff are not very open to changes and have less interest in self-enhancement. It is also found that, generally speaking, the older groups consider 'hedonism' of less importance than the younger groups.

Meanwhile, the youngest (under 26 years old) and oldest (above 55 years old) groups give a much higher score to 'tradition' than those between 26 and 35. Furthermore, 'security' is of greater importance to staff aged 36 to 55 than those between 26 and 35.

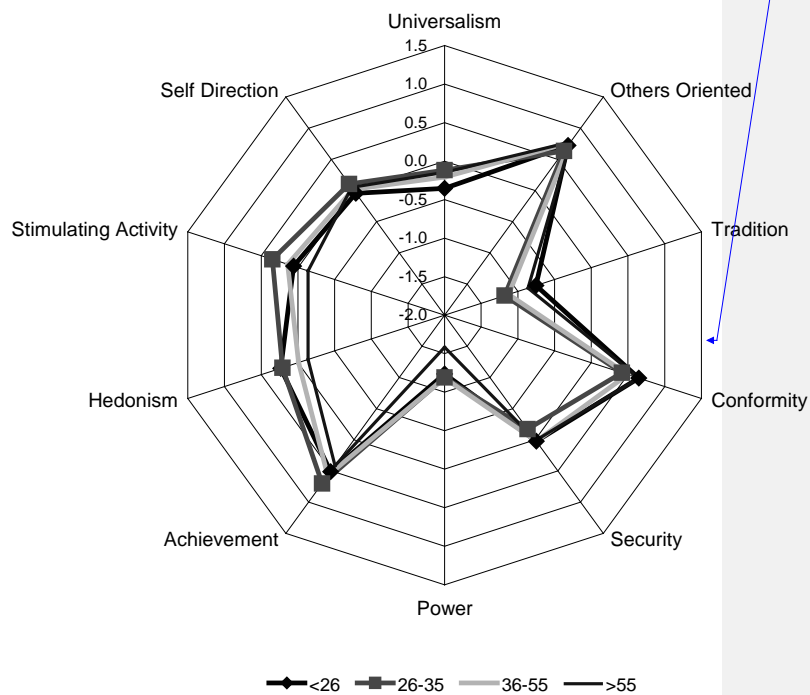


Figure 5 Values differences (mean CVS) between age groups

Table 7 Significant differences between age groups.

Values categories	F (3, 374)	p (<0.05)	Eta Squared	Group with significantly high score	Group with significantly low score	Score difference
Hedonism	5.204	0.002	0.04	<26	>55	0.4
				26-35	>55	0.3
				26-35	36-55	0.2
Tradition	4.474	0.004	0.04	<26	26-35	0.4
				>55	26-35	0.3
				36-55	>55	0.4
Power	4.198	0.006	0.03	26-35	>55	0.4
				26-35	>55	0.4
Stimulating Activity	3.768	0.011	0.03	26-35	>55	0.5
Security	2.969	0.032	0.02	36-55	26-35	0.2

[Insert Figure 5 here.](#)

[Insert Table 7 here.](#)

The differences between directors and other staff, as shown in Figure 6 and Table 8, reveal some interesting facets. It is found that the top two levels of management, i.e. directors and divisional directors have very similar values perceptions. This may be related to how the senior managers were selected within the organisation. Whilst all the groups gave very similar scores to 'security' and 'others oriented' values, the major differences emerge between the senior managers and other staff, with the middle management, i.e. associates, aligning with one or the other. As shown in Table 8, the managers gave significantly higher scores on 'achievement' than the other staff (P<0.0005). The effect size eta squared values is 0.09, which in Cohen's (1988) terms would be considered a medium effect size. With a large enough sample (in this case N=381), this difference can be considered as rather significant. Similarly, compare with other staff and/or the associates, the senior managers gave significantly higher scores to 'stimulating activity' and 'power'. Meanwhile, these senior managers gave significantly lower score to 'conformity' in comparison to other staff. These indicate that, compared with the staff, the senior managers are generally more open to change and focusing on self enhancement, while the other staff are relatively more conservative. Revealing these differences will facilitate mutual understanding between the managers and their staff, and form a base to shape the company's strategic management in the future.

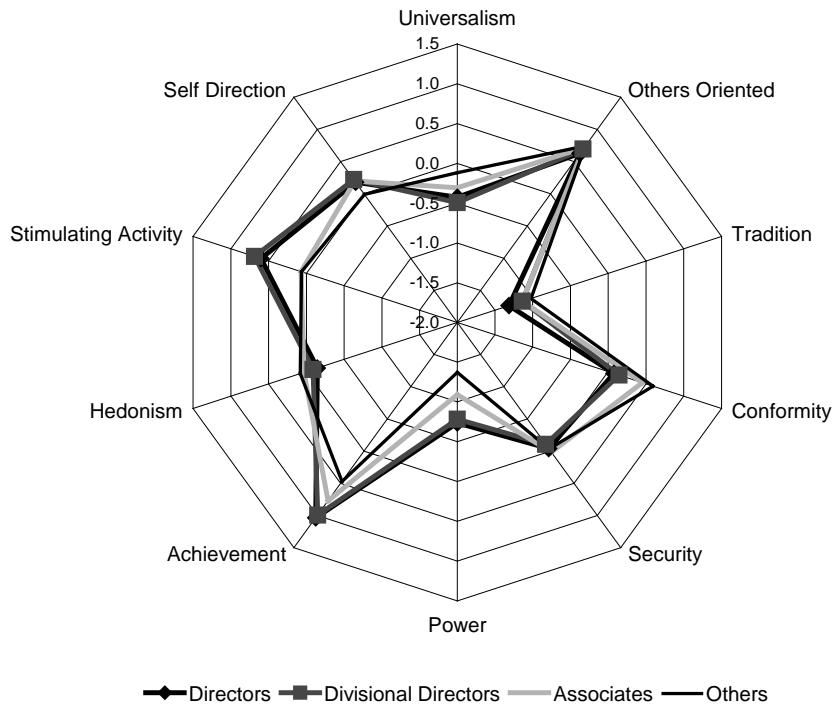


Figure 6 Values differences (mean CVS) between management levels

Table 8 Significant differences between management levels.

Values categories	F (3, 377)	p (<0.05)	Eta Squared	Group with significantly high mean score	Group with significantly low mean score	Mean score difference
Achievement	12.350	0.000	0.09	Directors	Others	0.6
				Divisional Directors		0.5
				Associates		0.3
Conformity	9.385	0.000	0.07	Others	Directors	0.5
				Divisional Directors	0.5	
Stimulating Activity	8.405	0.000	0.06	Directors	Others	0.6
				Divisional Directors		0.6
				Directors	Associates	0.6
				Divisional Directors		0.6
Power	6.157	0.000	0.05	Directors	Others	0.6
				Divisional Directors		0.6

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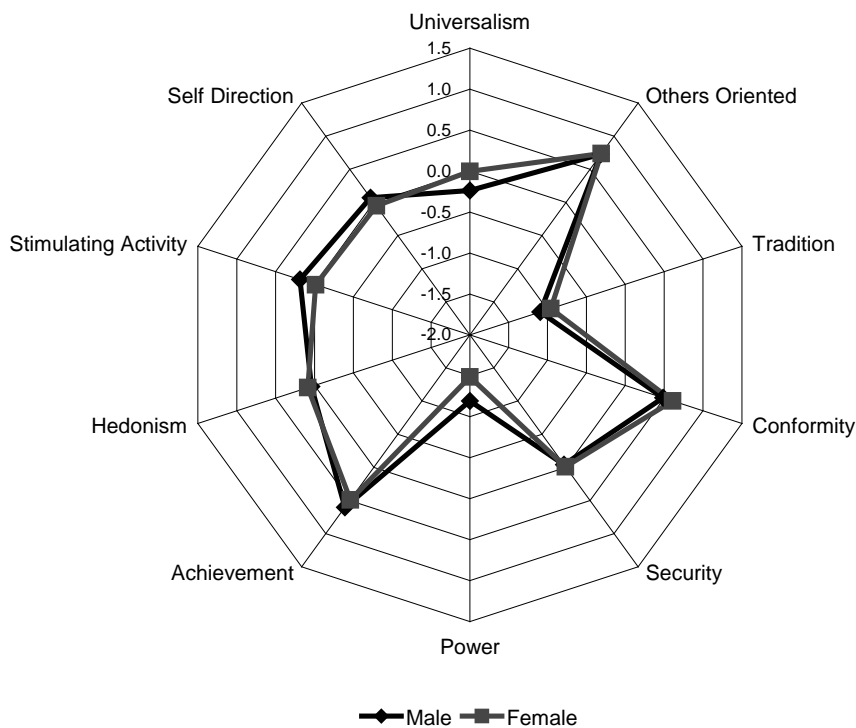
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[Insert Figure 6 here.](#)

[Insert Table 8 here.](#)

The differences between female and male employees' values perceptions are shown in Figure 7 [and Table 9](#). Male employees gave [significantly](#) higher scores to 'power' than the females, while female employees score 'universalism' [and](#) 'conformity' higher than their male colleagues. However, [as evident in small effect size \(eta squared values range from 0.01 to 0.03\)](#), these differences are not as significant as those between other groups, which suggests that values differences between gender groups are minimal. This is consistent to the findings of Rowe (1995), who argued that continued emphasis on gender differences merely serves to reinforce traditional gender-role stereotypes and to perpetuate gender inequality in the workplace.

[Figure 7 Values differences \(mean CVS\) between genders](#)



[Table 9 Significant differences between genders.](#)

Values categories	F (1, 377)	p (<0.05)	Eta Squared	Group with significantly high mean score	Group with significantly low mean score	Mean score difference
Power	13.171	0.000	0.03	Male	Female	0.3
Universalism	11.725	0.001	0.03	Female	Male	0.2
Conformity	4.390	0.037	0.01	Female	Male	0.2

[Insert Figure 7 here:](#)

[Insert Table 9 here:](#)

Overall, the results revealed the values priorities and some differences between sub-groups. Across all these subgroups, no significant differences were found in 'self direction' and 'others oriented' values. However, significant age, gender and management level differences were found in the values category of 'power'. Male employees, senior managers and people between 26 and 55 consider 'power' as of greater important than others. Furthermore, greater differences were found between different management level groups than those of age group, and there are even less significant gender differences exist in the organization. These findings can enable employers to assess the extent to which they take into account the concerns of different groups of employees, and, while expecting full commitment from employees, to recognize their particular priorities to other aspects of working life. In addition, they could evoke a wider social awareness and concern. The more we know about these values priorities and differences, the easier it is to understand and accommodate them within the organisation, which may have positive impacts on levels of motivation and job satisfaction among individuals, and hence the business performance.

Comment [A18]: See Response 25, 31.

FOLLOW-UP WORKSHOP

The questionnaire survey provided a useful instrument to capture people's values priorities. However, some researchers argue that it is not sufficient to infer values from attitude surveys alone (Smucker, 1982; Schooler, 1983). Therefore, a one-day workshop was held with the aim of creating an environment for people to share their individual values with others, explain the meaning of these values for their working life and identify the core shared values of the organisation.

Key Stages

Pre-workshop

Twenty-six values group members were selected from the questionnaire respondents by using the following criteria: a) select individuals who are enthusiastic about the study, respected in their offices, and good communicators; b) keep the balance between people from different age, gender, ethnic, geographic location, professional discipline, staff grade and management level; c) exclude management board members to avoid hindrance of expression, although the outcomes were presented to and discussed with them at the end of the research. The selection was made by an external researcher and endorsed by six strategic business unit directors. Table 7 shows the workshop participants' characteristics.

Comment [A19]: See Response 13.

Table 10 Workshop participants' characteristics

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Categories	Number of Workshop Participants	Percentage of Workshop Participants	Percentage of the Subgroup in Organisation
Age Band			
<26 years of age	2	8%	10%
26-35 years of age	10	38%	27%
36-55 years of age	12	46%	46%
>55 years of age	2	8%	17%
Gender			
Female	9	35%	32%
Male	17	65%	68%
Management Level			
Directors	0	-	6%
Divisional Directors	2	8%	7%
Associates	4	15%	11%
Others	20	77%	77%
Professional Discipline			
Cost Manager	11	42%	46%
Project Manager	7	27%	20%
Consultant	4	15%	17%
Support	4	15%	17%
Service Length			
<1 Year	6	23%	21%
1-5 Years	13	50%	49%
6-10 Years	4	15%	16%
>10 Years	3	12%	14%

[Insert Table 107 here.](#)

Six workshop groups were formed and care was taken to mix people from different backgrounds. Two external facilitators were used to guide the activity, with the aim of overcoming the insider's 'lack of awareness', avoiding 'subjectivity bias' (Schein, 1992) and allowing free expression and fair control of the progress.

One month before the workshop, each values group member was asked to conduct a pre-workshop activity within his/her base office to gather employees' opinions on 'What should be the most important values in the company, and why?' An information pack was provided, which included detailed instructions, office/organisational values charts and values survey summary results. The pre-workshop activity was undertaken in all UK offices across the organisation and involved the majority of the employees.

Workshop

The workshop was a facilitated process by which a group of employees with different backgrounds work together to identify their shared values within the organisation. It comprised the following steps:

- 1) Introduction and explanation of the workshop process
- 2) Group discussions on 'What should be the most important values within the company'
- 3) Presentations from each group
- 4) Identification and prioritisation of shared values
- 5) Development of draft values statements
- 6) Conclusion

After the briefing session, participants worked in groups to share results from the pre-workshop office sessions, with the aim of deepening the collective understanding of the values identified. There were lively debates about which values were most important for their work and were essential to high performance. For example, when discussing the concept of 'Teamwork', some argued that the competition between offices is healthy and promotes office competency, whilst others commented that 'we appear to compete against other offices and departments rather than maximising the potential of the whole group. We need to develop an understanding of their businesses and see where symbioses can exist'. The debate revealed the conflict between self-enhancement and self-transcendence values as highlighted by Schwartz, and also brought the concept of 'organisational decentralisation' to everyone's attention.

Comment [A20]: See Response 7, 9 & 31.

The group discussion yielded much qualitative data. Coloured cards-post-it-notes were used to record their ideas and suggest phrases relating to values. Later some were identified as organisational behaviours that compliment values, hence excluded from the workshop discussion, but recorded for future use. The important values were located on a blank Schwartz circumplex model chart next to the related universal values, to build an overall organisational values profile. This also helped categorise these values and reveal the interrelations between them.

Comment [A21]: See Response 14

Each group then shared its proposed values with other participants, which provided an opportunity for each participant to appreciate and verify other groups' work, communicate and justify the most important values for the organisation, and add further thoughts to the discussion. When there were differences of opinion, time was given to reach a consensus. For example, by discussing the two opinions regarding the concept of 'Teamwork', and checking the interrelationships between relevant values on the Schwartz's values framework, the majority of people agreed that breaking the office 'silo' is a better way to response to internal and external needs.

Comment [A22]: See Response 8, 9 & 31.

Following these steps, inductive content analysis was conducted with the objective of discovering themes. The cards from each group were coded descriptively to summarize chunks of meaningful data into themes (Miles and Huberman, 1994), e.g. 'care for environment', 'teamwork' and 'embrace change'. In this stage, more than 200 ideas were distilled to thirteen themes, which represent the core organisational values. Each group was tasked with drafting 2-3 values statements. Finally, the whole process informed the formulation of draft organisational values statements.

Comment [A23]: See Response 14.

Post workshop

Following the workshop the draft values statements were sent to everyone within the organisation for comments. The cycling of materials back and forth between the participants also helped to gain higher levels of commitment from a larger number of people (Whyte, Greenwood and Lazes, 1991). Over a period of one month, the values group members organised several local office meetings to engage the majority of employees in a dialogue about the organisation's values proposition, collect the comments and feedback to the group for discussion. The whole process ensured that the statements would reflect the shared values of all employees of the company. The statements were re-visited and challenged at a subsequent workshop where some further editing and refinement was undertaken by the values group.

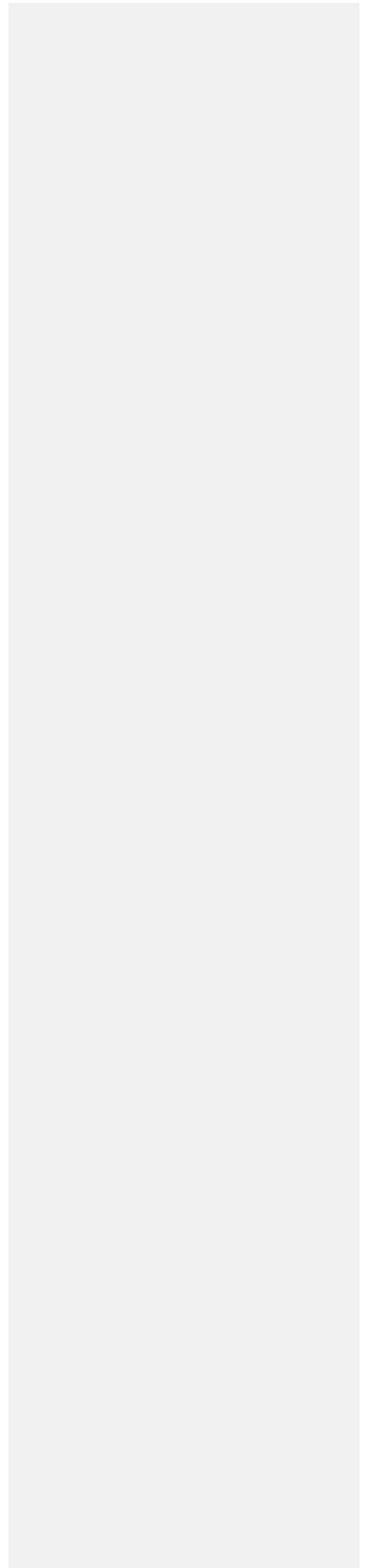
Senior management review/ negotiation

Further to the workshop a presentation of the results was given to the Management Board. There was a lengthy discussion regarding the survey and workshop outcomes. The values study was highly appreciated by the Board and at a subsequent board meeting, the Board decided that regular quarterly values workshop sessions should be held in the future, with the aim of exploring ways to integrate these values into organisational behaviour.

Workshop Results and Discussion

The workshop discussion provided an opportunity where ideas are expressed freely, paradigms were challenged, personal values were respected and shared values are identified. People's personal values were activated at the interpersonal or collective levels. The goal was not to achieve absolute

consensus on values but to recognise employees' shared values related to their working life. The process also helped identify the values diversity, which are discussed under the umbrella of the organisational core values. The outcome was a set of values statements developed by the employees (see Table 8 'Bottom-up Values Statements').



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Schwartz Values Categories	Code	Bottom-Up Values Statements	Top-Down Values Statements	Final Values Statements	Final Behaviour Statements
Universalism	V1	We care about the effect that our work has on the environment, both within the workplace and on society as a whole.	Customer - we treat customers the way we would want to be treated.	Customer - We treat customers the way we would want to be treated	1. Do what is right for the customer 2. Build enduring relationships 3. Always make it easy to do business with us 4. Communicate effectively and regularly 5. Always say thank you
Others Orientated	V2	We believe that loyalty must not be taken for granted. We underpin everything we do with honesty and integrity. We treat others the way we expect to be treated ourselves. We deliver exceptional service to our clients by trusting and believing in our people. We strive to exceed expectations.	People – we care for our people through a challenging, supportive working environment. Excellence – we strive for quality through the development of our people and systems. Environment – we care about the effect we have on the environment in which we work.	People - We care for our people through a challenging and supportive working environment	1. Encourage entrepreneurship and think creatively 2. Respect the opinions of others 3. Promote open and constructive feedback 4. Manage performance firmly and fairly 5. Recognise and reward achievement
Conformity	V3	We take pride in our work.	Honesty – we conduct our business with integrity.		
Security	V4	We balance work with personal wellbeing and promote healthy living.			
Achievement	V5	We recognise and reward our successes and achievement.			
Hedonism	V6	We encourage teamwork and deliver success through a motivational and supportive working environment.		Excellence We strive for excellence	1. Exceed the expectations of customers and colleagues 2. Conduct all business with integrity and professionalism 3. Think "Team" 4. Encourage learning and self-development 5. Embrace change willingly
Stimulating Activity	V7	We embrace change by developing our people and our service(s). We encourage individuals to reach their full potential. We are a united and energetic company with an innovative and challenging approach			
Self Direction	V8	We value freedom of expression.		Sustainability - We care about the effect we have on the environment	1. Minimise the environmental impact of our business 2. Ensure working environments are healthy and safe 3. Cut out extravagance and waste 4. Minimise our carbon footprint 5. Promote environmental awareness
Overarching Values		Enjoy work Overall satisfaction Promoting self respect			

Table 11 Three Versions of Values Statements

[Insert Table 118 here.](#)

Comment [A24]: See Response 24.

The workshop outcomes are generally aligned with the survey results. The statements [tend to emphasise](#) on the categories of 'others oriented' and 'stimulating activities', which represent the dimension of 'self transcendence' and 'openness to change'. Interestingly, the underrated value ['unity with nature'](#) in the survey was picked up by a few group members and discussed intensively in the workshop. It was agreed to be of great importance, [albeit more aspirational](#), and therefore included in the final statements. This provided evidence that engaging people in a values dialogue can be effective in improving mutual understanding and identifying aspirational goals, and [in some cases be used to guide or activate certain values, which could then affect people's behaviour](#). It also demonstrates the [complementary nature](#) of combining quantitative and qualitative methods in [the study](#).

Comment [A25]: See response 23.

Meanwhile, Schwartz's values theory helped reveal [the dynamic relations among these](#) values. According to Schwartz (1992), simultaneous pursuit of certain sets of values may cause psychological and/or social conflict. For example, the pursuit of 'others oriented' values may conflict with the pursuit of 'Achievement' values - enhancing the welfare of others may interfere with the pursuit of one's own success. Attention must be paid to these potentially conflicting values, in this case, conflict may exist between (V1, V2) and (V5, V6); (V3, V4) and (V7, V8). Understanding the interrelationship of these values can help organisations balance its strategy in an intentional way.

In parallel to this, the senior management of the organisation took a 'top down' approach to identify key values and behavioural issues. As shown in Table 8, a set of top down values statements was developed taking consideration of the

company and other stakeholders' needs. These were challenged in another workshop. The Values Group critiqued the work and made a number of suggestions for changes. The most significant concern raised by the Values Group is the need to demonstrate that key organisational values adopted by the business are a combination of both bottom-up and top-down values - not one imposed on/driven by the other.

Furthermore, a rigorous exercise of critiquing the main issues surrounding the compatibility of the work was carried out aiming to achieve a result that gives credibility to both 'top down' and 'bottom up' approaches and the potential for long term buy-in across the business. Finally, the bottom-up version and top-down version merged into a set of values and behaviour statements which represent the collectively shared values of everyone within the organisation. They are of top priority as perceived by both the management and the staff at that point in time.

Comment [A26]: See Response 24.

The employees were committed to the statements because they were generated by a considerable joint effort. The statements have already been used in one office for recruitment and tendering. In the former case, the intention was to demonstrate the company's identity and attract people who have not only suitable professional backgrounds, but also share the same values as the organisation. In the second case, it helped the company differentiate itself from the competitors and demonstrated the values alignment between themselves and the client's organisation, which was viewed positively by the clients. In addition, there is also a plan to integrate these values into personal development processes.

It could be argued that the process of creating the statements (entailing reflection and self-examination) is as valuable as the words that are ultimately written. The real outcome of the workshop brought together individuals to collectively make sense of the meaning of values. The method used in this study therefore proved to be a simple and effective way to understand, share and develop individual and organisational values.

LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

As with all research, there are limitations to be considered in evaluating this study. Firstly, the SVS instrument could reduce the chance of situational variables having a strong impact on the respondents. However, it does open the argument that the mostly positive-sounding value categories could create bias because respondents may be inclined to choose a more utopian answer not reflected in their actual behaviours. The anchoring of the response scale partly addresses this, and the confidentiality of the questions would mitigate against this, but further consideration of possible biases is necessary.

Secondly, although the SVS can yield meaningful data that are otherwise very difficult to collect, a written score on a questionnaire does not necessarily reflect actions. While the qualitative data from the workshop can provide some insights into the connections between espoused values and organisational practices, this is not the same as observing values in action and comparing these with espoused values. The latter would require a more ethnographic approach to data collection beyond the scope of the study.

Thirdly, whilst the case study provided a way to identify organizational shared values, it is important to note that the strongly shared organizational values

may not always be a positive thing. Kotter and Heskett's (1992) study of 207 US firms found that an organisation's strong values can drive either high or low performance, depending on that organization's ability to align with its market and adapt its strategies and practices accordingly. When the members of the organization shared the same view that certain values are less important (e.g. unity with nature), this may have dysfunctional implications for group practices, e.g. ignoring the negative impact on the environment of their business practice. Furthermore, there are times when the sharing of values or other beliefs may become a liability for the group: they can introduce biases by encouraging a focus on certain information, personal needs and priorities or socially desirable preferences at the expense of others. Mullen et al. (1994) argues that the more cohesive the group, the easier it might be for the individual to become 'lost in the crowd' and thereby cease to engage in self regulated attempts to match to behavioral standards, resulting in more pressure to conform to group norms and suffer from group think (Langfred, 1998). In addition, Tosi et al. (2000) argue that the cohesive groups may become very inward-facing and tend to overvalue their own behaviour and accomplishment and to undermine outside groups. All of these may impair effective decision-making and problem-solving. These negative impacts of shared values in turn highlight the importance of developing and understanding organisational values in an appropriate manner, as well as guiding, monitoring and re-evaluating them on a regular basis, to make sure they address the current needs of the organization and the society it is situated in.

Comment [A27]: See response 29.

Fourthly, although the SVS is a widely validated tool to measure values, it should not be used in isolation. Values have cognitive, affective and behavioural features (Allport et al, 1961; Rokeach, 1973); they need to be conceptualised as

a complex interweaving of universal human traits and the relative social constructs, i.e. behaviours, that vary according to context. Indeed, Schwartz (n.d.) claims that behaviour entails a trade-off between competing values. Almost any behaviour has positive implications for expressing, upholding, or attaining some values, but negative implications for the values across the structural circle in opposing positions. However, there is a danger with the SVS of treating each of the values as stable categories whose meaning is unproblematic regardless of the social context. Triangulation through other devices, such as the workshops, can help reduce the likelihood.

Comment [A28]: See response 30.

A further observation is that the single company nature of the study precludes any conclusions about the expansion of the findings to the broader industry. However we could hypothesise that a UK company providing similar professional services might share similar espoused values priorities but have quite a different set of 'lived values', i.e. behaviours.

Comment [A29]: See Response 11, 15, 16, 27 and 32.

The above limitations suggest areas for future research. The values statements will be of limited use if the organisation fails to put them into practice. Further research is required to understand how to realise these values and if necessary implement organizational change. One avenue that might be fruitful is to evaluate current business practices to reveal the gap between values and behaviours, i.e. 'words' and 'deeds', and then identify mechanisms for improvement. It might also be worthwhile involving case organisation's clients, suppliers or partnering organisations into the study to explore how values affect inter-organisational collaboration and corporation.

Comment [A30]: See Response 27.

CONCLUSIONS

Articulating organisational values is an important, but not, easy task. As argued earlier, a set of well-shared organisational values can help empower people and improve organisational performance. Whilst considerable uncertainty persist as to how organisational values should be developed, the case study presented offers practical guidance on to reveal employees' personal values and hence formulate collective organisational values statements. It is arguably a unique but natural way to developing organisational values, which differs from other approaches in the following aspects:

Firstly, the case study is an attempt to apply Schwartz's values theory and methodology in an organisational context. In the past decade, the work of Schwartz has been applied widely in comparative intercultural research, with most SVSs being conducted at the national/cultural level. This case study tests the validity of using the SVS in an organisation, and demonstrates the benefits it could bring into the business world. The survey provided insight into the employees' values system, and raised people's awareness in terms of values priority, values diversity and the interrelationships between these values. It is believed that this instrument can make values visible, comparable and, more importantly, help demonstrate the strength and alignment (or otherwise) of the values within the organisation, from which core organisational values could be identified and understood. Values perspectives were revealed that might otherwise have remained unseen. Furthermore, the survey results serve as a useful platform to initiate further debate and exploration of organisational values.

Secondly, unlike the more common senior-management driven approach to defining organisational values, this case study adopted a bottom-up approach which is owned by all members of the organisation. It started from an organisation-wide values survey, where everyone participated as an individual in the survey, with genuine interest expressed in trying to understand his or her personal values. With the help of Schwartz's values theory, the questionnaire survey helped participants become self-conscious and articulate about their own values. The following workshop discussion and ongoing communication between values group and staff members enhanced people's values awareness and understanding. Ideas and thoughts were encouraged, challenged and advanced throughout the process. As a result, an organisation-wide values dialogue was set in motion among staff to speak openly about the meaning of these values in the workplace, and to voice concerns. By discussing what is valued in their work and how it should be carried out, people's values and associated behaviours became meaningful in an organisational context. This would be very difficult to achieve in the traditional top-down approach, where the senior management are responsible for developing the organisational values with the staff being isolated from the process.

As a result, the process helped the employees to understand their shared values and generated a sense of responsibility to ensure that values were identified, understood, integrated and lived. One participant commented that the whole process is about *'finding places where we come together instead of pull apart – because we do that naturally.'* It empowers people in the organisation and connected them to the organisation's future. The derivation of the values statements formulated a values framework for the organisation. This can be

used to make sure they and the organisation are on track. It also reminds people of values they do not share, which is also important.

Furthermore, this approach helped to change the notion of the traditional single leadership model, where top management held all responsibilities, to a shared or distributed model of leadership where everyone is responsible for operational conduct. It helped the management realise that human values could form the basis of business strategy, and created a platform from which to define the organisational vision, mission and objectives.

Nevertheless, our experiences also revealed some issues which require special attention. Firstly, it is crucial yet difficult to create the right value-sharing environment. People need to be taught how to listen and be heard. Continuous encouragement and confidentiality assurance are required to nurture participation. Secondly, the development and promotion of a value-oriented culture has to be driven from the top. This will not only help smooth the process, but also provide understanding, ownership and support for the initiative. On the other hand, senior management must understand that they should not engage in such an endeavor unless they are committed to building on the results; lack of follow-through after raising expectations could be more damaging than not starting in the first place. Thirdly, a values communication programme must be put in place to promote the key organizational values and explain ways to assimilate them into day-to-day work. More importantly, it should reassure employees that they are involved in a long-term dialogue, not a quick fix or superficial exercise. Last but not least, identifying organisational shared values is by no means aimed at excluding values diversity. On the contrary, the process made the divergence of values explicit and facilitated

mutual understanding. Diversity should be encouraged and respected on the basis that it does not conflict with the shared organisational values. Care must be taken in preventing shared values being abused to limit individual creativity and restrict the entry of different cultural groups into the organisation.

Comment [A31]: See Response 12, 27.

The experience of shaping the collective organisational values based on consultation with, and engagement of, employees was a positive one. Personal values must be made clear before they can be communicated and linked into collective organisational values. The derivation of an organisational values statement is a process to help employee explore the real meaning of their values at work, invite people's thoughts, and form a values framework within the organisation. We have presented a structured method derived from Schwartz's values theory that can facilitate the alignment of individual and organisational values and hence be an effective way for shared values to emerge, evolve and enter into the corporate conscience.

In conclusion, the case study provides evidence that the SVS is a suitable instrument for developing organisational values. Meanwhile, the novel bottom-up approach helped map out the personal values existing in the organisation and identify key priorities around which to align a set of organisational values.

Comment [A32]: See Response 26.

This is not just an ethically desirable activity, but also a driver for improved organisational congruence and enhanced inclusion, and thus support from employees.

NOTE

1. Ipsative is used in psychology as in the phrase "ipsative measure" to indicate a specific type of measure in which respondents compare two or more desirable options and pick the one which is most preferred (sometimes called a "forced choice" scale). (Wikipedia (n. d.), Accessed 25 May 2008, <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ipsative>>)

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