Going Green with Values and Ethics in the 21st Century

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Leading in a disposable world is a difficult task in the 21st century. However, it is not impossible. Just as environmentalists are teaching the general public to “go green” and recycle products rather than utilizing simple disposables, the leaders of organizations today need to practice and teach “going green” principles in the area of values and ethics. Unfortunately many organizations have taken a disposable stance to values and ethics. However, with careful analysis of the organization’s culture, understanding its values and infusing Biblical values by Christian leaders, today’s organizations can become successful in all areas of business. Employees, customers and stakeholders would build trust and understand the principles of the business through this analysis. Christian leaders have opportunity through change initiatives to infuse values and build this trust that will carry the organization into the future. Going green instead of disposing of values is the only way to build a successful 21st century organization.

The world in which we live has become a disposable world over the past thirty years. As we look around science and technology strides have created cheaper products to the point that it is simpler to dispose and repurchase a better item than to fix one that has broken down. For instance, we have disposable diapers, disposable wipes, disposable razors, disposable dishes, computers, televisions and printers are all outdated as soon as we purchase them and prices are low enough that it is more economical to throw them away and buy new than to have them fixed, clothes are becoming disposable, jewelry, just about every facet of our lives has become instant and disposable. The new mentality is: “Don’t like it, just replace it.” Marriage, family and relationships are all becoming disposable. And our values and ethics are not exempt from this disposable world. Yes, values and ethics have become disposable as well. You don’t like the value you were raised with concerning the family unit, that’s fine, throw it out and develop a new one, don’t care for the marriage covenant, it’s okay, get a divorce and search for a new spouse, or just live with someone so there are no ties when you are tired of them.

The business world is not exempt from this behavior of easily disposing ethical and moral values. This paper will focus on exploring the world of disposable values and ethics in the business world throughout the globe. Through understanding the origin of values and the measurement of organizational values we can see why disposing of values has become such a major issue in the 21st century and how leaders need to handle instilling values that will last in their organizations, in other words “Going Green” in the area of values and ethics. Before one
can discover how to “go green” with values and ethics, they must first understand what values and ethics are and how they relate to organizational culture and leadership.

Organizational Culture

Understanding organizational culture is necessary before a complete understanding of why values and ethics are important in the business world. What exactly is organizational culture? Culture is a complex issue that essentially includes all of a group’s shared values, attitudes, beliefs, assumptions, artifacts and behaviors. When thinking of culture, one typically thinks of other nationalities or groups of people. However, in this sense, we are looking at organizational culture, which encompasses all aspects of the organizations internal as well as external relationships. It is deep in that it guides individual actions even to the extent that members are not even aware they are being influenced by it. Scholars tend to agree that the root of any organization’s culture is ground in a rich set of assumptions about the nature of the world and human relationships. For example, should an organization buy into the belief that people are selfish and only out for themselves? Their attitudes and behaviors toward outside salespeople, vendors and consultants might be influenced.

According to Cameron and Quinn, “most organizations develop a dominant cultural style.”\(^1\) This style can be determined through the Organizational Cultural Assessment Instrument (OCAI) which is based on the Competing Values Framework (CVF), a theoretical model developed by Cameron and Quinn, which is currently the dominant framework in the world for assessing organizational culture.\(^2\) The CVF is the result of many studies reviewed by Robert Quinn and John Rohrbaugh,\(^3\) in which they determined there were two major dimensions of organizational culture of which they then combined the two dimensions, creating a 2x2 matrix with four culture types (see figure 1).

**Figure 1 – The Competing Values Framework\(^4\)**

![Competing Values Framework Diagram](diagram.png)
The Four Culture Types

The four culture types seen in figure 1 are: clan; adhocracy; hierarchy; and market.

**Clan Culture**

The clan culture is a place where people share a lot of personal information and are similar to an extended family. The leaders or heads of the organization are seen as mentors and perhaps even parent figures. The organization is held together by loyalty or tradition. Commitment is high. The organization emphasizes the long-term benefit of human resources development and attaches great importance to cohesion and morale. Success is defined in terms of sensitivity to customers and concern for people. The organization places a premium on teamwork, participation, and consensus. Figure 2 breaks down the attributes of the clan culture according to leader type, value drivers, theory effectiveness, and quality strategies.

![Figure 2 – Clan Culture Attributes](image)

**Adhocracy Culture**

An organization that is a dominant adhocracy culture is one that is a dynamic, entrepreneurial, and creative place to work. People stick out their necks and take risks. The leaders are considered innovators and risk takers. The glue that holds the organization together is commitment to experimentation and innovation. The emphasis is on being on the leading edge. The organization's long-term emphasis is on growth and acquiring new resources. Success means gaining unique and new products or services. Being a product or service leader is important. The organization encourages individual initiative and freedom. Figure 3 shows the attributes of the adhocracy culture according to leader type, value drivers, theory effectiveness, and quality strategies.
Figure 3 – Adhocracy Culture Attributes

| Leader Type       | • Innovator  
|                   | • Entrepreneur  
|                   | • Visionary  
| Value Drivers     | • Innovative outputs  
|                   | • Transformation  
|                   | • Agility  
| Theory for Effectiveness | • Innovativeness,  
|                   | • Vision  
|                   | • New resources  
| Quality Strategies | • Surprise and delight  
|                   | • Creating new standards by anticipating needs  
|                   | • Continuous improvement through finding creative solutions  

Market Culture

A market culture is a result-oriented organization whose major concern is getting the job done. People are competitive and goal-oriented. The leaders are hard drivers, producers, and competitors. They are tough and demanding. The glue that holds the organization together is an emphasis on winning. Reputation and success are common concerns. The long-term focus is on competitive actions and achievement of measurable goals and targets. Success is defined in terms of market share and penetration. Competitive pricing and market leadership are important. The organizational style is hard-driving competitiveness. Figure 4 shows the attributes of the market culture according to leader type, value drivers, theory effectiveness, and quality strategies.⁷

Figure 4 – Market Culture Attributes

| Leader Type       | • Hard driver  
|                   | • Competitor  
|                   | • Producer  
| Value Drivers     | • Market share  
|                   | • Goal achievement  
|                   | • Profitability  
| Theory for Effectiveness | • Aggressive competition  
|                   | • Customer focused  
| Quality Strategies | • Measuring customer preferences  
|                   | • Improving productivity  
|                   | • Creating external partnerships while enhancing competitiveness and involving customers and suppliers  

**Hierarchy Culture**

The hierarchy culture organization is a very formalized and structured place to work. Procedures govern what people do. The leaders pride themselves on being good coordinators and organizers who are efficiency-minded. Maintaining a smooth-running organization is most critical. Formal rules and policies hold the organization together. The long-term concern is stability and performance with efficient, smooth operations. Success is defined in terms of dependable delivery, smooth scheduling and low cost. The management of employees is concerned with secure employment and predictability. Figure 5 shows the attributes of the hierarchy culture according to leader type, value drivers, theory effectiveness, and quality strategies.8

![Figure 5 – Hierarchy Culture Attributes](image)

The competing values framework “is useful in identifying the major approaches to organizational design, stages of life cycle development, organizational quality, theories of effectiveness, leadership roles and roles of human resource managers, and management skills.”9

**Values Defined**

So, where exactly do values come from? How do organizations develop their values? How does one develop values and infuse those values into organizations? Traditional values are thought to be the foundational ideals about what an individual feels are good or bad, right or wrong, moral or immoral, which coincides with Boudon who states: values reflect a person’s beliefs about what is good or bad, fair or unfair, legitimate or illegitimate.10 Through a person’s values, one can often ascertain how a person feels about certain issues or how committed they are to their own personal beliefs. Values are an underlying foundation for ethics, as they help to determine behaviors, setting limits regarding what an individual will tolerate or overlook in others’ behavior. In other words, they root leaders and remind them of their obligations. There is much
debate, however, over where values originate and why people hold to the values and beliefs that they do.\textsuperscript{11}

Christian leaders are aware their values derive from the Bible. The Bible gives much instruction concerning our values and ethics. However, even the Christian leader is not exempt from disposable values. In the 20th and 21st Centuries, the Christian ethic has come under attack. William Barclay proclaims the crisis of the present day is ethical and there is an element of permanency about the Ten Commandments when used to develop a value system. In other words, value systems have their day and then fade away, but those grounded in the Commandments that God gave mankind remain. Whatever people think of these values, they still remain the basis of any system of ethics for the servant leader, as the Sixth through Tenth Commandments (Exodus 20:13-17) were designed as a values system that would build a cohesive society. Each of these commandments was based on the value that God placed on people – their lives, their relationships, their property, and their reputation.

Leaders can look to Charles Taylor’s position on moral feelings to grasp a better understanding of values. Taylor describes values as “moral feelings” that “are distinguished from other feelings by their internal relation to values and to one’s self-understanding. Accordingly, they would simply not be moral feelings if they were not related to our conception of the good.”\textsuperscript{12} He further states, our moral feelings relate to our values and the gap between our moral feelings and reflective values can be bridged through articulation of these moral feelings and reflective values. “When we articulate our moral feelings we give them a form in which they can be discussed.”\textsuperscript{13}

Organizations do not form spontaneously or accidentally, the beliefs, values and assumptions of the founder and those of the leaders echo throughout the entire organization, shaping the learning experiences of the members during the start-up phase of the organization.\textsuperscript{14} More often than not, the organization takes on the personality and shape of the strongest leader. As one leader leaves, and another takes place, the organization changes to mimic that of the leader in charge. There are times when change such as this could be bad, however, most often it is for the better as it grows the organization in a different direction. One can open up opportunities to pass these values on, helping others to understand the values we have and why.

The Word of God guides Christians in forming these moral feelings. For example, Colossians 3:5 states: “Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.”\textsuperscript{15} It is important that Christian leaders understand moral feelings and reflective values, and learn to articulate them in order to infuse them into the organizations they lead. Fayolle, Olivier, and Legrain, posit that, “A value system is an enduring organization of beliefs concerning preferable modes of conduct or end-states among a continuum of relative importance.”\textsuperscript{16} In other words, a value acts as an ideal principle that people or leaders refer to in order to base their judgment when deciding which course of action to adopt. The beliefs, values, and assumptions of founders or leaders infuse organizations and shape the learning experiences of the group members during the start-up stage.

\textbf{Infused Values}

Leaders of organizations tend to infuse or instill their values into the organization they lead. Posner contends that values form the foundation for the purpose and goals of an organization.\textsuperscript{17}
They drive the direction of decision-making at all organizational levels and are the heart of the culture of the organization. Grojean, Resick, Dickson, and Smith, contend that the personal values of organizational leaders “play the dominant role in creating and maintaining climates regarding ethics.” The values of an organization have to be influenced by someone, and the most logical is for the leadership of the organization to be that someone(s). How this leader leads will determine the values the organization will maintain.

O’Toole offers us many examples of great leadership that evoked change not only through the values of the companies, but through their philosophy of leadership. By instilling their values, these leaders opened doors of change and offered hope to people to become all they can become. When the motive is properly aligned and the values are such as to empower the people and make the organization better, instilling those values in the company will make it more successful and the people, as well as the organization, will soar to great heights. It is when the values of the leader are used for personal gain in place of organizational gain that makes values infusion a detriment to the success of the organization.

**Shared Values: Organizational Culture**

An organization is made up of many members. The organization takes on the personality and shape of the strongest leader in many cases. Shared values are what produce trust and link members and the organization together. Shared values are the identity by which the organization is known. Therefore, the shared values must be stated as both corporate objectives and individual values. Every organization, as well as every leader, will have a different set of values that are appropriate to the organization’s business practices. When we consider that “top-level managers hold, practice, and promulgate organizational values, we realize that those values are preserved formally by selecting personnel during recruitment whose values match with the organization and socializing them to the organizational ethos and informally through rituals, stories, myths, and heroic acts.”

Klenke maintains, “A key function of organizational leaders is to help to develop, articulate and communicate, and model organizational values based on consensus through social validation. Social validation implies that value about how people should relate to one another, exercise power, define what is beautiful, and so on, can be validated by the experience that they reduce uncertainty and anxiety. Enquiring of the employees about the importance of values discloses personal value priorities. The extent to which personal values or shared values match with the organizational values is considered to be one indicator of fit between individuals and organizations. An organization that is clear about and focused on the same values and sharing the same beliefs eliminates the complications, disconnects and obstacles that can hamper effective performance.”

**Organizational Value Alignment**

The alignment of individual values and organizational values utilizes a more effective change in the organization. Ralph Waldo Emerson summed up the correlation between personal and institutional values when he said: “Every great institution is the lengthened shadow of a single man. His character determines the character of the organization.” Hence, the organization often times takes on the character, values and goals of the leader. Cameron and Quinn affirm that leaders tend to be more successful at change when the leadership strengths of an individual are
congruent with the dominant organizational culture.²⁵ Song states that “planned organizational change is expected to have a positive impact on individual development and organizational performance.”²⁶ In other words individual values that line up with organizational values open the door of opportunity for more successful change to take effect.

Misalignment of practices versus espoused values is dangerous for the organization. When senior leadership’s values do not line up with the values of the organization or other members, the culture is destroyed. Simmons tells us that “the divergence between words and deeds has profound costs as it renders managers untrustworthy and undermines their credibility and their ability to use their words to influence the actions of their subordinates.”²⁷ Trust is of critical importance between the leadership and subordinates of the organization. By not living up to their words and their deeds not matching up to their words/values, they hurt trust, especially with those who work closely with the leadership. If leadership is speaking out of both sides of their mouth, they will lose the trust of their followers, and willingness to change their attitudes, values, assumptions and commitments will not be brought into alignment with the organization. Confusion will ensue and the organization will not be as strong since no one will know the values, opening the door for unethical behavior. Researchers are convinced that when the fit between individuals and their organization’s values is in alignment, there is a more positive subjective experience for the person and better performance for the organization.²⁸

**How to Evaluate Organizational Culture and Alignment**

Every organization has its own mix of the four types of organizational culture. And every organization has a set value system. This mix is found by the completion of an instrument designed to measure Organizational Culture such as the OCAI which is a short questionnaire. This questionnaire is a valid method to indicate handles for change within the organization. The participants for the organization are asked to divide 100 points over four alternatives that correspond to four culture types, according to the present organization. This method measures the mix of or extent to which one of the four culture types dominates the present organizational or team culture. By taking the test a second time, but now dividing the 100 points over the same alternatives according to what the test taker would like to see in the company, the desire for change can be measured.²⁹

The six dimensions judged by participants are:

1. Dominant Characteristics
2. Organizational Leadership
3. Management of Employees
4. Organization Glue
5. Strategic emphases
6. Criteria of Success

**So Why Evaluate?**

Failure of change initiatives in organizations is consistent with neglect of the organization’s culture. Cameron and Quinn tell us there is importance in diagnosing and managing organizational culture because of an “increasing need to merge and mold different organizations cultures as structured changes have occurred”³⁰ such as consolidated units, downsizing and outsourcing eliminate part of the organization and mergers occur. To tie this assessment to
ethics, we must understand that ethical behavior of an organization is not possible without ethical core values, which influence the emergence of the informal ethical structures such as communication on the ethical problems between managers and employees, and further the emergence and implementation of the formal ethical structures and measures of business ethics implementation such as mission statement, policy manuals and training in ethics. And, considering the ethical core values and ethical climate of the organization, the culture defines the rules of ethical behavior as the sole basis and starting point for the emergence of both formal and informal measures of business ethics implementation.

This important relationship among the organization’s core values, ethical climate and culture will support the emergence of the informal and formal measures of business ethics implementation and will result in consistency among mission, vision, enterprise values and culture – which is essential for the organization’s long-term success. Kaptien’s research emphasizes the importance of the mutual influence among enterprise ethical core values, climate and culture which deals with the problems of the code of ethics as one of the important formal measures of business ethics implementation. The research further reveals and stresses that to organize and implement business ethics, the organization must first identify the principles to which it wishes to adhere, then cement those principles in the core values and transmit into the organizations climate and culture. Without a culture-values audit, how else could the organization make these assessments?

According to Cameron and Quinn, “Cultural congruence means that various aspects of an organization’s culture are aligned.” Also, “In a congruent culture, the strategy, leadership style, reward system, approach to managing employees, and dominant characteristics all tend to emphasize the same set of cultural values.” It’s the presence of incongruence in organizations that highlight the need for change. When members of an organization see a lack of integration, ambiguity, the absence of fit, and behaviors incompatible with the espoused values of the organization, it often leads to “differences in perspectives, differences in goals, and differences in strategies within the organization.”

Back to the Beginning – Ethics

With a clear picture of values and organizational culture, we can now look at the disposable ethics 21st century leaders seem to have adopted. Ethical issues are in the forefront of every sector of business and part of the character of every individual. “The decline in ethics is largely cultural and appears to be as closely associated with a failing system of morality as it is with the profession’s ethical rules.” Before one can decide if there are ethical problems in an organization, one must understand exactly what constitutes an “ethical” problem. Without a grasp on the definition of ethical, it is nearly impossible to decide if there are ethical problems.

Ciulla states that “Ethics is about the assessment and evaluation of values…” He maintains that ethical judgments are values vs. values or rights vs. rights and how to handle situations is not simple. In these situations, how one measures the quality and worth of a leader comes down to the character of the leader. In other words, what he/she “intends, values, believes in or stands for.” Working with a consultant, the organization should seek to “adopt a morality-based approach to the development of its ethical codes and standards.” Part of the human make-up, when looking at ethics and values, is to infuse our own values into the organization as the “right” thing to do.
In working on ethical issues and what is right and wrong, leaders must consider the globalization of organizations in this day and age. Due to the rise in globalization, one of the first things to determine is the culture of the organization and the nationality of the leaders leading that organization. For leaders of global organizations, it is imperative that there is an understanding of the ethical differences between the nations involved. Beekun, Westerman and Barghouti contend that ethical differences between countries has a potential impact of a country’s national culture on ethics and what drives the decision-making process underlying ethical behavior in both countries. An understanding of these differences is critical towards enhancing ethical behavior in both countries. Schien points out that simply telling a person in another culture that an action is unethical may alienate that person. Understanding the behavioral process underlying ethics across national cultures helps the leader to make sense of an individual’s ethical decision-making process and behavior, which allows further insight in the attempt to avoid offending others.

To change the culture of an organization and raise the bar on the standards of ethics, there must be an alignment process that integrates business ethics with mission, vision, values, strategies and goals. The use of consultants to help the organization to understand this alignment process and thereby align their ethical practices is an option to consider in implementing change. Because of the social nature of ethical values, this alignment process will be concerned with relationships and defining relational expectations between leadership, employees, stakeholders and customers. The goal of an ethical organizational culture is the greater good of all. Internal relationships between leaders and followers, as well as external relationships with clients, customers, vendors and the community are all prized. As a result, people are treated well consistently and an ethical culture emerges.

Conclusion

It is imperative that leaders today have a firm understanding of their organization’s culture, develop a sound value system and insist on ethical behavior from all employees regardless of rank. Disposable products to make life easier are great items to have. However, when it comes to disposable values and ethics, Christian leaders all over the world need to unite and refuse to dispose of the value system God set in place. Biblical values and ethics cannot be turned into disposable products to make life easier if we are to run successful organizations. Everywhere in the world today we see advertising and reminders of becoming a “greener” world, not using as many disposable products. Leaders of organizations today should adopt a “Going Green” attitude with the organizational values and ethics adopted by the organizations they lead. Jim Henson, creator of the Muppets summed up the problems of leadership going green with their ethical behavior when he coined the phrase, “It’s not easy being green,” for his famous leader of the Muppets, Kermit the Frog. He is correct, it is not easy being green, but it is worth it in the end as going green with ethics and values will create more successful organizations to carry us through the 21st century and beyond.
About the Author

Merium R. Leverett is a Regent University student in the Doctor of Strategic Leadership program. Merium earned a BAS in Organizational Leadership from Mercer University and an M.A. in Organizational Leadership and Management from Regent University. She is a certified Growth Coach, Life Coach and Leadership Coach through Dream Releaser Coaching. Merium is the owner of JCAM Bookkeeping & Tax Office and MJ Leadership Development and Coaching, as well as professor in the Leadership Studies Department at Beulah Height University in Atlanta, Georgia. In addition to her work and educational pursuits, she is the proud mother of three young adult children and resides in Stockbridge, Georgia with her husband. Questions or comments regarding this article may be directed to the author at: MeriLev@mail.regent.edu

Endnotes

5 OCAI online analysis for Living Faith Tabernacle, July 14, 2012.
6 OCAI online analysis for Living Faith Tabernacle, July 14, 2012.
7 OCAI online analysis for Living Faith Tabernacle, July 14, 2012.
8 OCAI online analysis for Living Faith Tabernacle, July 14, 2012.


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