



Career Management Column as published in Leadership and Management Books, L&MB - [Rita Balian Allen](#), Author of *Personal Branding and Marketing Yourself*

"Values Driven Leadership"

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Can you identify your top 5 values and do you allow it to help you build a strong foundation of personal empowerment and leadership? We make a wide range of choices and decisions every day. Along the way, we follow an internal voice that guides us directly or indirectly...and sometimes creates a tug of war or challenge for us. At times, we may feel this tug and don't quite understand why and/or cannot identify the source of this struggle. Some of you may easily resonate with this statement while some of you may be a bit puzzled by it.

Allow me to offer an example – how would you respond to these statements:

- I prefer working in an environment that is collegial and team-oriented
- I prefer working in an analytical environment that is innovative
- I prefer to be measured by my ability to meet expected bottom line results
- I prefer to be measured by how I build relationships while achieving results

Take another example - which of these statements do you connect with most:

- I prefer to lead by example through my behaviors and actions
- I prefer to lead through service, being helpful and supportive of others
- I prefer to lead by empowering others with appropriate tools and resources
- I prefer to lead through collaboration and participative interaction

There is no right or wrong selections in the above statements. Each of us value different things and therefore will resonate with one or two more than the others. Our values are truly at the core of our vitality and will be the foundation of our fulfillment. It's like if you build a house, you need to lay a strong foundation for which to build upon. Think of your values in the same way. They are the foundation for which we build everything upon throughout our lifetime. If the foundation is not set strongly in building a house, then your house will fall apart. If our values are not set strongly in all of our personal and professional choices, we will feel the disconnect and not be content or productive. Our values will also drive our leadership style, how we choose to lead and influence others.

Our core values are the foundation for all we do including our:

- Beliefs
- Motivations
- Attitudes
- Aspirations
- Expectations
- Perceptions
- Fulfillment
- Passion
- Productivity
- Energy
- Happiness

Take the time to assess, identify and prioritize your values. Think about the things that are most important for you to feel whole, satisfied and/or complete. Differentiate between values that are non-negotiable to you, values that must be present in everything you do, from values that are moderately important, as well as the values that are least important to you.

As you determine what kind of leader you aspire to be, you will find strong alignment with your values as the foundation for successfully being your authentic self. When we are genuine, authentic and transparent, we will ultimately be our best self and therefore exhibit effective leadership when we stay true to ourselves. Leadership starts and ends with inner strength and one way to heighten our self awareness is to start with our values.

What are your top 10 values? Make a list of several values and then force yourself to rank them 1 through 10 with 1 being the highest and so on. Examples of values could include family, respect, challenge, integrity, balance, wealth, health, recognition, competition, autonomy, loyalty, collaboration, cooperation, security, responsibility, acceptance, personal growth, education, fun ... and the list could go on and on. When you have determined your top 10 list, transpose them on to an index card and post them in a visible spot for you to see every day as reminder of what is most important to you, and when you are at your authentic best.

Values will (and should) impact our decisions in all aspects of our lives – personal, social, spiritual, professional, political, etc. It is important to identify what our core values are and then work towards alignment which is critical for our fulfillment. It is necessary, however, to recognize and manage when our values are not aligned which will realistically happen at times. When we are aware that there is a compromise that needs to be made, we can assess the benefits and risks of that compromise. If we determine there is something to be gained, we can then determine strategies that will help us to be successful in doing so. Then there may be times when we realize there is nothing to be gained and the compromise is not acceptable to us causing us to make a different choice. The bottom line is we have to first know what our values are so that then we are empowered to move forward accordingly.

When we know what our core values are and stay true to them, we are able to lead a fulfilled life and career. More often than not, when someone is struggling at work or at play, and you peel through all of the layers to get to the core of the situation, you will find that their values are not properly aligned and being sacrificed. In the world of constant change that we now live, we can expect a change in leadership, mergers, acquisitions, as well as a host of other shifts at work which may cause our values to no longer be exactly aligned. We want to embrace those changes, assess the situation, determine which values are being sacrificed, weigh the risks and rewards, determine our boundaries, make personal choices, manage compromises, and apply appropriate strategies for success.

Identify your values and incorporate them in your decision making and life choices. Stay true to your values, make compromises as you see fit. Identify your values and build a strong foundation towards personal empowerment. Stay authentic and be the leader you aspire to be using your values as your guide!

Ask Rita: Do you have a career question and/or a career story to share? Email your questions or stories to rita@ritaballenassociates.com

Rita Balian Allen is the president of Rita B. Allen Associates, a career management firm specializing in executive coaching, leadership development, management training and career development. She is a lecturer at Boston-area universities, a sought-after speaker and presenter, the author of numerous articles, blogs and the newly released book, "*Personal Branding and Marketing Yourself: The Three Ps Marketing Technique as a Guide to Career Empowerment*". Rita was voted one of the top ten executive coaches by the Boston Women's Business Journal .