

Does Your Company Need A Chief Values Officer?

William Arruda Senior Contributor @

I write about personal branding.

Follow



Mar 19, 2024, 07:16am EDT



Photo credit GETTY

Values are important to us as individuals. They impact how we feel, act, and react at work. Your [values](#) are one of the six drivers of your personal brand. And according to [David Allison](#), CEO of Valuegraphics, employees' values are among several sets of stakeholder values that companies need to understand and support. I had a virtual sit down with David to learn just how important and powerful values are.

William Arruda: I write a lot of articles about values and how important they are to personal branding and career success, and then I learned about what you are doing with the Valuegraphics project and was blown away. Why did you embark on this project?

Allison: It was frustration with the indoctrinated way that we're supposed to understand people, which is demographics and psychographics. Whether we're talking about marketing or about employee engagement or about stakeholders of any sort, it's all about people. And people are all about their values. So if you're going to understand people you've got to understand human values and then everything starts to make a lot more sense.


Arruda: What did you learn about human values?


Allison: There are only 56 core human values. We know this after doing close to a million surveys. We talked to people all over the world about the things that matter most to them and why they do the things they do. We then analyzed this data, encompassing 436 different data points across nearly a million surveys in 152 languages and 180 countries. We saw patterns – and those patterns led us to these 56 values. They're the 56 things that drive every decision that every one of us is making every day. Now we can get away from looking at people based on who they are on the outside and these ridiculous outdated assumptions that somehow because you're male you're the same as all other men or because you're a baby boomer you're the same as all other baby boomers.


Arruda: There are so many people, all with different values, that an organization needs to engage with. Doesn't this add a massive level of complexity to what you are doing?

Allison: At business school were taught that the sole purpose of an organization is to create shareholder value. That's just not the case anymore. Sure, shareholders deserve to be thought about in any business decision; but so do employees and so do customers, and vendors and partners and the communities that we're impacting with the work that we're doing. So there are actually five different stakeholder groups that need to be considered when leaders make a decision on behalf of a large organization. The problem with this idea of stakeholder capitalism, the reason it has come in and out of fashion over the years, is because people get excited about it for a little while and then they realize it's next-to impossible to find a way to make a decision that satisfies all those stakeholder groups. But that's because they haven't been using values derived from data.

MORE FOR YOU

[Total Solar Eclipse 'Map Of Nope' Meme Is A Must See Before April 8](#) 

[300 Billion Crypto Price Crash Suddenly Accelerates As Bitcoin Ethereum And XRP Traders Brace For A Fed Shock](#) 

[HP Amplify Partner Conference Touts AI Hybrid Work And Supply Chain](#) 

This is an over-simplified hypothetical, but as the number one most important value to the entire general population in the United States is the value of belonging, it's a pretty safe bet that belonging could end up being a value. And so will family because that's number two. So let's say in your five stakeholder groups for this hypothetical organization belonging and family are showing up. Well then frame up everything you do in a way that will benefit families and make everyone feel like they belong. It's so much more complex, of course, but hopefully that makes the point.

Arruda: This all makes sense, so why aren't all companies using values to achieve their goals?

Allison: Organizations are inherently risk averse and you can use data to talk about pretty much everything in the life of an organization except for one thing: human behavior, because humans are inherently illogical, emotional, irrational. And we don't always do the things that you'd expect us to do. So, until now, human values haven't fit on a spreadsheet. So we've ended up in a place where we've dehumanized organizations.

We have to embrace that messy, illogical, irrational human behavior. Our soul must come back into the boardroom. And if we let our souls come back into the boardroom – with data not guesswork – then we can be the most out of the box, the most intense. That's what makes us human.

Arruda: What have been some of the biggest wins your clients have experienced after implementing an integrated values-based business strategy? Do you have an example?

Yes. While not our largest client, this is one of the most heartwarming success stories we have. It's a company that builds apartment towers. They decided that it was time to stop hiring outside property management firms to run their apartment blocks, because nobody likes their property manager and they wanted to do it better. They came to me and said we need to figure out how to make a property management company that people are actually going to love. And how do we do that?

What are the values we need to be paying attention to? So we went and did our work and we came back and we presented a series of values to them. They rebuilt what it means to be a property management company from the ground up. They rethought communication and hiring and how fast things get fixed and what people wear and what their hours are and everything they could possibly do to align with the values of people who live in apartment buildings. They launched this new property management company at the height of COVID in a building that had a sort of rocky start (leasing during COVID), when everybody didn't want to be anywhere near anybody else. And in the midst of all that, something happened that I don't think very many property management companies can say has ever happened to them before.

They started getting unsolicited thank you notes from the people who live in those buildings saying things like “this is the most well-run building.” “If this is what it's like to live in one of your buildings, I'm never going to live in anyone else's building ever.” Who writes thank you notes to their property manager?

Arruda: That's an impressive story. You've said that you strongly believe companies should have a Chief Values Officer.

Allison: Yeah, now that we can bring human nature back into the boardroom with data, someone's got to be responsible for that. It's time for us to have a Chief Values Officer sitting around the boardroom table.

Arruda: And what would the CVO do?

Allison: Their job is to make sure that in all functions around the table are considering humans, that when they make financial decisions, they take into account the values of the people that the organization is meant to serve. They focus on all five of those stakeholder groups. So being the values advocate, values watchdog and values implementation exec, making sure that as strategies and policies are built for internal and external teams, and all the other stakeholders, that values are reflected there.

Arruda: You suggest that the term corporation is no longer relevant and that it should be replaced.

Allison: I like to use the term ecosystem. In fact, the CVO should be thinking about advocating for that—that we stop calling this a corporation and we start calling it an ecosystem because of all these five different stakeholder groups. It's a symbiotic relationship, isn't it? If there were no shareholders, there wouldn't be any money to make anything happen and if there were no customers there'd be no profits for their shareholders.

Arruda: What's next for your work with the Valuegraphics project?

Allison: We've just partnered with Google and we're launching a thing called the belonging index that's going to be a free resource to help event planners and people who put on conferences. It will help them build events that are more inclusive and that make people feel like they belong. So if you're putting together a conference for lawyers in the EU, it will tell you what they mean when they talk about belonging. So that you can plan those things into your conferences and events. It's going to be massively important.

William Arruda is a [keynote speaker](#), co-founder of [CareerBlast.TV](#) and creator of the [360Reach Personal Brand Survey](#) that helps you get candid, meaningful feedback from people who know you.

Follow me on [LinkedIn](#). Check out my [website](#).



William Arruda

Follow

I'm a personal branding pioneer, motivational speaker, founder of Reach Personal Branding and cofounder of CareerBlast.TV. I'm also the bestselling author of the definitive... [Read More](#)

[Editorial Standards](#)

[Print](#)

[Reprints & Permissions](#)
