

# Values

The values a leader brings, and shows, to the newsroom will resound. These core beliefs and aspirations can be repeated and need to be lived. What are the best ways to impart values to colleagues lauded for their skepticism?

## **Nancy Maynard**

The most enduring value of a news organization is honesty. You need to have the reporters and (other) professionals understand that the ownership and the leadership value integrity above all else.

## **Ben Bradlee**

I think history is the great teacher of values; there's a wonderful textbook every day in your daily newspaper in how not to behave.

## **Jack Fuller**

[Values emerge from] serious self questioning about serious, important things, and openness to the possibility that you're wrong, or that the learned response to a particular situation isn't the right one.

We need to ask ourselves whether we thought everything we did was right. If we ask the question of ourselves seriously, interrogate ourselves seriously right along, we're going to do OK.

## **Arthur Sulzberger Jr.**

The core purpose is the reason we exist. This is why we have banded together, why 12,000 men and women around this United States have come together under the banner of The New York Times Company — to enhance society.

The values [we hold dear] are so important that we're prepared to be penalized for upholding them. Let me read you just [one]: contents of the highest quality and integrity. This is the basis for our reputation and the means by which we fulfill the public trust and our customer's expectations.

Now we have another core value, creating long-term shareholder value through investment and constancy of purpose.

So that's the theory. And we believe it.

It's great to have a former First Amendment lawyer as a CEO, which is what [Russ Lewis] started as, because he understands our core mission and our core values. He was critical in creating it as much as I was. But he loves this quote by Jack Welch: "You can't grow long term if you can't eat short term. Anybody can manage short. Anybody can manage long. Balancing those two things is what management is." I found another quote from Vincent Van Gogh, which I thought would be more appealing to the journalist types: "To do good work, one must eat well." No great newspaper can be an unprofitable newspaper.

What has to grow is the quality and the talent and the expertise of those journalists and the time they need to focus to create great journalism. Those are resources used. The newsroom cannot be starved. You slit your own throat if you starve your newsroom.



I spent three of the worst educational months of my life at the Harvard Business School back in the early '80s. I would not have worked for the company they wanted me to run. In my judgment, they confused value with wealth. They were interested in building wealth and I'm interested in building value. I think that with value, wealth will follow.

One great man there, John Kotter, taught leadership. And he taught the power of values, commitment, alignment. Between John Kotter and Outward Bound, which was the defining experience in my life, the ability to motivate groups of people under conditions of stress to a common goal is at the heart of what I think keeps most of us going.

For journalists, it's not the pay. It's a sense that you're making a difference, that you have an ability to affect society, that you're helping democracy survive, which is not just words to say. It's true. It goes back to: enhance society.



We call them "rules of the road." And the precede is: Success at The New York Times Company means more than [only] achieving our financial and journalistic goals.

(In addition,) all of us should conduct ourselves in a manner consistent with the following tenets of behavior: Treat each other with honesty, respect and civility. Strive for excellence, don't settle for less. Embrace diversity. Contribute your individual excellence to team efforts. Take risks and innovate, recognizing that failure occasionally occurs. Information is power, share it. Accept responsibility and delegate authority. Give and accept constructive feedback. Maintain perspective and a sense of humor.

### **William Hearst III**

The best way to imprint values in a news organization is to live them, no question about it. If you go into a meeting and you say what we're all about is creativity, and then all you really talk about in a crunch is the budget, then your staff will understand you like to talk about creativity, but you care about the budget. ...You can't project a value that isn't lived.

## Tim McGuire

A few years ago, I put out 13 values — things that I wanted the newspaper to be, better storytelling, more accurate, balanced, et cetera.

I had little plastic cards made. I put them on the wall and we had some meetings on them. I'm not sure that was a total success. I think there were too many of them, and I didn't stay on them long enough or hard enough. I've just recently started [saying] I want the newsroom to be more aggressive. ... At the beginning of the year, I talked (in a staff meeting) about the things I wanted for this year. I talked about aggressiveness. After that meeting, I'd use an example from our newspaper of reporters or editors who have been aggressive. As much as possible, you model those values: "Here is what aggressiveness is, here's where we succeeded on that."

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makes up quotes or fakes data should be fired.

## Norman Pearlstine

It all begins with a commitment to absolute honesty and integrity when dealing with sources, readers and other constituents. Anyone who makes up quotes or fakes data should be fired. I see no alternative.

## Neal Shapiro

Try to find stories that you like and talk about what it is within them that you like, because that naturally enables you to start talking about your values. The most important thing which I stress over and over to people is that, "If you think something is wrong at any level of this process, say it. And if you do not want to say it to me, say it to somebody else."

What I never want to do is have a story go on the air and have someone say, "I knew that was wrong."

## Mark Whitaker

I used to think (that) if I have said something once, everybody has heard it. And, of course, they understand it. I don't really need to insult their intelligence by repeating it again.

What I've discovered is, first of all, you can dilute your message and confuse people if you are making 20 different points. The same thing applies in editing that people used to say about Ronald Reagan.

He did know four fundamental things that he really wanted. He was very articulate and he repeated them very eloquently over and over again. That had a huge effect.

As a leader, what you do is just figure out the fundamental things that you want your organization to stand for. You cannot repeat them often enough.

# The most reliable guide to achieving your aspirations is not ambition, but principle.

## Jay Harris

Too frequently we are walking briskly from one meeting to the next, and meetings are actually relatively unimportant because the machine tends to [run on its own].

What can be a lot more important is when that person whose name you might not actually even know calls out your name and wants to ask you a question. ...

Take the time to teach, take the care to live your life in a way that is consistent with what you say. People are called naturally to higher, noble goals. And if you give them the opportunity to pursue them, you will find that most will fall in line.



In the end, effective leadership is about people, not power. The most reliable guide to achieving your aspirations is not ambition, but principle.

## Sandy Rowe

I've found that actually what works best, and what is demanded, is repetition. You have to live it. You have to say it. You have to say it over and over. And in our business, you have to define it in journalistic terms. In the last decade, a lot of news organizations went to a more disciplined management and copied a lot of the management and leadership techniques used in other organizations, many of which were sorely needed in the newspaper business. But there was a sort of over-correction, as you would expect, and a lot of management-speak was introduced in newsrooms, sort of consultant jargon, and it just doesn't work. It doesn't translate. One of the editor's jobs is to be a translator of the business values of the company and the overall values of the company, but to also make sure that she is speaking in journalistic terms.

## Burl Osborne

It is critical to have a set of deeply imbedded values for whatever one is trying to do. As I have gotten older, I have come to believe these values are defined less in journalistic terms than in much broader terms that any citizen could embrace. These are important words that might fit on a calling card — words like integrity, fairness, inclusiveness, excellence — and wrapping all that together [you get] a sense of purpose for the institution. These are the values of our company, and they do fit on a calling card.

## Monica Lozano

We are a media company that is directed to a Spanish-speaking audience. Because of that, most of our professionals were born and raised in Latin America. Mostly [they are] here in the United States not just to work, but they have done their schooling in the U.S. So they have gone through journalism schools and have come out, and are

competent to report on this world. But the perspective is clearly one of somebody from Latin America.

So the questions of American values, the fundamental commitment to press freedom, to freedom of information, to freedom of thought — those are not values that are necessarily inculcated in people who come from countries that have been run by military governments or have high levels of corruption; there is a lack of belief that the commitment is real.

It is the sense that here is this hegemonic creature like the United States that espouses freedom and commitment and democracy, but does not reflect it in its dealing with other countries. It is in that area where you see a particularly high level of cynicism.

### **Jack Fuller**

There has to be an attractive, overriding goal that everybody can buy into or everybody that you're going to want to have around you will buy into. ... You start with what newspapers do for communities, what role they play in a self-governing society. It's a very ennobling thing. It's hard for people not to be inspired by it, whether they're journalists or people who work in the mailroom.

### **Lou Boccardi**

I think clarity of purpose is where that conversation starts. ...

People still ask, in newsrooms all over the world, when something happens, "What does AP say?" And to me, that question is kind of a central force in our life. We've changed AP in so many ways, in content, in technology, in size. So much of it is different. And yet the core values, I think, have been kept in sight and in hand.

### **Tom Johnson**

It's very important, as we change technologically and as we change formats and design, that we preserve high standards of quality: the importance of getting the story right, the importance of being fair, the importance of being responsible.

There is something that we always must measure, and that is public trust. I also worry a great deal about tabloidization ... the move to introduce entertainment values into news values. Fortunately, [after the Sept. 11 attacks], I've seen print, television, radio, magazines [reclaiming] their standards.

### **Ben Bradlee**

I went to a little grade school whose motto was, "Our best today, better tomorrow." Can't you hear those apple-cheeked kids saying it? But in some form, that stuck to me.

I said to myself, do we have the best people in there, and if not, how do we get them? Is that the best we can do? And is one (particular) edition the best we can do?

You could always find some fault with it. ... If you really were so pleased that you were breaking your back patting yourself on it, you'd say: Can you do it again?