

Positive Leadership Toolkit

An overview of Chapter 5: Values-Based Leadership

Pillar 5 – Values-Based Leadership

Leading with integrity, ethics, and a strong moral compass has emerged in leadership research as a critical approach for driving trust, engagement, and sustainable success. Values-based leaders align their decisions and behaviours with core values, creating a culture of accountability and authenticity.

“The why”: Evidence of the importance of values-based leadership

Although it is still an emerging field of scientific inquiry, the importance of values-based leadership is supported by multiple studies, including ones conducted within public sector environments. Benefits include:

- Restoration of public trust (as seen through qualitative research from the UK)
- Higher levels of organizational commitment and lower absenteeism
- Stronger ethical cultures
- Higher levels of engagement and performance

“The how”: Practical strategies to enhance values-based leadership

- **Define, communicate, and commit to core values** – clarify what values will anchor your leadership and organization
 - Articulate and share your values with your team and set a standard for accountability
 - Initiate discussions with your team members about where potential values conflicts may arise in your work and brainstorm values-based actions to undertake
- **Leverage the power of authentic leadership** – lead by example and practice consistent role modelling to build credibility and trust
 - Set the tone with your behaviours – the visible manifestations of your values
 - Demonstrate integrity in all decisions (e.g., sharing bad news, ensuring the fair enforcement of rules)
 - Remember that authentic leadership fosters trust – a superpower in times of uncertainty
- **Embed core values into the fabric of your organizational culture**
 - Integrate values into everyday work and conversations, allowing them to become self-reinforcing habits (i.e., “how things are done around here”)

- Incorporate discussions of values into the onboarding of new employees and leadership training
- Acknowledge and publicly reward values-based behaviours on your team
- Incorporate values into decision-making frameworks by asking “Is this consistent with our values?” to normalize a values-based lens on all operations
- **Foster open communication and transparency** – a key marker of the accountability that is paramount to the public sector
 - Practice open communication and transparency about decisions, policies, and even mistakes as this reflects honesty and builds credibility
 - Create opportunities for two-way, inclusive communication, fostering trust by enabling input and the ability to voice concern

To learn more about the benefits of values-based leadership and practical strategies to apply it, read **Chapter 5: Values-Based Leadership**, written by Dr. Craig Dowden, in full in [APEX's Positive Leadership Toolkit](#).