

What Are Core Values



Do you know what your core values are? Additionally, could you easily identify your company's core values? These are just a few questions you should be asking yourself, whether you're looking for a new job or simply reevaluating your current employer. Core values are our inherent guiding principles that need to be applied at every level of our professional lives.

Finding meaningful work means finding meaning within yourself — not just within an employer or their supposed [workplace culture](#). You need to dig deeper and reflect on your core values, as you begin looking for new employment opportunities ... or as you consider a [career change](#).

Get Hired by LinkedIn News previously covered how [finding a positive workplace culture](#) begins with you, where we spoke with [Danielle Posa](#), founder of [Workplace Wellbeing Advisor](#), who advises people to align with their purpose when job seeking.

“The first thing that really needs to happen is that people need to do their own self-reflection. It’s easy to jump into the job search process and kind of get addicted to searching and trying to find the best job [for] what aligns with their experience, pays the most and has a great culture,” she remarked.

So ask yourself: “What are my core values and what companies/roles align with them?”

Defining Core Values

You first need to understand what core values are and how they manifest in the workplace — and our lives as working professionals, to answer the aforementioned question.

To save you a Google search about the meaning of core values (which is still helpful), let’s look to [Forbes](#), which defines core values (company-wise) in two straightforward sentences:

“A company’s core values are the root values and beliefs which form the basis on which the organization and its employees operate from. They ultimately serve as the ‘guiding light’ that steers the company’s attitude and behavior towards others.”

This definition easily translates to an individual, just replace the word “company” with “person”. But of course, it’s going to vary from person to person.

For [Mita Mallick](#), head of inclusion, equity and impact at [Carta](#) and [LinkedIn Top Voice 2020](#), core values make up our moral compass, both professionally and personally.

“It’s the heart of the organization and what we stand for. Core values can also have multiple names: beliefs, traits, principles and more,” she says. “And when we take the time to define, understand and embrace our core values, we know very clearly what we won’t compromise on, sacrifice or back down from.”

[Demisha Jennings](#), established career strategist and resume writer, explains core values when working with clients. “Core values are your personal beliefs and what you stand for in a nutshell.”

And the number one thing she teaches her career coaching clients is how to look out for core values that a company may have.

“Your core values have to be in alignment with the company that you are employed with or looking to be employed with, “ says Jennings. “So, figuring out what’s important to you and making sure that you hit on those things for one, during the interview process.”

Identifying Core Values

As [global resignations continue even as the pandemic wanes](#), with more people reevaluating their values and switching to better-aligned jobs, we can all benefit from re-identifying our own values. Additionally, by understanding your own core values and those of a prospective employer, you're better prepared for certain [interview questions](#), like "[Why do you want this job/position?](#)".

[Harvard Business Review \(HBR\) reports](#) that expressing your passion for an employer's mission or values is one basic approach to that common interview question, especially when entering the [nonprofit space](#).

"Employers want to know you're passionate about what they do, whether it takes the shape of a product, a service, a mission, or a brand. You can also connect your passion to the company's core values, which can often be found on their website. Showing you're passionate about the position is particularly important if you're applying for a role at a nonprofit where the mission matches your personal values."

You'll also be able to easily sort through various job openings and [offers](#), discarding those that don't align with your values.

The time has finally come for you to pinpoint some core values of your own, which will stick or evolve with you through both trying and successful periods. Take some time for careful consideration, as these values will hopefully guide you to worthwhile job opportunities.

Your core values may show up as your desire to [prioritize travel](#) through fully remote work or a need to work in a highly [creative space](#).

Regardless, remember that core values are "intrinsic to who we are and are as unique as our fingerprints," [according to BetterUp](#). The platform also breaks down some of the core values of top global companies, from Apple to Netflix.

I've compiled some examples from BetterUp below, along with a few from Mallick and her employer Carta.

Core Value Examples:

- Netflix: Curiosity, Communication, Selflessness, Innovation, Impact and Judgment
- Apple: Accessibility, Education, Privacy, Environment, and Inclusion and diversity
- Google: Democracy on the web works, Great just isn't good enough, and Fast is better than slow.
- Adidas: Confidence, Collaboration and Creativity
- Carta: Helpful, Relentless and Unconventional

As you can see, core values are the guiding principles and traits we operate by, whether at work or at home. At an employer level, the alignment of core values lends itself to increased teamwork and should be on display at every level within the organization, from operations to human resources.

Seeking Out Core Values

If your company or organization is looking to establish or redefine core values for current employees, new hires and prospective employees, [HBR recommends](#) making sure to “establish some basic definitions to ensure that people know what they’re talking about and what they’re trying to accomplish.”

Employees crave purpose, culture and meaning from their employer. According to McKinsey & Company's recent [Individual Purpose survey](#), 63% of the employees surveyed said they wanted their employer to provide more opportunities for purpose in their day-to-day work.

Inquiries into company core values and how they’re implemented company-wide could come up in the interview process. And take note, job seekers, as this is an incredible and potentially standout question to ask.

“You get a lot of companies saying that they have core values, but they're doing nothing to display that. So asking those difficult questions in the interview is critical,” says Jennings.

At an employee level, if you don’t know your company’s values or begin noticing that the preached values aren’t even practiced, consider it your sign to move on, cautions Jennings

“If you are in a current company and you see that things are not in alignment with your values, then nine times out of 10, it's time to move on. Core values are really top tier and critical as a professional because a lot of the time we try to just focus on, ‘Oh, I want to make more money.’”

Top Takeaways

Take some time today to reflect on your core values. Here’s why:

- Core values are the “root values and beliefs” that we operate from
- Find out if a prospective company aligns with your core values by asking questions during the interview process and reading their website
- Values can show up in the workplace as communication, inclusion, accessibility and more

