

**A Literature Review Exploring Values Alignment as a Proactive Approach to
Conflict Management**

by

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Abstract

Purpose

The research aim had two purposes: to clarify the concepts of values, collaboration and conflict and their relationship to each other within organizations; and to provide data that supported or disconfirmed values alignment as a proactive approach to conflict management.

Design/Methodology/Approach

An interdisciplinary review of literature was undertaken as current literature on the topic of values as it relates to conflict was very limited in scope. The key concepts investigated were the connection between values (including alignment and congruence) and decision-making, behaviour, collaboration, strategy, prioritization and conflict within an organization. Research was guided using Constructionism, Chaos and Complexity theories within a framework of Chaordic Systems Thinking.

Findings

Provides documentation that previous values research practices have been fragmented and have had limited practical applications. Support is provided indicating values alignment fosters collaboration and could be a proactive approach to conflict management.

Research Implications/Limitations

No long-term studies were found on the topic of inquiry although some documentation on business performance is starting to appear. Further research using values alignment as an organizational process would be beneficial.

Practical implications

The framework presented appears to have pragmatic application that would benefit organizational development and effectiveness.

Originality/value

This paper expands previous studies by examining values research across domains and suggesting a different research approach. A model is discussed that provides meaningful linkage between business strategy and organizational values.

Keywords: Values alignment, Collaboration, Organizational conflict, Proactive conflict management

Paper type: Literature review

Introduction

It is generally accepted that the workplace is changing rapidly and that organizations need to adapt management practices to accommodate the increasing pace and growing diversity of their global environments. There has been a great deal written that suggests collaboration is necessary for organizational effectiveness. Research indicated nothing is more important to an organization than commitment to a common purpose and a set of related (specific and actionable) performance goals for which the group develops a common approach and holds itself jointly accountable (Katzenbach & Smith, 2003).

The major premise of this research is that values alignment is necessary for effective collaboration. The minor premise is that collaboration reduces unproductive conflict in organizations. The hypothesis therefore, is that values alignment can be considered a proactive approach to conflict management in organizations. This is a deductive research approach (Palys, 2003). However, this is not an empirical study but

exploratory research investigating what literature exists that supports or disconfirms the theory.

The key concepts for investigation mentioned in the abstract guided the choice of topics for inquiry. This Literature review will show investigation was made into cognition and perception, strategic as well as systems thinking to learn how individuals select values and live their values. Examination of organizational systems and change initiatives was conducted to learn how values are enacted and the role they have in organizational change. The role of leadership on organizational values was also examined. Spirituality provided insight into intuition, purpose and perception, which are components of how we live our values in organizations. “It is not possible to explain human action without reference to consciousness”, (Locke, 1991, p. 151). Science provided information on brain development and whole brain thinking, which explained how we form our values and physics provided a theory to examine organizations from a living systems perspective as well as a new way to examine conflict. This interdisciplinary approach was necessary to find relevant material and benefits the study by bringing together research from different fields to expand the inquiry. The presented research demonstrates the interconnected relationship of values, collaboration and conflict. “As standards of importance, values are crucial cultural components, because they’re the criteria used to make decisions, set priorities and develop strategies” (Hultman & Gellerman, 2002, p. 80).

This Literature review will begin with a discussion on the significance of the present research followed by theory used to guide the research. A section on terms provides clarity on concepts used throughout the paper. Appearing next will be the

review of current literature, followed by a discussion of the implications for management as well as limitations of the review. Some suggestions for future research will be made before a brief conclusion.

Significance of the literature review

Consideration was given to the possibility the research inquiry may seem trivial to some individuals who think the research hypothesis is obvious. Most people would acknowledge the importance and influence of values as well as the significance of collaboration and conflict on organizational culture. However, contrary to what some people believe; evidence is presented that indicates most people are unconscious to their deeply held beliefs and values. In view of the extent of unproductive conflict that exists as well as the fragmented approach and results of previous research; it seems possible the topic being investigated is not clearly understood.

Traditionally we have been taught that conflict means failure and a breakdown of relationships (Lappe & Perkins, 2004). Terms such as “conflict management” and “conflict resolution” have a negative connotation (Shelton & Darling, 2003) and create the idea that conflict should be “wrestled into compliance (managed) or gotten rid of altogether (resolved)” (Lappe & Perkins, 2004, p. 86). Emphasis is on problem solving (Costantino & Merchant, 1996; Fisher, Ury, & Patton, 1991; Folger, Poole, & Stutman, 2001; Furlong, 2005; Ury, 1991) despite recognition that “the best time to handle people problems is before they become people problems” (Fisher et al., 1991, p. 36). Problem solving is described as managing; taking action to have something go away (Fritz, 1999; Senge, 2003). It is reacting to circumstances (Fritz, 1999) through control, efficiency and rules (Covey, 1989). This reactive state comes from a basic paradigm of determinism

where our lives are a function of conditions or conditioning that we have consciously or unconsciously chosen to control us (Chopra, 2003, 2004; Covey, 1989). Creating is described as leading; taking action to bring something into being, a desired state of existence using vision, ideas and direction (Bender, 2002; Bennis, 2003; Fritz, 1999; Goleman, Boyatziz, & McKee, 2002; Senge, 2003). Creating and managing are two different processes (Fritz, 1999). Unlike conflict management which is focused on problem solving or problem avoiding, collaboration focuses on creating.

Collaboration was described by several authors as creating a community of people committed to a collective purpose (Capra, 2002; Covey, 1989; Goleman et al., 2002; Limmerick & Cunnington, 1993; Williams, 2002; Williams & Ferris, 2000). Many authors claimed collaboration is vital to synergy and enhances organizational effectiveness (Covey, 1989; Ferdig, 2000; Marsh, 1996; Wheatley, 1999). To achieve a state of increasing progression and constant evolution, several authors claimed people must create alignment where values are shared, people work together towards common outcomes and they have a deep desire to contribute to the organization (Capra, 2002; Fritz, 1999; Hatch, 1993; Limmerick & Cunnington, 1993; Edgar Schein, 1999; Edgar Schein, Quick, & Gavin, 2000; Stevens, 1999). “Great organizations create systems that constantly align their people with their true caring about what the organization is trying to accomplish and how that connects to the members” (Fritz, 1999, p. 213). Fritz claimed alignment comes from the qualities of invention, exploration, creation and purpose.

Creating is a proactive. Proactivity was explained to exist in individuals who collaboratively pursue the goals of the organization (Limmerick & Cunnington, 1993; Shelton, McKenna, & Darling, 2002; Stevens, 1999) and individuals understand conflict

is integral to both individual and organizational transformation (Shelton & Darling, 2003). Covey (1989) explained proactivity, means we are responsible for our lives. “Our behavior is a function of our decisions, not our conditions (and) we can subordinate feelings to values” (Covey, 1989, p. 71). External stimuli still has an influence on proactive people, but their reaction to the stimuli is a values-based choice or response (Covey, 1989). The literature review provides evidence that creating alignment with members in an organization helps prepare people for and fosters progressive conflict that helps move organizations forward. The implication is that values alignment fosters collaboration and can be considered a proactive strategy for conflict management.

Research approach and theory

There are many approaches to research and researchers are expected to present rational arguments that prove or disconfirm research data. With exploratory research such as the present study, investigation is made to learn what other researchers and authors have found about the topic of inquiry. While traditional research methods are respected in this paper by providing an explanation for the research question, choice of literature reviewed as well as interpretation; an argument is presented that suggests no research method is definitive in its approach or results. Research and its interpretation are influenced by the researcher as well as the reader.

One of the founders of Quantum theory, Werner Heisenburg; said you cannot separate the observer from what is being observed. Each observer has a different observation and what is experienced is through that observer and observation (Wolinsky, 2002). Many scientists, psychologists and philosophers believe we all construct the world through lenses of our own making and use them to filter and select. They theorize our

belief system creates our reality by creating our subjective experience, but the belief system is not the external world (Wolinsky, 2002). “There is no objective reality; the environment we experience does not exist ‘out there.’ It is co-created through our acts of observation”, (Wheatley, 1999, p. 37). Kegan (1982) believes “meaning-making” is the fundamental activity of human beings and it will be unique to both individuals and cultures. The above ideas are a philosophical theory known as Constructionism that was used to guide the present research.

Bohm (1994) offers further explanation on how we comprehend. He refers to thought as a system and explains that thoughts are a quandary because they are fragmented, cause automatic, non-reflective action and are the source of problems. Like Einstein, Bohm notes that we have difficulty solving our problems because the means by which we try to solve the problem are the same as the source. The quintessential problem that compounds the issue is that we are unaware of the extent of our unconscious assumptions.

The unique way we interpret information is essential to understand for this research inquiry because the concepts discussed are abstract and cannot be explained with similar formal logic used for mathematical equations. While the researcher and reader examine information for its truthfulness or accuracy, it is important to consider that prejudice, in the form of unconscious assumptions, are embedded in our ways of thinking (Kegan, 1982; Kline, 2007). The concepts of unconscious and tacit assumptions are critical to the topic of inquiry.

The ideas presented thus far are particularly challenging for researchers who are expected to provide objective information in their studies. Many people will argue that

our reality is created from more than just our beliefs and assumptions. They may refer to how knowledge influences our interpretation of experience. However, knowledge is comprised of both facts and opinions and only the former are not arguable. A great deal of our knowledge is based on opinions that we believe. This is another critical point for this review of literature that examined abstract concepts.

The inquiry for this research paper was not guided by philosophical concepts alone. Scientific theory was used as well. Analyzing the relationship of values, collaboration and conflict within an organization requires a framework for examining a system. Chaordic Systems Thinking (CST) is a frame-work that uses chaos as a lens and as a metaphor for change (Fitzgerald & van Eijnatten, 2002b; van Eijnatten, 2003; van Eijnatten & Putnik, 2004). The term Chaordic combines the terms "chaos" and "order" signifying the fact that the two dissimilar properties of experience co-exist in complex, dynamical, non-linear systems (Fitzgerald & van Eijnatten, 2002a). CST offers new concepts to consider the uncontrollability, uncertainty and complexity in an enterprise, and help its transformation. The framework provides a way to examine the complex, dynamic nature of traditionally controlling, hierarchical systems and consider what changes in beliefs and world-views are necessary to foster a more collaborative management style.

Changing world-views is part of organizational development and is considered "whole system transformation" (Barrett, 1998; Collins, 1997; Stanfield, 2000; Wheatley, 1999). Organizational development is "a system wide and values-based collaborative process of applying behavioral science knowledge to the adaptive development, improvement and reinforcement of such organizational features as the strategies,

processes, people and cultures that lead to organizational effectiveness” (Bradford, Burke, Seashore, Tannenbaum, Worley & Zhang,; as cited in Hultman & Gellerman, 2002, p. xix). These authors identified that organizational development is about change within organizations. The major change identified by these and other authors (Barrett, 1998; Capra, 2002; Colins & Chippendale, 2002; Dimitrov, 2003; Ferdig, 2000; Wheatley, 1999) is the transformation of organizations from the old metaphoric model of “lean machine” to “living organism”. This change began as a result of a paradigmatic shift in physics describing reality, to life sciences providing the fundamental description of reality (Capra, 2002; Teerikangas & Hawk, 2002). The old metaphor of organization as machine focused on predictable, measurable and quantifiable change (Capra, 2002). However, the new metaphor of organizations as living systems focuses on the culture of the organization which involves the feelings and values of the people who make up the system (Barrett, 1998; Bawden, 1997; Capra, 2002; Ferdig, 2000; Hatch, 1993).

Chaos and Complexity theory emerged from the scientific domain of Quantum mechanics (also referred as Quantum physics) to explain complex, dynamical, non-linear systems (van Eijnatten, 2003; van Eijnatten & Putnik, 2004) and it offers a new perspective from which to explore sustainable organizational change and transformation (Ferdig, 2000). It is a fitting theory for this research because:

The evolving holistic paradigm requires an expanded view of values and cognition characterized as tendencies toward objective assertion on one hand, and subjective integration on the other. Objective assertion reflects the tendency to establish elements of certainty in order to describe social reality from a position of individual independence. Subjective integration advocates the tendency to

collaboratively generate knowledge in context and co-create social reality from a position of synergistic interdependence (Ferdig, 2000, p. 3).

According to chaos theory, high levels of disorder are the precondition for all system progression (greater effectiveness and efficiency) and information is the catalyst that disrupts a system's equilibrium (Fitzgerald & van Eijnatten, 2002b; Shelton & Darling, 2003; van Eijnatten & Putnik, 2004). As the new information permeates a system, it reaches a point of significant change called a bifurcation point. In organizations, bifurcation points are usually created by conflict and they occur when individuals' goals, values, or style differ from others (Dolan, Garcia, Diegoli, & Auerbach, 2003; Ferdig, 2000; Shelton & Darling, 2003) or from the organization.

Complexity theory evolved from chaos theory (Fitzgerald & van Eijnatten, 2002a; Shelton & Darling, 2003). This theory focuses on the behavior of complex systems such as organizations and teaches that maximum creativity and hence progression, exists on the edge between chaos and order (Dimitrov, 2005). If new information is added to static, stable systems, the information becomes frozen and unusable but if the system is too chaotic, the new information gets lost in the static. Therefore, systems must be operating at the edge of chaos in order for self-organization to occur (Dolan et al., 2003; Ferdig, 2000; Shelton & Darling, 2003).

Self-organization means a system is able to re-organize to deal with the new information and therefore progress to higher levels of complexity and diversity (Dolan et al., 2003; Ferdig, 2000; Marsh, 1996; Shelton & Darling, 2003; Wheatley, 1999). The ability to self-organize is due to the existence of "strange attractors" (Dimitrov & Woog, 2000; Dolan et al., 2003; Wheatley, 1999). An attractor is an "idea, belief, value or ethic

of sufficient stability and diffusion to capture a system's 'attention' causing it to produce a repeated pattern of behavior" (Fitzgerald & van Eijnatten, 2002a, p. 412). Thus, attractors can provide possible scenarios of where a system is headed based on the patterns of behavior it produces (Dolan et al., 2003). The strange attractors considered for this research are an organization's values. Examination of an organization's ideas and beliefs about existing values help clarify what behavior currently exists and whether the behavior effectively supports the desired organizational objectives. Examining the strange attractors is an opportunity to consider what kind of change might be necessary within the system. Although behavior within a system may appear random, the meanings we attach to the behavior (values) propel them and hence they act as the attractors of order in complex systems (Dimitrov & Woog, 2000; Dolan et al., 2003; Judge, 1993). Ultimately, "the strange attractor represents a *window of opportunity* for extraordinary creativity, innovation and *transformation*" (Fitzgerald & van Eijnatten, 2002a, p. 413), because people can change ineffective, dysfunctional, current beliefs and values of existing systems with a new reality by creating a new system of meaning (Colins & Chippendale, 2002; Dimitrov & Woog, 2000).

This concludes the method section that explains present research was guided by the philosophy of Constructionism as well as the scientific theories of Chaos and Complexity within the framework of Chaordic Systems Thinking to examine the literature reviewed.

Terms

Language is the means by which we communicate our unique "meaning-making" and thus reveal our understanding of reality. It is a false assumption to think people will

share the same understanding for abstract concepts and therefore the terms used throughout this paper are defined here. This approach models the ideas discussed in the present research. The importance of creating shared meaning is explained by Sandow & Allen (2005) as critical to collaboration and the flow of knowledge in organizations. “It is easy to agree on words, however; the difficulty is in developing a shared meaning for our words” (Sandow & Allen, 2005, p. 8).

An organization is a system composed of parts and systems thinking requires examination of the whole, not just the parts (Marsh, 1996; P. Senge, 1990). This research proposes that values are the foundation on which the system is built. The system includes organizational strategies, processes and behaviors, which are affected by values and require close and constant examination in order to understand the system (Fritz, 1999; Hultman & Gellerman, 2002; P. Senge, 1990; Senge, Kleiner, Roberts, Ross, & Smith, 1994)

Organizational alignment is considered a dynamic ongoing process of building a cohesive culture that creates a commonality of purpose, shared vision, and harmonization of energy towards achieving the goals of the organization (Argyris, 2000; Capra, 2002; Collins, 1997; Fritz, 1996, 1999; Hultman & Gellerman, 2002; Labovitz & Rosansky, 1997; Edgar Schein et al., 2000; P. Senge, 1990; Senge, 2003). Its foundation is believed to be built on values that have been clearly identified, examined, prioritized and translated into specific behavioral terms (Chippendale, 1995; Collins, 1997; Fritz, 1999; Goleman et al., 2002; Henderson & Thompson, 2003; Hultman & Gellerman, 2002; Jones & Pollitt, 1999; Williams, 2002). The degree to which compatibility exists among

values is considered alignment (Colins & Chippendale, 2002; Hultman & Gellerman, 2002).

Several types of alignment have been identified for examination in this research. Hultman & Gellerman (2002), explain intrapersonal alignment exists when the values and behaviors of an individual are compatible. Interpersonal alignment takes place when a person's values are integrated and compatible with the organization's values. Alignment is also referred to as consistency between espoused values and lived values (Edgar Schein et al., 2000). This can take place at either the intrapersonal or interpersonal level. Misalignment of the espoused values and behavior can occur in organizations. Sometimes the values of the people in the organization are not only misaligned but also incompatible with the values of the organization, which several authors claim, results in conflict and inefficiency.

Values are defined as our preferences and priorities that reflect what is important to us (Henderson & Thompson, 2003; Hultman & Gellerman, 2002; Locke, 1991). They are considered abstract concepts we hold as important because of our beliefs about how life "ought" to be lived and Colins & Chippendale (2002), believe we gain insight into the world-views of people by learning the relative importance (priority) they place on values. These and other authors' agree that values guide all our behavior whether we are aware of it or not (Argyris & Schön, 1978; Hultman & Gellerman, 2002; Stevens, 1999). It is believed creating common values help build a cohesive culture built on trust and a sense of community (Beyerlein, Freedman, McGee, & Moran, 2003; Blanchard & O'Connor, 1997). These are considered critical elements to building a collaborative working system, defined below.

Values often get confused with other philosophical or linguistic terms and for that reason, it is important to clarify what values are not. Henderson and Thompson (2003) offered the following definitions to distinguish between values and other commonly substituted terms. Values are not: ethics (agreed codes of behavior adopted by people to use as guidelines for actions of the group to which they belong), morals (adopted viewpoints regarding our judgment of what is good or bad), principles (time-tested truths that are self-imposed or adopted as rules to obey in individuals' lives), judgments (labels that represent our beliefs about our moral perspectives), virtues (personality traits or characteristics that are considered favorable but are not necessarily personal preferences), attitudes (an expression of our beliefs and personality through behavior or words), needs (resources, actions or behaviors that are required to experience our values), beliefs (the reasons we have for our values), and finally; values are not emotions (feelings whereas, values are concepts).

Organizational collaboration was defined as a culture of shared responsibility, authority and accountability (Beyerlein, McGee, Klein, Nemiro, & Broedling, 2003). These authors claimed the purpose of a collaborative culture is to practice work and accomplish goals in a collaborative manner. Methods are designed to create strategies and policies as well as implement behaviors and practices that promote cooperation among different groups within an organization in order to achieve desired outcomes (Beyerlein, Freedman et al., 2003). Perkins (2003) explained collaboration is more than people working cooperatively by consulting one another, or participating in common efforts. "True collaboration occurs when people strive together toward the *same* (emphasis added) outcome in ways that directly share the work, thinking and

responsibility” (Perkins, 2003, p. 155). Collaboration was believed to require trust, respect, and most importantly, commonality of purpose (Perkins, 2003; Sandow & Allen, 2005). It was also believed these qualities are derived from shared organizational values that have been adopted by everyone in the organization (Beyerlein, McGee et al., 2003).

According to Perkins (2003) there are four components of collaboration; generating new knowledge, communicating knowledge, integrating knowledge, and acting on knowledge. Perkins claims these components are necessary for effective knowledge processing and positive conduct that builds cohesiveness, trust and commitment.

Conflict exists when people have different ideas about what is important, as well as different answers for something that requires resolution. Conflict can be productive and unproductive, depending on how it is managed. Perkins (2003) suggested the components necessary for collaboration create productive conflict and the absence of the components contribute to unproductive conflict. Other authors agreed that effective conflict management occurs when interactions occur that produce productive conflict (Folger et al., 2001). In light of the fact that proactive is defined (The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language) as acting in advance to deal with unexpected difficulties; proactive conflict management would therefore exist when steps are taken to increase productive conflict and reduce unproductive conflict.

Robert Fritz (1996) has spent years studying “structural conflict” within organizations. He believed all organizations have a “structure” or factors that influence outcomes. The foundation of the structure is a “tension-resolution system”, where there is a discrepancy between one thing and another and its resolution (Fritz, 1996). Structural

conflicts cause oscillation in organizations when tension-resolution systems compete against each other and their resolutions are mutually exclusive (Fritz, 1998). Structural conflicts are an example of unproductive conflict.

Finally, it is important in the present research to distinguish process from state. No where in this research is outcome achievement considered a fixed condition. As was discussed in the presented theory and defined above, organizations are living systems and organizational alignment is a dynamic process. It is therefore understood that the extent and direction of motion is not linear and will vary.

Literature review

Although there was no literature that directly examined the use of values alignment as a strategy for enhancing collaboration, there was a significant amount of literature that was related. The review of literature is divided into the following sections: values research differentiation; values, decision-making and behavior, values, organizations and collaboration; values, strategy and prioritization; values and conflict and finally; values, congruence and alignment.

Values research differentiation

Most values research used values “measurement” to substantiate values similarity or differences (Agle & Caldwell, 1999) for a specific domain being studied. Previous researchers determined that values and values congruence influence perceptions, decisions and behavior (Feather, 1995; Liedtka, 1989; Pant & Lachman, 1998; Posner & Schmidt, 1993; Ravlin & Meglino, 1987; Schwartz, 1996; Williams, 2002; Wimbush, Shepard, & Markham, 1997), corporate culture (Enz, 1988; Hewlin, 2003; Meglino, Ravlin, & Adkins, 1989; Williams & Ferris, 2000), competitive edge (Hatch, 1993;

Meglino & Ravlin, 1998), as well as job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Meglino & Ravlin, 1998). Other studies demonstrated empirically how values affect personal and organizational effectiveness (Kraimer, 1997; Meglino et al., 1989).

Additional research demonstrated the connection between values and conflict (Jehn, Chadwick, & Thatcher, 1997; Jehn & Chatman, 2000; Jehn & Mannix, 2001). Although these results are important to my topic, the approach used in their research used predetermined values in their investigation. According to (Meglino & Ravlin, 1998), this technique constrains values research by suggesting that very specific values are more relevant in organizations..

The research of Jennifer Dose (1997) illustrated several limitations of previous values research. Dose explained values research is fragmented because different theorists have focused on specific domains without considering the relationship or similarity between domains. In addition, researchers use different terminology (work values, moral values, personal values, social consensus values as well as preferences) and formulate their own lists of values as well as behavioral definitions. The results therefore, are not consistent across studies. Dose explained this makes comparison of results across studies difficult.

Dose revealed the purpose of previous research, is to have a practical application for organizational leaders by providing research results that will assist leaders in instituting policy that “ensures” employees hold “pivotal values”. Although Dose acknowledged a consistent framework would benefit research (and the implication is organizations as well); the methodology proposed remains the same. In other words, the researcher defines the terminology and the behavioral definitions as well as value

importance and then uses measurement to determine the degree to which the predetermined values exist.

The present research cites authors who recommend values identification be used as a process to clarify rather than a means to promote or “measure” specific or desired values. “Measurement” of values is a misnomer. “There are no ‘values’ as actual objects that can be scientifically measured or precisely defined” (Chippendale, personal communication, January, 2005). The implication is values alignment is a process for organizational development. Many authors agreed, individuals and organizations should work together to clarify and define for their own purposes, what values mean in order for them to achieve their desired organizational objectives, (Barrett, 1998; Henderson & Thompson, 2003). Driscoll & Hoffman (1999) stated, choosing the values that the organization intends to live by leads to a review of the structures and processes to ensure they are compatible or adapt them to these values. This means the researcher does not bias the research by selecting a predetermined set of values that the organization “needs” to have but examines what organizational values exist and clarifies with the participants what they mean and if they are compatible with organizational objectives. Driscoll & Hoffman stated clarifying peoples’ values also helps elucidate how to enact them.

Many authors’ cited agreed, that in order for collaboration to exist; there must be an agreed upon collective purpose as well as a common understanding of the manner in which organizational goals will be achieved (Beyerlein, Freedman et al., 2003; Beyerlein, McGee, et al., 2003; Blanchard & O'Connor, 1997; Fritz, 1999; Perkins, 2003). In other words, all members must agree on how the values of the organization are to be lived (Barrett, 1998; Blanchard & O'Connor, 1997; Collins & Chippendale, 2002; Collins,

1997; Henderson & Thompson, 2003). The values alignment process always begins, some authors' stated, by first identifying existing values (Barrett, 1998, 2006; Henderson & Thompson, 2003, 2004; Hultman & Gillerman, 2002; Colins & Chippendale, 2002).

Two framework tools this literature reviewed that considered values identification differently than previous research were the Cultural Transformation Tools (CTT) developed by Barrett (1998) and A Values Inventory (AVI) developed by Chippendale (2002). The purpose of the values alignment process, these authors' explained; is to define and clarify the collective purpose of an organization by identifying and defining a purpose that is congruent with the values of the organization. This process then allows organizational principles to be defined that become the foundational guide for the structure, decisions and conduct of the organization (Henderson & Thompson, 2003). Both tools are used to identify existing values within an organization and used to implement values-based leadership and management practices as well as manage cultural transformation. Both authors also agreed values identification and alignment is a process that needs to be repeated throughout the life of an organization as a means to identify and manage change, The CTT however, recommends an "ideal mix" to achieve what is referred to as "full-spectrum" organizational consciousness; whereas the AVI does not recommend a particular condition of individual or organizational development.

The AVI is based on more than thirty years of research beginning with Paulo Freire and Ivan Illich and then Brian Hall and Benjamin Tonna. Validation of this work can be viewed on line (Chippendale, 2004b). The AVI allows a values inventory of individuals and groups to be taken so that organizations can align their strategies with their values to achieve their goals.

Scientific theories were used to develop the framework of the AVI as well as to explain its use and analyze results. It appears to be multi-dimensional in its functionality by focusing on different components of the assessment. One manner in which the tool can be used is by focusing on values as the “strange attractor”. As was previously discussed, values predict behavior and therefore, values systems are considered the strange attractor needed to understand behavior of individuals (Colins & Chippendale, 2002; Dimitrov & Woog, 2000; Dolan et al., 2003; Judge, 1993). These authors believed, examining and clarifying values allows an organization to more accurately predict general behavior by making its values explicit. The manner this is done using the AVI is to separate the values into three different dimensions; Control values, Relational values and Developmental values (Chippendale, 2004a). Chippendale believes organizational culture is created by the Relational values that mediate the constant relationship between the Developmental values and Control values. A discussion about these values will follow in the section on values, strategy and prioritization.

The present research provided information that questions the effectiveness and practicality of previous values research methodology for organizational culture. Information gathered suggested organizational systems are unique and using measurement for general applications is not realistic. In addition, it seems possible that the increasingly diverse and global workplace will make previous research practices more difficult to achieve pragmatic applications for organizations. Present research provided evidence that focusing on process rather than prediction, acknowledges the diversity in organizational culture and builds relationships. Many authors cited in the literature reviewed, predicted social capital or organizational relationships, will be the determinant

of organizational effectiveness in the new millennium. “In this world, organizations will be the *relationships* (emphasis original) between the players: the employees, the customers, the varied communities in which the networked organization operates. *The relationships will be all that actually exist*” Allen as cited by Kline, 2007).

Values, decision-making and behavior

There have been great advances in neuroscience that teaches people use their brain in different ways to process information. Herrmann(1996) and Lowen (1982 (as cited by Chippendale, 2002) both developed theories about how the brain functions and its effect on the different ways people think. Most recently, Brizendine (2006) published her research explaining how hormones affect brain function and thinking processes. The work of these researchers informed, that the way people use their brain will influence their world-view, which significantly influences their values (Colins & Chippendale, 2002; Herrmann, 1996).

Values are believed to determine the selection and perception of external stimulus by influencing a person's cognitive-affective appraisal of a situation in relation to both “means” and “ends” (Argyris & Schön, 1978; Feather, 1995; Krishnan, 1997), thereby affecting decision-making (Argandona, 2003; Keeney, 1994; Liedtka, 1989; McCuen, 1996; Ravlin & Meglino, 1987) and behavioral choices (Adkins, Ravlin, & Meglino, 1996; Agle & Caldwell, 1999; Kraimer, 1997; Pant & Lachman, 1998; Ravlin & Meglino, 1987; Schein, 1999; Senge, 1990; Stevens, 1999), by motivating action (Dose, 1997; Locke, 1991) “Within a given situation, the influence flows from abstract values to midrange attitudes to specific behaviors” (Krishnan, 1997, p. 210). Goals are understood

as applications of values (whether conscious or unconscious) to specific situations (Locke, 1991).

The work cited in this section draw the connection between how we perceive our world and the values we select, which in turn affect our decisions and behavior choices. The material provides an explanation about why people will have different ideas about what is important and why. We can conclude, if values guide our decision and behavior choices they will have an obvious affect on conflict that is experienced. Therefore, it seems that if agreement is reached in advance about what values will guide behavior, conflict may be reduced.

It may also be possible that differences in perception account for why researchers have different ideas about what values are as well as which values are important. Furthermore, the research indicates it most likely is a false assumption to think values can be predetermined and dictated as important because it does not take into consideration people's differing perceptions.

Values, organizations and collaboration

Values are believed to be the foundation on which organizations are built (Barrett, 1998; Bennis, 2003; Colins & Chippendale, 2002; Dolan & Garcia, 2000; Driscoll & Hoffman, 1999; Henderson & Thompson, 2003; Williams & Ferris, 2000). Values are considered a major component of organizational culture (Posner & Schmidt, 1993) because they are based on the collective beliefs about what the entire enterprise stands for (Drucker, 1988; Hatch, 1993; Schein, 1999; Schein et al., 2000). Although organizational values were defined as the values shared by the members (Beyerlein, McGee et al., 2003; Colins & Chippendale, 2002; Enz, 1988; Henderson & Thompson, 2003; Schein, 1999),

and collaboration was said to occur in an organization when the actions of a group of people are coordinated in order to achieve explicit results in which they all have an interest (Driscoll & Hoffman, 1999); it is possible that not every member of the organization shares all the same values to the same extent (Hultman & Gellerman, 2002) or for the same reason (Driscoll & Hoffman, 1999; Henderson & Thompson, 2003).

It was reported that organizations are moving toward less hierarchy, integrated structures, empowered employees, teams and teamwork and underlying all of this change is a new emphasis on values regarding how the organization functions (Barrett, 1998; Blanchard & O'Connor, 1997; Dolan & Garcia, 2000; Harshman & Harshman, 1999; Hey & Moore, 1998; Izzo & Withers, 2000). This organizational change exemplifies collaboration where individuals' values and actions are aligned in pursuit of common organizational goals (Beyerlein, Freedman et al., 2003; Beyerlein, McGee et al., 2003; Fritz, 1996, 1999; Perkins, 2003), and their collective intelligence produces results that are beyond the intelligence of any single individual (Kimura, 2005; Sandow & Allen, 2005; Wheatley, 1999). One researcher indicated that collaboration demonstrates collective purpose, where organizational members are willing to subordinate individual goals and related actions to collective goals and actions (referred to as associability) and that such a condition is a primary component of social capital (Leana & Van Buren III, 1993). The author explained further, that without associability, collaboration cannot exist because organizational members won't be able to agree upon or coordinate common activities. Williams (2000) stated that conducting business around shared values results in improved collaboration.

Harshman & Harshman (1999) claimed a critical component to organizational change promoting collaboration, shared authority and decision-making is communication; of which values and principles are the foundation. Several authors agreed, communication will be effective only if employees perceive it to have integrity (Baird & St-Amand, 1995; Harshman & Harshman, 1999; Simons, 2002) and shared trust is essential for collaboration to exist (Gibb, 1991; Leana & Van Buren III, 1993; Perkins, 2003; Sandow & Allen, 2005; Senge, 1990; Senge et al., 1994). Some authors elucidated that common values and goals facilitate trust (Gillespie, 2003; Kehoe & Pointing, 2003) and several researchers claimed frequent and explicit discussion of guiding values enables collaboration to manifest (Driscoll & Hoffman, 1999; Williams & Ferris, 2000).

Present research indicated the importance of common values in order to foster collaboration, which has been determined, is beneficial to organizations. The implication is that if agreement is going to exist about what goals and behavior are important (collaboration) then agreement must also exist about what values will be selected to achieve that aim. Research about brain function and values however, indicated people have a kind of default position from which they understand the world and select what is important. Therefore, it seems unlikely that values can be predetermined and dictated to organizational members, if it does not take into account the values and beliefs members already possess. In other words, to achieve collaborative practices (create common agreements), one must act collaboratively.

Values, strategy and prioritization

Strategic planning is considered a process for building direction around the collective purpose, competencies and conditions of the organization (Fritz, 1999; Senge, 1990; Williams, 2002). Pant & Lachman (1998) claimed strategies whose behavioral requirements conflict with the priority values of a majority of organizational members will be resisted. Conversely, these authors' stated when essential behaviors of decision-makers match those of their chosen strategy; the likelihood of successful strategy adoption and implementation will be greater than if behaviors conflict with strategy.

Values have been determined to be part of an organization's unique competencies and the values that are chosen will be fundamental in shaping its strategy (Argandona, 2003; Colins & Chippendale, 2002; Dolan & Garcia, 2000; Fritz, 1996, 1999; Pant & Lachman, 1998; Treacy & Wiersema, 1993). Both strategy and values are seen as defining an organization's purpose in an integrated manner (Fritz, 1999; Williams, 2002). Current literature suggests the need to reestablish a meaningful linkage between business strategy and organizational values (Bennis, 2003; Colins & Chippendale, 2002; Fritz, 1999; Hultman & Gellerman, 2002; Williams, 2002; Williams & Ferris, 2000). An example making this linkage is provided below.

Many authors agreed there is a direct correlation between our priority values and goals as well as strategies we have chosen to achieve our goals (Fritz, 1996, 1999; Henderson, 2004; Treacy & Wiersema, 1993). According to authors' cited, values act as conscious or unconscious motivators that guide the decisions and behavior of people (Barrett, 1998; Colins & Chippendale, 2002; Stevens, 1999). These authors claimed, as motivators, our highest priority values are the ones we focus our attention on and therefore, by examining our values we can consciously choose which strategies support

our goals (Colins & Chippendale, 2002; Fritz, 1999; Henderson, 2004; Treacy & Wiersema, 1993). “When leaders are capable of ensuing the strategy (the organizational plans for moving in a chosen direction) and the culture (the organization’s values, beliefs and behaviors) are in alignment with one another, then they can make a positive impact on moving the organization towards its vision” (Henderson, 2004, p.2).

Several authors explained poor decision-making skills exist when no clear guidelines are being used to inform group processes. Many authors’ commented that if organizations are unclear about their goals, people’s reactions and responses will guide its direction and behavior of individuals will not change until the organizational structure changes. If no clear goal is outlined from the beginning and no common understanding of values or strategic priorities exist, everyone will have their own agenda based on what is important to them (Fritz, 1999; Hultman & Gellerman, 2002; Katzenbach & Smith, 2003; Labovitz & Rosansky, 1997). Fritz stated, if a decision has not been made about “which competing goals are most important, *none* of the goals will be adequately satisfied or supported. Members of the organization will not know how to address the many critical issues they face. Each side will think its approach is the correct one” (Fritz, 1999, p. 210). He explained, and others’ agreed, personal conflict will result when each stakeholder tries to create their own direction based on their understanding of what the organization is trying to accomplish (Fritz, 1999; Labovitz & Rosansky, 1997). “Without a higher order organizing principle, an organization will self-organize into various structural conflicts as various groups try to do a good job” (Fritz, 1999, p. 212). “To avoid (unproductive) conflict, there must be enough of an alignment (between ends and means values) for progress toward the overall mission and vision to be made” (Hultman & Gellerman,

2002, p. 80). Most authors' agreed, it is common understanding of the purpose that allows people to collaborate (Allnoch, 1998; Beyerlein, Freedman et al., 2003; Beyerlein, McGee et al., 2003; Fritz, 1999; Gibb, 1994; Katzenbach & Smith, 2003; Labovitz & Rosansky, 1997; Perkins, 2003; Williams, 2002).

Treacy and Wiersema (1993) stated there are three fundamental business strategies of all organizations; Product Leadership, Operational Excellence and Customer Intimacy. They referred to these strategies as "value disciplines" because "successful" organizations learn to offer what customers' value and this varies depending on the industry. They stated that an organization needs to develop all three value disciplines; however, it must prioritize one of them ahead of the other two and then manage the chosen strategic mix to achieve its organizational purpose. The evidence these authors provided is based on a three year study of forty companies that enabled them to conclude what value discipline demands of an organization and why.

Chippendale (2004a) separated values identified using the (AVI), into three different dimensions; Control values, Relationship/Ethical values and Developmental values. Chippendale claimed there is a correlation between organizational values and Tracey's and Wiersema's value disciplines. Treacy & Wiersema explained, Product (Service) Leadership means striving to produce a continuous stream of innovative products and/or services. Organizations using this strategy will focus on operationalizing their ideas quickly, continuously attempting to improve products or services and shorten implementation times by avoiding bureaucracy because it slows the process down. Chippendale believed Developmental values relate to this strategy because they are

values related to trust and freedom in the workplace such as; creativity, self-actualization, self-assertion and adaptability, and are essential for creating new opportunities for action.

Operational Excellence, Treacy & Wiersema explained; describes a specific strategic approach to the production and delivery of products and/or services.

Organizations focusing on this strategy will concentrate on minimizing costs and inconvenience, efficiency of service or product delivery and optimizing processes across functional and organizational boundaries. According to Chippendale, this value discipline correlates to Control values that are necessary to maintain and bring together various organizational sub-systems. They include values relating to efficiency, discipline and performance standards and they guide activities such as planning, quality assurance and accounting.

Treacy & Wiersema explained Customer Intimacy means continually modifying products and/or services “to fit an increasingly fine definition of the customer”.

Organizations with this as their primary focus will concentrate on customers’ needs for information and service, decentralizing operations in order to empower people who work directly with the customer and responding quickly to customer needs. Chippendale believed this strategy relates to Relational values that guide the behavior of people and are based on the beliefs held about how people should conduct themselves. Relational values are associated with social values such as honesty and respect, congruence and accountability. He explained further, that Relational values are values in use all the time and they influence how we behave when we use our Control and Developmental values. Likewise, he stated, Relational values also determine how we operationalize all organizational strategies.

Chippendale argued that by examining our priority values we can determine what organizational strategy people are likely to engage in (Chippendale, personal communication, 2005). Conversely, by examining the operational practices of an organization, one can determine values people hold. “An organization chooses its values and aspirations, de facto by the actions it takes, the decisions it makes, and the long term plans and strategies by which it lives” (Fritz, 1999, p. 190). Fritz also believed a problem exists for many organizations who fail to prioritize values and strategies as everything becomes equally important and their conflicting values create conflicting strategies (Fritz, 1999).

Like Colins & Chippendale (2002), Henderson & Thompson (2003), Treacy & Wiersema (1993), Fritz (1989, 1996, and 1999) emphasized the necessity of organizations to prioritize their values into a hierarchical order, explaining that all strategy and goals cannot be equal. “If everything is (equal) then individual elements of a strategy becomes arbitrary. Relationships between various factors are dulled, as everything is made to compete with the same resource base” (Fritz, 1996 p. 97). If a decision has not been made about “which competing goals are most important; *none* (emphasis original) of the goals will be adequately satisfied or supported” (Fritz, 1999, p. 142).

Present research provided evidence that values are hierarchically organized in terms of their importance for self (Feather, 1995; Locke, 1991; Pant & Lachman, 1998; Ravlin & Meglino, 1987), although often unconsciously (Liedtka, 1989) and people will apply their dominant value in uncertain situations (Liedtka, 1989). Thus, it seems important for organizations to explicitly identify and define values (Allnoch, 1998;

Argandona, 2003) that are accepted and shared within the organization, so that the organization's structure, processes and formal and informal rules (culture) are combined to achieve common organizational goals (Dolan & Garcia, 2000; Driscoll & Hoffman, 1999; Fritz, 1999). Several authors' noted that putting values into action is much more important than identifying what the values are (Collins, 1997; Jones & Pollitt, 1999). Driscoll & Hoffman (1999) explained the existence of a values hierarchy is considered important because it provides a means for resolving value conflicts within the individual and organization. "Since people can only take one action at a time (and values motivate actions), people who do not have a hierarchy of values would be paralyzed by conflict and would be unable to act at all or to sustain action once taken" (Locke, 1991, p. 291). Many authors explained the process of analyzing, discussing and defining the values must be repeated at regular intervals (Colins & Chippendale, 2002; Collins, 1997; Driscoll & Hoffman, 1999; Henderson & Thompson, 2003; Labovitz & Rosansky, 1997; Senge et al., 1994).

This portion of the literature review emphasizes the important role of values on strategy as well as the necessity to prioritize organizational values. Although values are generally recognized as important, research has indicated many people do not understand the role values have on strategy or the significance of prioritizing them. In an organization, failure to recognize this importance can influence the extent of unproductive conflict that will exist. Many individuals and organizations experience difficulty achieving goals due to conflicting priorities and they relate this to tasks rather than the underlying values that are guiding choices.

This review of literature provided a precise example linking business strategy with organizational values that could be used to assess the degree of alignment between organizational espoused values and strategy. Such an assessment could act as a feedback loop to enhance organizational learning and change. The literature reviewed also draws a connection between values prioritization and reduced conflict. The implication is, if values prioritization reduces conflict, the prioritization process is proactive.

Values and conflict

To understand the etiology of conflict, between organizational culture and strategies requires examination of the existing organizational values (Pant & Lachman, 1998). Values have been found to be relatively enduring constructs that describe characteristics of individuals as well as organizations (Colins & Chippendale, 2002; Drucker, 1988) and therefore, comparing value systems can apply to a wide variety of individual and organizational phenomena, at both affective and behavioral levels (Krishnan, 1997; Posner & Schmidt, 1993; M. Schwartz, 2001; S. Schwartz, 1996; Stevens, 1999). Some authors agreed, change in value systems requires rearrangement of the relative importance given to various values and requires organizational members to first become aware of their current value system (Argyris, 2000; Colins & Chippendale, 2002; Hultman & Gellerman, 2002; Krishnan, 1997). Liedtka (1989) claimed value congruence only becomes an issue in its absence and examining the relationship of the value system is necessary to understanding which system will dominate the decision-making process (Colins & Chippendale, 2002; Fritz, 1999; Treacy & Wiersema, 1993). According to many authors' cited, the degree of conflict experienced by individuals in organizations will depend on the extent of value incongruence between individuals and

the organization (Adkins et al., 1996; Jehn et al., 1997; Kehoe & Pointing, 2003; Liedtka, 1989; Meglino et al., 1989; Pant & Lachman, 1998; Posner & Schmidt, 1993).

Hewlin (2003) explained conflicts that arise due to differences in personal and organizational values may cause organizational members to suppress their own values and pretend to embrace organizational values. This action is similar to compliance in that individuals may appear to change their beliefs and opinions publicly in response to external pressure, however; they have not made the internal change necessary for their related actions to be sustainable (O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986 as cited in Hewlin, 2003) and this may lead to dysfunctional out-comes (Allnoch, 1998; Hewlin, 2003). Two authors claimed organizations that focus on compliance, only ensure minimal standards Kennedy-Glass & Schultz, (2005).

Jehn and colleagues (1997, 1999, and 2000) found work value dissimilarity was positively associated with task and relationship conflict reduction, and had a stronger influence upon conflict than other types of difference. In addition, (Jehn & Mannix, 2001) found that high value consensus was likely to benefit work groups, by reducing relationship conflict and increasing group performance. Support was also given that group value consensus reduced process conflict because group members could agree on how to interact and how to deal with administrative details. Meglino et al., (1989) also provided evidence that values dissimilarity may cause task conflict because organizational members with different values may also perceive tasks differently which could contribute to members having different goals and opinions about what and how things should be done in the group. In addition, several authors explained, the higher individuals' dissimilarity in values, the more involved they were with task and

relationship conflict, and the less involved they were in the group (Hobman, Bordia, & Gallois, 2003).

The literature reviewed indicates how unproductive conflict can have a negative impact on organizational effectiveness. It seems obvious, organizations would benefit from ensuring less unproductive conflict however, as literature revealed; many organizations are caught in reactive response behavior. Fritz explained such behavior makes people focus on problem solving and crisis intervention, which if chronic in the managerial process, will make long-range building unlikely. This is because problem solving generally addresses symptoms rather than causes and the “flurry of activity hides what is really going on” (Fritz, 1999, p. 9). The implication is that focusing on creating what is wanted (collaboration) rather than reacting to what is happening in the organization would be considered a proactive approach to conflict management.

Values congruence and alignment

Value system congruence is defined as the extent of agreement between individual member’s value system and the organization’s value system (Krishnan, 1997; Limmerick & Cunnington, 1993). Enz (1988) referred to perceived values congruity as the explicitly stated and socially defined values that organizational members are consciously aware of and latent value congruity is the lack of awareness of any value similarities between individuals, departments and organizational management. Posner and Schmidt (1992) found that perceived value congruence was directly related to positive work attitudes. There is other evidence that work value congruence positively predicts important attitudinal and behavioral outcomes for employees (Scott, 2002; Stevens, 1999), such as organizational commitment and job satisfaction (Meglino et al., 1989; Mele, 2003). It is

believed that individuals who espouse and communicate (both verbally and behaviorally) the same values also use comparable methods of classifying and interpreting external stimuli (Allnoch, 1998; Argyris, 2000; Bacharach, Bamberger, & Sonnenstuhl, 1996; Hultman & Gellerman, 2002; Labovitz & Rosansky, 1997; Schein, 1999), and this would seem to foster collaboration because interpersonal communication and common purpose would be enhanced (Pant & Lachman, 1998; Williams, 2002; Williams & Ferris, 2000). Research indicated that when there is low work value congruence, individuals may engage in behaviors detrimental to organizational goals (Kraimer, 1997) or outright reject strategies that are incongruent with values (Pant & Lachman, 1998). Many authors (Hewlin, 2003; Hey & Moore, 1998; Izzo & Withers, 2000; Pant & Lachman, 1998) indicated that employees who are forced to practice values that contradict their own deep beliefs; can and often do sabotage the workplace. Enz (1988) suggested that congruence with espoused values, as opposed to in-use values, is likely to have a negative relationship with performance and Pant & Lachman (1998, p. 209) stated conflicts between core (priority) values and strategies in organizations “have the most serious negative implications for performance”.

Employees are expected to reflect the values of their organizations and it seems evident, unaligned personal and organizational values would indicate conflict between what employees consider important and what policy communicates is important. “Without clarity about the kinds of goals they need to achieve, groups remain confused about when collective work products (services) shared leadership and mutual accountability are required and when they are not” (Katzenbach & Smith, 2003, p. xxvi). Several authors believe organizations benefit by helping employees align personal values

and behaviors with organizational values (Barrett, 1998, 2006; Chippendale, 2004a; Henderson & Thompson, 2003). “The more a value is believed to be important by the people in the organization, the more motivated they will be to behave in a manner that is congruent with that value” Henderson & Thompson (2003, p. 105). Many authors’ agreed, when the organization’s mission and purpose overlap with the personal mission and vision of employees based on common values, motivation and satisfaction of employees will be high and result in greater success of the organization (Barrett, 1998; Chippendale, 1995; Hultman & Gellerman, 2002; Senge, 1990, 2003; Senge et al., 1994; Williams, 2002; Williams & Ferris, 2000). In addition, most authors concurred, for organizational agreements to be sustainable, they need everyone’s support (Kaner, 1996; Katzenbach & Smith, 2003).

The Literature reviewed above, emphasized the importance of aligning values among organizational members as well as between members and the organization. A clear connection seems to exist between values alignment and collaboration as well as lack of alignment and unproductive conflict. The literature suggests that creating alignment reduces unproductive conflict and therefore, could be considered a proactive approach to conflict management. Therefore, this literature appears to support the thesis inquiry.

Implications for management

There are two very important implications of this literature review for management that must be addressed. One implication is that more attention needs to be paid to organizational culture. Since organizational culture is based on assumptions regarding the beliefs and values of its members about how the organization works

(Schein, 2004) and these values and beliefs affect the entire system of organizational strategies, processes and behaviors; an organization will only be as effective as its ability to live its values. Therefore, it seems essential to make the assumptions about organizational values and beliefs explicit.

The second implication for management is regarding the method used for values identification. Many organizational leaders have spent considerable time creating values statements that reflect what they believe the organization represents, yet unproductive conflict still remains a problem. It seems possible the manner in which values have been identified has not been effective. Many executive leaders of organizations may have spent more time creating values statements they believed to be important rather than time identifying existing values of employees and aligning them with the mission, strategies and processes of the organization. The literature reviewed explained that organizational alignment is a dynamic ongoing process where values are clearly identified, examined, prioritized and translated into specific behavioral terms. "It is not sufficient to define a core set of values for an organization. The organization's people need to agree on a range of appropriate behaviors that will be congruent with these values. That people within the organization subscribe to and are committed to the core values will be judged by their behavior" (Chippendale, 1995). In his research of great organizations, Jim Collins states, most organizations spend more time drafting and redrafting values statements rather than creating alignment (Collins, 1997). He believes 80-90 % of time should be spent on alignment rather than identifying and writing values statements. It is possible that values that have been selected as being important are not values that are put into practice in the organization. Collins and Porras (1994) indicate what matters most for organizations, is

that a set of core values is made explicit and that the organization is seen to be committed to the values through their consistently congruent behavior.

Limitations

No literature was found that argued values alignment was not beneficial to an organization and its members, or that it would not enhance collaboration. However, one limitation of this literature review is that it is possible critical literature on the topic was missed and therefore does not reveal important information that can provide more disconfirmation of the thesis.

Some potential limitations may exist with the process of values alignment. One is the financial cost and the investment in time required. A number of practitioners in the organizational development field (Barrett, 1998; Blanchard & O'Connor, 1997; Block, 2000; Fritz, 1999; Hargrove, 1998; Kennedy-Glans & Schulz, 2005) have noted that many leaders think organizational development processes (of which values alignment qualify) are too costly both in time and finances. However, they also note that experience has shown them that resources invested to initiate and carry out values alignment are always less expensive than resources used to correct problems further down the line, when the lack of a cohesive culture is causing unproductive conflict, poor efficiency and performance as well as low morale.

Another potential limitation of values alignment is if the process is carried out incorrectly or is abandoned. It is vital that the values identification process incorporates the broadest range of values rather than a limited number. People that conduct a values inventory where they limit the choice of values are very likely imposing their own bias on the process (Chippendale, 2006). Chippendale explains further, it is only when people

are able to choose between the fullest set of values possible using value-laden statements; that their values emerge to the level of conscious awareness.

Many of the authors cited in this literature review have noted in their work the dire consequences to organizational morale when processes are initiated only to be abandoned when there is a change in leadership or lost interest. It has also been noted that poor morale is synonymous with poor performance. Values alignment is not a “one time event” but rather an ongoing process (Collins, 1997; Hargrove, 1998; Labovitz & Rosansky, 1997).

Values alignment does not guarantee everyone will “buy into” the process or that no conflict will exist. Identifying and aligning values to create a collaborative culture does not require everyone to “be on board” but it does require committed leaders and stewardship within the organization (Block, 2002a, 2002b).

Directions for future research

Research revealed results of a few recent informal case studies that demonstrated the financial benefit of values alignment to organizations (Barrett, 2006). Future research could benefit the field of Conflict Analysis and Management by conducting case studies of existing conflict before and after values alignment in organizations as well as assessing financial costs and benefits. Such research would have to take place over an extended period of time due to the nature of integrating values that have been agreed to. Although some authors claimed positive effects can be noticed right away, sustainable change occurs between one to four years or more (Barrett, 1998, 2006; Hargrove, 1998).

Concluding comments

This concludes the literature review. Presented information has demonstrated values influence behavior, decision-making, and conflict. Support has been provided indicating that values influence organizational collaboration, strategy and culture and to have the greatest influence, they should be prioritized. Values alignment promotes cooperation among different groups within an organization in order to achieve the desired outcomes that fulfill the organizational purpose. In other words, values alignment seems to enhance collaboration.

Evidence has also been presented that collaboration, which creates a community of people committed to a collective purpose, enables people to subordinate personal differences to values that support the organizational purpose. Therefore, the literature suggests unproductive conflict that is a personal reaction to stimuli based on feelings rather than values that have been agreed to; is reduced. Creating alignment with members in an organization appears to be proactive by preparing people for and fostering progressive conflict that helps move organizations forward. The implication is that values alignment can be considered a proactive approach to conflict management by fostering what is wanted in the organization rather than reacting to what is happening.

This literature review provides rationale for organizational leaders to examine the values that are driving their organizational culture and investigate if the existing values support the organizational purpose. Understanding the benefits of creating a collaborative culture as well as the significant impact of values alignment on organizational culture, allows leaders to take steps that will positively influence moving the organization towards its vision.

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