

Healthy Values Conflict: The Final Four

In this leadership strategy, we create a meta-strategy for creating clarity of intention. Almost no other action is as leveraging as the strategy behind tactical action. As a single part of identity, values can be used to surface assumptions and beliefs, create vision, to outline principles of behavior, and to create filters for assessing right action—all significant leadership guidelines that promote clarity, autonomy and self-directed leadership.

However, sometimes values—those critical few—are difficult to surface, test and affirm. In preparing a person or an organization to think through or experience identity, the following game or exercise can promote the action that is required to formulate identity very quickly in both small or large organizations.

In creating questions that surface the values for the “tournament”, the following examples are guidelines:

- What really matters?
- What should you or this company stand for?
- What is the most important thing to judge a decision on?
- What criteria make a great decision?
- What should every person be guided by in their decision-making?
- What are the critical few things that matter to our business, to our customers and our people?
- What are the limits of acceptable behavior?



Mike R. Jay is a business and executive coach, *happeneur* and speaker on personal and organizational development.

He is the author of *COACH2 The Bottom Line: An Executive Guide to Coaching Performance, Change and Transformation in Organizations* and the founder of B\Coach Systems, a business and executive coach training system. If you would like more information on creating coaching programs for managers, leaders or executives, we welcome your inquiry for your coaching and development requirements.

Mike Jay can be contacted at
1.877.901.COACH (2622)
or by email at
coach@Leadwise.com.

Sample Values Library

Promptness: Responding to internal and external customers. Having the capability to respond with urgency or at least in a timely manner.

Agility: Ability to adapt in a seamless manner.

Attraction: Everything about my work and marketing acts as an attraction to new clients who can afford working with me.

Integrity: My marketing is valued as representation of what is available through me.

Innovation: Developing new concepts, new means of delivery, and thought-provoking ideas that make a difference in people's lives.

Service: Under promise and over deliver.

Product Leadership: My product performs better than other people's product.

Customer Intimacy: My product is exactly what people want because I tailor it to each client's specific needs.

Positive impact: Through services provided.

The Final Four: A Values Game

Some time ago—I think it was 1994—I was working with a group of managers on leadership. What was happening to these managers and leaders as we brought them together was a state of values conflict. Because they had recently suffered a reorganization, they were coming from various backgrounds and departments and were all driven by different sets of values and value systems.

As we moved them into the Integrated Strategic Intention System [ISIS], many of them became stuck pretty early on. It wasn't just the surfacing of assumptions but the values conflict that was creating the lack of movement towards a shared vision. After asking all of them to submit a set of values, we ended up pretty much with a library of values.

Since that time, we have discovered an even easier way to arrive at the governing values. This is easy to accomplish by first writing a manifesto (a public declaration of policy or views) consisting of a set of assumptions and beliefs, a now, near and/or far vision and a set of guiding principles (ways of making decisions). In order to create a simple values library for the final four game, go through the three documents and circle every keyword you find important or valuable to yourself or business system.

Identifying Key Values

After extracting all the keywords, ask people to define the keywords so that everyone understands the intended meaning. This can be done in groups or teams, or by asking people just to jot down a short sentence of meaning.

This values library will be critical to completing the identity process. The question for the managers was how were they going to get from a values library to a core set of values that everyone could buy into and use to govern decision-making in the organization.

The same question might come up for you as you contemplate all the values you feel running through your own life and the lives of those you affect and whom affect you.

I have a game for you to play called the final four. This game is modeled after the noted American College Basketball Phenomenon that occurs as a ritual every spring—The Final Four Basketball Tournament. In deciding who is the best basketball team in the country, teams from all over the U.S. compete in tournaments throughout the country to get to the final four.

This is the meta-model behind the Final Four Values Game I am about to describe. What you can do is assemble all the values according to seeds (ways of deciding which teams are ranked) from each area of the company. It is easy to mirror this process by using the balanced scorecard categories. Those categories are *internal*, *external*, *financial* and *innovation*. We can divide up the organization—at least for now—into these categories across functional lines. This can help define the values, rank them in the category of the function and provide a strategic discussion prior to the values game.

While there are other ways you might want to consider arriving at critical governing values, this is an effective way of reaching a final four with a representative value from each area. This is critical to creating balance in your life or organization in terms of understanding that we have a system of operation that is governed by decision-making through values. The system needs to be balanced in order to achieve balanced outcomes over time. It pays to balance the system (double loop governing variables), then you don't have to worry about balancing the outcome (single loop behavior).

The Clarification Process

As soon as you construct your values library, you need to go through and clarify each one with a sentence of description or meaning that can be agreed upon. Indirectly, this serves as another way to create a strategic conversation!

So, after dividing the values or the “master programs” up into the categories listed above, we look for ways to seed the values based on the importance to the organization.

Clearly, the reason for outlining values is to create a test or filter, which a decision in the organization must align with. If a decision falls outside the realm or in conflict with a value, it should be examined for its integrity. There are about two ways to explain a loss or gap in integrity. Espoused theory (the value) or Theory in Use/Action (the decision) is flawed.

At least by having something to test against, a person can operate autonomously as long as the decision being made is in alignment with the value—or in a larger space, the identity of which the values constitute a part. Always remember, the identity is used to clarify action and intent—strategically.

Once you have created at least four and no more than eight values per category, you begin the *tournament*. You can do this in many ways. You can do it in a retreat setting, a strategy meeting setting, through a web site portal in virtual organizations or over time as you develop an integrated strategic intention process.

Setting Up the Tournament

Here's how to set up the tournament using internal as an example. You would create additional brackets for external, financial and innovation. It would of course be strategic to consider who to put on the teams in order to come up with the “tournament seeds” in the one through eight positions. Then all you have to do is to have individual tournaments to see who goes to the final four.

At some point, it might be important to have the group as a whole develop the final four members depending on how many people are involved. If it is just one person, then the tournament would be seeded and directed by them and they might only want to use four values to seed in each category.

In the case of a family, you might want to use other guidelines instead of the balanced scorecard categories. You could use things like physical, social, family, financial, career, etc. and involve all the members of the family in the tournament.

Use the keyword library you generated throughout Phase 1.

Instructions:

1. Decide how many brackets you will have, it could be a final four or a final eight.
 2. List eight values in order of priority. This iteration can be done a number of times to create the seeding order necessary to enter values in the tournament. For large or multi-national companies, it might take on a rather large tournament beginning at lower levels in order to reach the point where 8 values exist for each balanced scorecard category.
-

- Seed the values in order and decide what criteria will determine which one advances.
- Once you get to this point—the seeding of the eight—you do NOT discard those that do not advance but you move them into the principles category by completing a description of the value as it relates to its use as a principle.

The Value and its Statement of Meaning

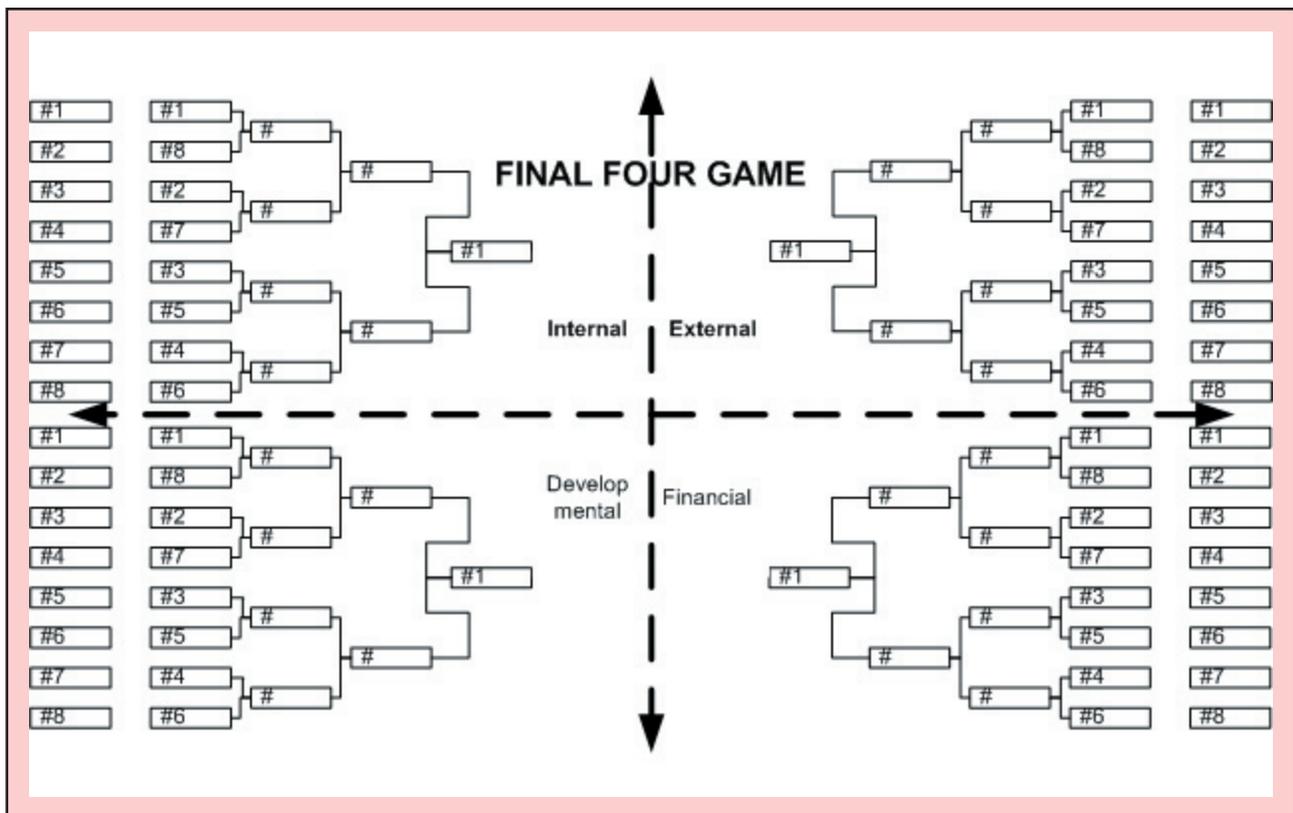
Example:

DIFFERENCES—not sameness—those unique factors that jump out at you.

Written as a principle:

We value differences as unique factors that add to or complement our organization.

What you have done is preserve the integrity of the value in a guiding principle that can be used as a standard or assumption of identity—however, it is not important enough in the scheme of the identity to filter all decisions, such as would be one of the final four values.



...A Methodology for Awareness, Purpose,
Competence, Well-Being and **RESULTS!**

www.b-coach.com