

## VALUING OTHERS

### What do we mean by valuing others?

**Valuing others means we recognise and acknowledge the fact that we all have a place and are important to the fabric of any venture or professional relationship.**

It means appreciating, validating and affirming the unique abilities, skills, characteristics, understandings, background and experiences of others.

### Why is it important to value others?

A person who values others is likely to recognise that 'man is not an island', rather that it takes a community to create the fullest potential of any endeavour. No two people are exactly the same. When you look for the uniqueness in each individual you encounter, you are better able to identify what their strengths and talents are, and find the best possible way to place them into your team/organisation/project to truly maximise their individual potential. Valuing others means you will surround yourself with a community of supporters and helpers, providing you with a diverse range of skills, inclinations and talents.

When you are able to actively demonstrate your appreciation of another person's value, you will automatically draw forth the very best in that person. Many people do not feel invited to contribute, or worry that their contribution is not good enough. By allowing them to see how valuable they are to the overall project/goal, you will give them added confidence to put forth their fullest and best. The added benefit is that they will have a strengthened sense of self worth when they feel valued. This will improve their confidence and self-belief, which will improve their overall ability to perform.

When you acknowledge the value in another person, it is easier to handle differences in preferences, personality and behaviours that may otherwise bother you in some way. Rather than coming from a position of 'my way or the highway', you are more likely to take the time to hear a different perspective and allow this new information to help you form the best decision.

### Why is it so easy to slip up in the area of valuing others?

By nature we tend to attract and maintain relationships with people who are like us. This is because we will share a common language, world-view, perhaps experiences (due to age or gender or other contextual factors). These relationships flow effortlessly and they elevate our energy levels. The positive side of this is that when we interact in a way that requires little effort, explanation or energy, we perform well and feel good about our selves.

The negative side, however, is that if we *only* spend time with those who are mirrors of ourselves we risk missing out on a wealth of additional perspectives, skills and resources. Many people don't even realise that they are excluding others, and they allow their perception that another person wouldn't be interested in being part of this team or this project to become their defence for not involving that person.

Some people allow the *behaviours* of others to cloud their perception of that person's personal value. Because another person's actions in certain areas may not seem agreeable to my ideals, I might assume that the *person is their behaviour*. In other words, I may make judgments about the value of the person based on the value of a specific behaviour I have witnessed.

For example, I may have a colleague (let's call him Sam) who is constantly 'big noting' his own achievements, taking credit for the work of others, and shamelessly taking any opportunity for self-promotion. This sits very uncomfortably with my own belief in the importance of humility, and in my mind I have labelled him as an arrogant and self-interested ladder climber. I simply cannot like the man. The effect this has is that whenever Sam speaks in a meeting, I switch off and do not listen to his comments, internally rolling my eyes and saying to myself "here we go again". My radar now only picks up on the behaviours about Sam that support my judgments of him. I no longer see Sam's value.

By doing this I miss the point that all *human beings are intrinsically valuable*. There is no exception. Sam may have ideas that are innovative and brilliant, but by my focussing on his behaviours of speaking over others and constantly jostling for position, I miss these ideas, shutting him down, excluding him, and seeking out team mates who are more humble and team-minded. Ultimately, what I am doing is reinforcing those behaviours in Sam. It may well be that because of my own behaviours Sam feels the need to push his ideas forward with more aggression in order to be heard. His own frustration at not feeling listened to or valued forces him to act more forcefully, creating a downwards spiral of negative effect.

Another reason we can slip up is because we forget that in every moment of every day we are constantly changing. We assume that those around us have the same ideas, skills and interests today as they did a month ago. Therefore, we don't check in with them to seek their input on matters that we assume we already know their position on. This has the effect that those around us can feel overlooked and undervalued.

Further to this, we can also be quick to make our first impressions of others into concrete, static judgments. We allow the behaviours, visual cues and comments of the first meeting to become our instant and on-going frame of reference for that person. For an example, I meet Sue at a conference on the first evening during the pre-dinner drinks. She is dressed very elegantly, speaks eloquently, and because she is taller than I she appears to be literally looking down her nose at me. As we make small talk, she is constantly looking over my shoulder, searching the room. I walk away from Sue thinking "What a snob! She thinks she's too good for me and couldn't wait to get away from me." I avoid Sue for the rest of the conference because of these judgments. By doing this I miss out of finding out more about Sue.

If I had taken the effort to try again, I may have found out that Sue was actually very embarrassed about being over-dressed for the evening, having misinterpreted the information pack about appropriate attire; that she had met someone in the foyer earlier who was extremely shy and was anxious about attending the dinner because she knew no one and that Sue had promised to take her under-wing and was looking out for her. As a result of me acting on my first impressions and not trying to see the value in Sue, I unintentionally alienated Sue. She noticed I avoided her for the rest of the conference and returned to her state office with the impression that I did not value her

and this became the foundation of our working relationship from that point forward – me thinking Sue was a snob and she thinking I was one as well.

Everyday we constantly call upon generalisations and stereotypes as 'short-cuts' to evaluating people and situations. These generalisations can be based on gender, race, physical appearance, occupation, age, mannerisms, accents – and the list goes on! These generalisations are a highly adaptive way our brains are wired for our survival. For example, if I am walking down a dark alley and see a group of young men staggering towards me dressed in gangster-style clothing and welding baseball bats, I will very quickly make the decision to cross the road, walk with confidence and be prepared to run for my life if I see them move towards me. However, these generalisations can become between us showing true value for others in other situations. For example, I may be looking for someone to manage a new promotions project in my office and become frustrated when I find that all the potential contributors are over-committed on other projects. Meanwhile, unbeknownst to me, Tim, our IT Guru, is currently looking for jobs elsewhere because he feels he is stagnating in his current position and wants to find work someplace where he can expand his skills and gain some project management and marketing experience. I overlook Tim, take on the work myself, feeling more overloaded and frazzled, while Tim feels undervalued and has no idea the opportunity even exists.

### How can you excel in valuing others?

If you are always looking to the heart of those you interact with; if you are constantly aware of the importance of seeing each person as an individual, full of potential and ever-changing with the capacity to learn and evolve; if you make sure you acknowledge the contribution and point out the strengths of those around you, you will be excelling in the area of valuing others.

To truly excel, you need to come from a position of constant curiosity about those you interact with. Ask questions, seek ideas, and listen with an open mind and an expectation to find out something new. Never take anything about a team member for granted, and have structures and policies in place that ensure there is time for each individual to review the value they bring, along with acknowledging the potential they have to grow.

### Evaluate your own ability to encourage others

- Reflect on the last 24 hours:
  - How many people did you truly value?
  - How many of those people did tell your appreciate their unique contribution?
  - On hindsight, were there any situations/conversations you had in which you could have listened more openly, found a new way to value the other and shared your perception of their value with them?
- Think of the last ten people you have had contact with in business:
  - How many of them did you fully value?
  - Did you value only colleagues, or also clients, suppliers and others in business?
  - Did you operate with each of these people from the perspective of aiming to continue to see their value, or where you working from old assumptions/generalisations?

- Keep a record for a two week period:
  - List the people you have worked with
  - On a scale of one to ten, score yourself on how well you showed you valued each person
  - Next to their names note any specific identifying context (ie: what sex were they; were they of subordinate, equal or superior status; do they actively value you; do you personally like/respect them?)
  - Make any additional notes about people you interacted with who you found hard to find value in.
- Think of someone you know who is exceptional at valuing others. How would you rate yourself in comparison to this person (if they were a 10, what would you be)?
- Think of someone you know who has acceptable standards of valuing others. How would you rate yourself in comparison to this person (if they were a 5, what would you be)?
- In your next review with colleagues, clients, suppliers and peers, ask specifically about whether they feel valued by you. Ask them if there are any particular areas you are specifically good at noticing their value and what areas there might be to improve.

### Improve your ability to value others

After you have completed your evaluation, if you have noticed some room for improvement, you might like to try some of the following strategies:

- Make notes about people who have shown they value you, including:
  - How did the interaction feel at the time?
  - What ripple effects occurred after the interaction?
  - Did the way they demonstrated they valued you feel genuine, and if so, what specifically was it about that interaction that felt genuine?
  - What could have been done to make the encouragement more meaningful and motivating?

Allow these insights to provide added motivation and inspiration for you to commit to becoming exceptional in your own ability to encourage others.

- Make a list of the people you work/associate with who you value the *least*. Set a target to ensure you make an effort to find reasons to value them and express to them what value they bring to the team.
- With people you find it hard to value, ask yourself:
  - What is (are) the specific behaviour(s) that I find hard to value?
  - How well do I know this person?
  - Are there stereotypes/generalisations I am making based on what I know about this person?
  - Do I acknowledge that this person is capable of changing?
  - Am I expecting him/her to be 'like me' rather than valuing their difference?

- Am I taking their behaviours personally?
- How do the skills/behaviours they have that annoy me actually serve them/us as a team?
- What can I personally learn in order to find and acknowledge this person's value?

Remember: the people we struggle the most with are usually the people we need the most!

- Whenever giving critical feedback, always end on an encouraging and uplifting note, sharing with the person the value they have brought to the task/project/business.
- Be specific when you tell someone they add value. For example: "The way you always see potential pitfalls in all the ideas that we put forward is so brilliant! It means we all have to think harder and work harder in the planning stages, but I can't imagine how much trouble your contribution will save us down the track! If we didn't have you on the team, I can't imagine how lose our planning would be."
- Make it a habit to check in with how valued each team member feels. Ask them if there are any areas they feel they would like to be involved in that would offer them the opportunity to add further value.
- Create a culture of gratitude and appreciation in your workplace – talk to others about how you can, as a team, value each other more. Some ideas might be to:
  - Put up reminder notices saying "How valued did you feel today?" or "BE YOURSELF – you bring a unique quality to our team that no one else has" or "INNOVATION and CREATIVITY come from difference of opinion."
  - Build in review sessions to the end of training/supervisory sessions, ending with the question "What value did this session have to you?" Encourage each party to share how the other(s) added value/something unique to the experience.
  - Do team building tasks that focus on identifying unique strengths and experience within the group.
- When you have a different perspective to a colleague or client, rather than using 'Yes, but...' use 'Yes, and...' By doing this you respect the contribution of the other and add to it rather than taking an adversarial or critical approach.
- Be open and honest when you don't understand another person's position/attitude/behaviour; however, come from a position of curiosity – seeking to understand, rather than judgment.
- Always validate and affirm different perspectives. Reframe from holding to a 'right way' and a 'wrong way'. When brainstorming, always thank each person as they put forward ideas, then develop, prioritise and polish the ideas as they come forward.
- If there are particular people in your team who appear to contribute little, take them aside and ask if they feel valued. Encourage them to share their unique perspectives and questions, no matter how silly they may seem.
- Make sure you don't only focus on valuing those who have differing opinions to you, ensure you also share how much you value those who you share your views too.

- Value others by pitching to their 'highest selves', in other words, do not get drawn into negative dramas, always focus on the best in others and you will naturally draw out their very best.

### Further resources

If you would like to develop further in the area of responsiveness, the following books, courses and consultants may be worth considering. Please note that High Ideals does not endorse or receive any direct benefit from recommending the following resources, the list is simply a suggestive collection of materials that members of the High Ideals management team have found useful in their own development.

- **Managing to Have Fun** by Matt Weinstein
- <http://www.mindtools.com/> is a site High Ideals often refers people to as it is an incredible resource to assist people in developing their own professional skills regardless of whether they run their own business or work for someone else.
- <http://www.selfgrowth.com/> is a site High Ideals often refers people to as it offers both personal and professional self-development information and resources. You can type in any search word you want, such as "sustainable decision making" and you'll get a list of articles, blogs, resources and links to other sites which could assist you in your own development.
- <http://www.high-ideals.com> – Check out the Member Directory section for High Ideals members who offer services which could support you, such as coaching, mentoring or consulting on High Ideals criteria/values.

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**High Ideals** would like to acknowledge and thank Karina Butera for her work on this document. Karina is the Managing Director of High Ideals, a life coach, sociologist and speaker. To find out more about Karina, please visit her profile on the High Ideals directory by clicking [here](#) and search by name.

This document is part of the **High Ideals** Criteria Information Series, edited by Claire Stretch. For more information on Claire please visit her profile on the High Ideals directory by clicking [here](#) and search by name.

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