



## Lequin's Polygon Profile: Identifying your values

Certain clients struggle with self-motivation, inflexible behaviour and low self-esteem because they don't have a clear picture of their core values.

So, I use a values clarification tool and we're going to use this, shortly, but before we get into using the tool to define your values, let's look at what values are, (and what they're not), and why they're important.

### What are values?

Values are the deep-rooted beliefs that you use to decide your codes of right and wrong, what is good and bad, and what's important to you. You can see them as an internal compass that can guide you throughout life, and while they might evolve over time, they are often fairly consistent for each of us.

Many of our clients confuse values with needs. They'll say they have a value of 'inclusion' or 'achievement' when actually they have a need to feel included or be successful to feel OK with themselves. Personal needs tend to be similar for all people – like the need for money, shelter, friendship, and belonging, while values are personal to you. Often it's the case that needs drain you energy while values energise you.

### Why are they important?

Values give you a clearer sense of self, meaning, more energy, focus, and self-esteem. Values show you how to feel 'pono'. Pono is an Hawaiian concept that advocates living with a conscious decision to do the right thing in relation to yourself, others, and the environment. It's about feeling right with yourself and the world - feeling aligned with who you really are, calm and centred with everyone around you. If you're not feeling pono but you're clear on your authentic values, you can realign. So when your critical ideal self pops up to tell you that you should or ought to be doing something which is out of kilter with your authentic self, by knowing what value or values you'd be dishonouring, this can help you ignore the ideal self and be more assertiveness with ourselves and others. We can create lines in the sand, boundaries by which we can learn to assert ourselves more firmly even when facing opposition. Values allow us to trust our own judgement, and not feel guilty when others don't like our choices.

Sadly, most of us only feel pono occasionally. We feel uncomfortable in our own skin because they are acting in conflict with our values.

The clients I see who are not living through their values, chasing after money and bigger houses for the sake of keeping up the Joneses are often hectic, drone-like and stressed. Why? Well it's because it's much harder to pretend to be someone you're not than to be who you actually are, and living a life in line with our values is the trick to having the sort of life where you want to spring out of bed in the morning.

Depending on situations and challenges we face, if we know our full set of values, we have different strings to our bows, and we play whatever tunes required, giving us versatility to problem solving rather than bleating out the same note, keeping trapped in the same situation. So, I had a client who was a workaholic, working through to 8pm most days. When asked about his motivations to work such long hours, he cited fairness – everybody else was doing it; he was in a culture of machismo that encouraged people to work long hours. He'd been doing this routine at a prominent magazine publishing house for 6 years, honouring that same fairness value. When we sat down and we uncovered his full set of values, he found a value of self-improvement was been completed ignored by his fairness, so later he started leaving work 2 times a week at 5.30pm to get home then head out for some evening classes.

Most of us live to please the "I should" self, so we lose sight of their values. But by clarifying values, you can see when they're not living up to them, and through self development look at the changes required to live them.

## **The Lequin Polygon Profile – defining your personal core values**

Have a think now about what your values are. When I've asked clients this question, they either look at me blankly for some time before mumbling a few needs rather than values, or they churn out the values they think they should have – like integrity, diligence, fairness, and collaboration.

Correctly indentifying our values takes time and skill, so it's not surprising few of us go to the effort of doing so. Our parent, Lequin Leadership Development, has designed a values clarification tool to, the Lequin Polygon Profile, that identifies our own unique set of values and help you start living them.

Before we start, print off the polygon profile worksheet. And if you have, get some post-its out.

### **The first step is to identify your values**

We're going to start by looking at our past experiences, goals and your dreams for life. When answering the following questions, and when you've got what you think is a value, ask yourself: what drives that? So, I had a client you recently said he enjoyed adventure, driving this was a need to push himself, and this for him was a value of perseverance. But don't worry too spend too long on this and this first step is brainstorming and patterns will emerge and later you can name the value.

Here are the questions.

1. Think of the top three peak experiences in your life. What values were present?
2. What are you truly passionate about? It could be anything from flying a kite to DIY. Again, what values are present?
3. What really upsets or angers you? What values are being trodden on?
4. What simple pleasures do you enjoy? What value is honoured by those pleasures?
5. How would others describe you in a positive way? What values are represented?
6. What activities get you into flow – in the zone, where you think of nothing but the task at hand? What values were present?

From these questions, you might have written down 15 to 30 words.

### **Step 2 is Filtering**

As I've said, you can waste your time away living the values promoted by an unrealistic ideal self. So now we need to double check these are your authentic values, and weed out the values you've inherited or feel you ought to have to look like a good or to be a successful person.

For each value you've identified, ask yourself two key questions:

1. Who does this value serve? Is the value one that's been handed down to you by a caregiver that you were told was important and yet it's one deep down that doesn't sit well with you. If so, this is an extrinsic value and you need to remove it from your list.
2. Is your value actually a need?

### **Step 3 is Grouping your values**

Now, you need to group your list of values into groups. You'll probably see themes emerging or have a feel for how they should be grouped. There are no right or wrong ways to do this.

Aim for between 4 and 7 groups, which is a manageable number because you'll need to remember them easily when you're out and above and you need to draw on them.

### **Stage 4 – Naming your values**

Play around with names for each group. It can be the name of an animal or person who really embodies that set of values for you; it can be a colour; an element of nature such as fire or river – be as creative as you like. The great thing about having these named groups is they're yours and they're memorable. So each time you're in a situation that requires your best qualities, you can quickly visualise or feel which value will help you be most effective. Imagine it like a golfer with a bag of different clubs ready to pick whichever club is needed for any given shot, or a wardrobe full of coats, a different coat for whatever the weather.

## Stage 5 – Using your Polygon Profile

This is where you can now start to plan out how to bring your values more fully into your ask. So, you can ask:

1. How fully do I honour each value? Go through each, and score it out of 10
2. Which values do I want to honour more fully?
3. What are you currently doing in your career, social and family life that restricts or dishonours a value?
4. What 3 personal standards – what you must commit to doing – should you honour so that your values are honoured?
5. Over the next three months what 3 things can you start doing to honour these values?
6. Over the next three months what 3 things could you stop doing to honour these values?
7. What 3 boundaries – what you will not accept from others – can you install to protect yourself so that your values are honoured?"
8. Is there a certain goal you are trying to achieve? Which of your values would help you attain that goal?

It's good advice to repeat this exercise once a month or quarter to assess your progress. Or, at the beginning of every day, before you get out of bed, ask yourself what value you feel like being. Don't think too hard; use your intuition. Or choose one of your values and set yourself a goal to embody that value for a period of time, or choose an activity and do it with as much of the chosen value as possible. It doesn't matter whether you think you have the opportunity, you just need a little imagination! For example, if you're leading a team and you want to use a value you have of developing others, you might want to think about delegating direct reports some challenging tasks.

You can also use your values in decision making, so you can purposefully chose which ones to bring to the forefront in any given situation.

To see an example of a completed polygon profile, a client has given us permission to show you hers. She's a Trekkie – Star Trek fan – and she used characters from the TV series to help her memorise and visualise her five value groups. During coaching she was able to draw inspiration from the characters and relate her experiences with them. Whenever she had to make a difficult decision she was able to step back, ask herself, which value do I need to honour, then step into Picard's or Diana's shoes for instance. What was great was that she related to both the feminine and masculine parts within herself.