

How to Eat, Sleep, and Breathe Your Values

I recently met with all the managers and directors of the Resources Division at LifeWay, the division I am responsible to lead. We have nearly 650 employees in the division, and they all report to the leaders who were in that room. At the beginning of each calendar year, I remind our team of our mission and values, our identity that is foundational for all we do. For five years we have lived with the same mission and values and have seen the impact on the culture of being crystal clear about our identity.

I have given up on the fantasy that a leader can get in front of a group of people and declare a culture into existence. We are not the Lord; we cannot speak something into existence. Creating and cultivating a culture takes time. I asked our team if they really believe our mission and values have worked their way into our culture. They shared stories of how our values impact decision-making, inform execution, create shared energy and enthusiasm, and increase our ability to attract the right people to the team. [Here is a copy of our team's mission and values.](#)

So how, over five years, have we driven these deeply into our team? Here are five practical ways:

1. Teach the mission and values.

We invest time to re-teach our mission and values to the team. Sometimes the whole meeting is about the mission and values (as in early January), but most often we embed teaching into our regular meetings. For example, for the last two years I have taught on one value each meeting at each of our division-wide meetings.

2. Discuss them regularly.

We discuss our mission and values in team meetings, and the language is a filter for how we make decisions. If values are only shared from the microphone, they have little chance of being driven into a culture.

3. Hire with a mission/values lens.

We hire through the lens of our mission and values. We want to make them so clear that if someone has not fully bought into them, they self-select out of the hiring process. If you don't lead with mission and values, you cannot expect to hire the right people.

4. Celebrate stories that illustrate.

We give awards based on our values. The awards are based on great stories that illustrate the commitment to the mission and values we desire to live by. Stories can give people a tangible example of what living a value really looks like.

5. Evaluate honestly.

We regularly evaluate how our execution is rooted or fails to be rooted in what we say we believe. From annual evaluations to evaluating a particular project, evaluation through the lens of mission and values further drives them into the culture.

Learn more about driving your values deeply into your team - [connect with an Auxano Navigator](#)

> [Read more from Eric.](#)