Management by Values: An Exploration of National Sport Organizations
~ REPORT ~

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Overview
The positive impact of having a set of enduring values is well understood and documented by some of the world’s best organizations. When used intentionally, values can help to clarify what matters most to an organization by stimulating dialogue and by engaging all people in the process. Recently, researchers have identified three lenses – emotional, social, economic – by which the definition of values have developed. Each of these lenses provides a unique and specific focus for a particular organization. In particular, values are likened to the glue that connects an organization’s mission to its vision and can serve as a platform upon which shared understanding emerges. Investigating how managers think about and use their organization’s values can further our understanding of management approaches used to achieve success and optimize organizational effectiveness.

Management by Values (MBV) is a process that involves the intentional development of management systems that integrate values into the policies, procedures, and programs of the organization. Key drivers of an MBV approach are organizational leaders who believe in and champion a values-based orientation when making decisions. Understanding how an organization “lives” its values may increase our knowledge regarding the impact of values and values-based management on important outcomes such as conflict management and performance. In essence, an MBV approach may help the organization operate more effectively.

The purpose of this research project was to investigate the intentional use of organizational values in the management of National Sport Organizations (NSOs) by exploring the perceptions of paid staff/employees via an online survey instrument.

Data Collection
Leaders from 43 National Sport Organization (NSO) were invited to take part in a survey, with 23 NSOs agreeing to participate. On-line surveys were subsequently completed by 99 staff of the participating NSOs, which generated a 33% response rate.

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1 To read more on this topic please visit http://www.sportlaw.ca/articles/pdf/MBV_Conference_Paper_Edmonton_final.pdf
2 Key definitions of the factors of interest can be found on the final page of this report.
3 A copy of the online survey can be obtained from Shannon Kerwin (skerwin@hhp.ufl.edu)
Summary of Results

- The majority of participants rated:
  - Their NSO at the Intrinsic Stage of MBV. That is, individuals perceived organizational values to be embedded in policies, practices, and procedures of their NSO.

- There were also individuals who rated:
  - Their NSO at the Intuitive Stage of MBV. Here values are dependent on the leader’s management style and while known by staff and volunteers, they have not been strategically embedded within the NSO.
  - Their NSO at the Inspirational Stage of MBV. A smaller number of participants indicated that their NSO had values that were embedded system-wide, and were being leveraged intentionally as strategic communications tools to engage and inspire members to achieve their common goal.
  - Their NSO at the Inactive Stages of MBV. A relatively small group of participants indicated that organizational values were not present at all within their NSO.

- The intentional use of organizational values played a significant role in maintaining/increasing performance, and controlling dysfunctional conflict (see Figure 1).
  - When NSOs are intentional about managing by values, their performance increases.
  - Defining social values within an NSO increases performance to a greater degree than defining/using economic-based values. For instance, if an NSO adopts a core set of values that focus on social beliefs such as honesty, respect, and loyalty, this emphasis will have a larger positive impact on performance compared to NSO's that concentrate on economic values (i.e., values based on high return on investment or focused exclusively on meeting objectives)
  - Intentionally managing by values decreases the level of conflict in NSOs at multiple levels. For example, when NSOs were rated at the Intrinsic and Inspirational Stages of MBV, disagreements about the tasks; arguments over how tasks were to be completed; and personality clashes were reduced.
  - When values are NOT intentionally managed by the NSO, there is a decrease in performance and conflict increases.

*Figure 1. Key findings highlight that the intentional use of values increases performance and decreases conflict; when values are not being used intentionally, performance decreases and conflict increases.*
Recommendations

1. **Think about who your NSO’s values are for.** Start by determining who your audience is for these values. For instance, what are the “boundaries” of the organization’s values? Do they extend beyond the national office? Are they just for the Board? Are the values meant to reflect your entire sport including your provincial and territorial organizations and clubs? It is important to start asking these questions within your NSO; and do not limit these questions to the management-level.
   - Research indicates that when people are involved in defining their values, they are more likely to use them when making decisions. If your goal is to have your values extend more broadly, then consider involving more voices in identifying and defining them.

2. **NSO’s must spend time identifying and defining organizational values.** At the strategic level, this might include embedding values into your strategic plans. At the program level, this might include reinforcing how values can inform the development of a project. At the procedural level, this may be factoring values into processes. For example, embedding them into decision-making frameworks. Finally, at the performance level, this might mean creating individual performance evaluations that are based on your NSO’s values.
   - For ways to embed your values at different levels within your NSO, you may want to contact Skate Canada. They have been intentionally leveraging their values for 18 months and have recently reached out to their provincial Sections to broaden the dialogue. They have tools, suggestions, and tips that may be helpful.

3. **Continuous communication of organizational values is essential.** When communicated explicitly, values can serve to inspire, provide stakeholders with a sense of what matters most to the organization, and holds people accountable for their actions. While the findings indicated fewer NSOs were using values as part of their communications efforts, research tells us that this is an unleveraged strategy that may help good NSOs become great ones, and in the process manage the waves of complexity that surround our work (see quotation below).

4. **The findings indicate that it is worth your time and effort to leverage your values.** Research indicates that leaders within an organization are the key ingredient in supporting a management by values philosophy. If you are interested in learning more about how values can help you increase your organization’s performance and decrease conflict, contact Dina Bell-Laroche at dbl@sportlaw.ca.

Conclusions

Intentionally managing by values can help an organization deal with an increasingly complex and globalized world by setting clear management priorities that are consistent with the vision and beliefs of the organization as a whole.

As values are being managed more intentionally by NSOs, we see an increase in performance and a decrease in conflict. Continued research in this area is needed to further understand how more NSOs can manage by values and communicate this with a view of inspiring members, stakeholders, funders, and partners. It would equally be worthwhile to determine what happens when an NSO is intentionally managing by values and making this commitment explicit at all levels of the organization.

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As noted by Elizabeth Moss Kanter in 2009, and may be most relevant in today’s fluctuating sport economy:

New business models start “with values and principles, which provide a guidance system that helps them make strategic choices, with an eye on long-term institution building, generate high levels of innovation using a wide society lens … as long as they are guided by values, principles and a humanistic approach that provide grounding and guidance in the midst of turbulence.”

*(Super Corp: How Vanguard Companies Create Innovation, Profits, Growth, and Social Good, p. 48)*

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4 It is important to note that these results are only generalizable to those NSOs who participated in this particular study. Continued research is needed to uncover the impact of MBV across all NSOs in Canada.
Appendix

Key Definitions

1. **Inactive Management by Values (MBV)** – organizational values are dormant or not used
2. **Intuitive MBV** – organizational values are shared and experienced at the individual level and the communication of organizational values is leader dependent
3. **Intrinsic MBV** – organizational values are embedded, system-wide, and are evident in policies, practices, and procedures within the NSO
4. **Inspirational MBV** – organizational values are embedded, system-wide, and are being leveraged *intentionally* as strategic communications tools to engage and inspire members to achieve a common goal
5. **Economic Values** – organizational values related to how the organization objectively performs (e.g., focus on bottom-line outcomes)
6. **Social Values** – organizational values that guide how individuals conduct business (e.g., focus on developing positive interactions among individuals, and learning through work experiences)
7. **Performance** – organizational effective as indicated by ratings on (1) number of participants who play your sport, (2) bringing in sponsorship dollars, (3) achieving on-field success, (4) positive financial management, (5) positive public image, (6) ability to use your sport to strengthen the community, (7) contribution to national sport development, (8) contribution to national humanity development, (9) developing a clear purpose for the NSO, (10) aligning with PSO/TSO and community organizations, and (11) gaining access to alternative sources for financial support/funding
8. **Task Conflict** – disagreement about the task itself (e.g., where the budget is spent)
9. **Process Conflict** – disagreement about how tasks are accomplished (e.g., who does what)
10. **Relationship Conflict** – disagreement that is personal in nature (e.g., personality clashes)

~Thank you for your time and contribution to this research~

If you have any questions, please contact Shannon, Dina, or Joanne at the contact information on Page 1