

WHAT MATTERS OVERVIEW

Purpose: Most organizations assume their values are clear, actionable, and understood by all their members—but this is rarely the case. What Matters is a program designed to bridge the gap between abstract values and lived organizational reality. By integrating systems thinking, cognitive science, and cultural transmission models, this program ensures that values become practical decision-making heuristics, not just aspirational statements. This program challenges conventional approaches to corporate values by focusing on:

- How values function as cognitive and systemic forces, shaping behaviour and decision-making.
- How values spread, reinforce, or decay over time, using models of cultural evolution and cognitive memes.
- How organizations can create values that guide action, simplify complexity, and remain adaptable in changing environments.

By the end of this program, participants will have a structured set of 3-5 core values and a clear framework for sustaining them across leadership, decision-making, and organizational culture.

Duration: This program is made of an introduction and two arcs, with 4 learning blocks in each arc. Each block has 30-60 minutes of digital learning and 20 minutes of post session reflection. Live sessions are between 2-3 hours long. Between the 2 arcs is a middle phase, for developing and iterating core values.

- Introduction: 2 hours
- Total individual time: 15 hours
- Total sessional time: 20 hours
- Digital middle phase work: 3 hours
 - *Grand total time: 40 hours.*

Ideal Participants: This program is designed for leaders, decision-makers, and culture architects who shape organizational identity and behaviour. The cohort should come from your organization as a functional team.

- *C-Suite Executives & Senior Leaders:* Those responsible for setting vision and culture.
- *HR & People Officers:* Ensuring values are embedded in hiring, training, and retention.
- *Mid-Level Managers & Team Leaders:* Translating values into day-to-day operations.
- *Entrepreneurs & Founders:* Defining and sustaining culture from the outset.
- *Emerging Leaders & High-Potential Talent:* Preparing for leadership roles with a values-driven approach.

Format: Digital program with in-person or digital interactive sessions. All prelearning and reflection is digital, managed on an online platform. A further digital meeting/survey step is used at the halfway point, blending asynchronous work with iterative values extraction.

Outcomes:

- Develop a structured and embedded set of core values—tailored to their organization.
- Understand how values function as decision-making heuristics, reducing ambiguity and guiding action.
- Learn to create and sustain cultural alignment, ensuring values are not just words but behavioural anchors.
- Identify and mitigate failure points, ensuring values are resilient and adaptable.
- Design rituals, symbols, and narratives that reinforce values at every level.

Roadmap:

Introduction: **What Makes a Value Stick?**

- How values operate at cognitive, systemic, and cultural levels.
- The difference between aspirational and embedded values.
- Understanding values as cognitive loops, not fixed principles.

Arc 1: Building the Cognitive Foundation

1. **Introduction to Systems:** Understanding complexity, emergence, and cybernetics.
2. **Introduction to Failures:** How values fail: misalignment, blame cultures, contradictions; along with psychological safety.
3. **Introduction to Problems:** How the mind constructs meaning traps: cognitive biases, framing errors.
4. **Introduction to Dynamics:** The Cognitive Narratives Model – integrating thoughts, emotions, and behaviours.

*Middle Phase: **Cognitive Orientations & Value Development***

- *Cognitive Loop application*: Mapping values as part of an evolving system.
- *Value extraction & iteration*: Using polling and qualitative insights.
- *Drafting values*: Developing structured first drafts for refinement.
- **Outcome**: A drafted, structured set of core values, ready for real-world testing.

Arc 2: Systematization & Implementation

5. **Ambiguity & Decision-Making**: How values reduce uncertainty & guide actions.

6. **Systematization & Symbolization**: Embedding values in culture: language, symbols, rituals.

7. **Future-Proofing Values**: Feedback loops – ensuring values adapt, not stagnate.

8. **Rollout & Finalization**: Making values operational – integrating into hiring, leadership, and evaluation.

Final Deliverables:

- A structured set of 3-5 core values with completed cognitive loops.
- An implementation strategy for actualizing these values.
- A cognitive and systemic framework for ensuring values remain dynamic and self-sustaining.