



Dear Friend,

### Do As I Say Do!

Don't you just hate it when your words come back to haunt you? I sure do!

That was exactly what started happening...all too frequently, I might add...when my son began driving. By golly, I think the number of gray hairs on my head tripled each time I took my place in the passenger seat for a practice run. And, who cares if they don't exist? There was something very comforting about being able to access my imaginary hand and foot brakes. (Don't laugh!)

Perhaps one of the worst parts of the whole "rookie driver" experience, though, was the critiquing. Mind you, I'm not talking about my critiquing of *his* driving, but his of *mine*! Can you believe it? This young man who'd been driving all of a minute suddenly became full of advice for me -- who's been driving for...well, trust me, it's been much more than a minute!

"Mom, you didn't come to a full stop. That was a rolling stop."

"Mom, watch your speed."

Really?

Now that I'm able to step back and think objectively about it all, there was a lesson to be learned from my rookie driver. Before we can lead others effectively and credibly, we first must be able to lead ourselves. We must be setting the examples -- at home, in the workplace and, yes, even in the car. We must model the behavior we want to see from others. We actually must live the values we say we hold. And, until we do that, our words become hollow.

So, join me for this edition of **EA Insights** and a look at matching our words about values to our actions.

Oh, and be careful of YOUR speed too. Others are watching!

All the best,

*June*

June Melvin Mickens  
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### Show Me the Values

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If you've ever seen *Jerry Maguire*, and perhaps even if you haven't, there's one scene that comes to mind any time the movie's title is mentioned.

No, it isn't the, "You had me at hello," scene.

It's "Show me the MONEY!"

The point Jerry's larger-than-life client was making in that show-stopping scene was that, it wasn't enough for Jerry simply to *talk* about the fat contract that was on the way. No, my friend, the money needed to be seen. That's because, for many, seeing is believing!

Well, the same can be true when it comes to values.

It's always interesting for me to walk into, and begin getting to know, new companies. Mission statements, vision statements, and core values abound. Invariably these are well-crafted, encouraging declarations -- the things we stand for, who we are.

What's often more telling, though, about the things these companies stand for and who they are, are conversations about and observations of dealings with staff, and clients, and vendors, and neighbors. You see, these interactions, with folks who may never have read the official pronouncements, or who may not have set eyes on them in years, paint what's typically a more accurate picture of who's who and what's what.

Now, this isn't just a matter for companies. Individuals face similar challenges. Folks may *say* they subscribe to certain principles one moment, but the very next moment may *show* them carrying out actions that are sure to leave the hearer/viewer scratching his head.

What's going on?

It appears that we've mastered the art of *telling* others our values. Yet



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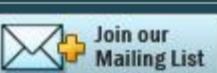
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### "Quotes"

*"The emphasis is on the values behind the events. The events ... are merely vehicles that we use to reinform the values."*  
~Michael Becker

*"My values, our values, aren't about pointing fingers. They are about offering a helping hand."*  
~Kathleen Blanco

*"... I believe in open, honest government, where we hold our leaders accountable."*  
~Wesley Clark

*"You talk about the values that you have whether they're in favor or not in favor. That's how you lead."*  
~Artur Davis

*"Ideas, even those inimical to our values, must be surfaced so they can be challenged. That is where education occurs."*  
~Terry Denbow

*"With [him], the ... program is in the right hands. He embodies [the school's] core values, and his leadership, character and drive assure [its] return to its traditional place among the elite national powers."*  
~Dick Ebersol

*"I'm always being realistic."*  
~Stefan Edberg

*"Always be consistent."*  
~Casey Kasum

*"[T]he central challenge... is ... how to retain those core values as it moves forward[.]"*  
~Michael MacCambridge

*"He has a high level of integrity; he's honest, hard-working, energetic, trustworthy, loyal,*

it seems as if we still have a way to go in terms of *showing* others our values. And, I guess, if I had to choose between the two, *showing* probably trumps *telling*.

One of the things I've come to realize over the years is that people are watching. Perhaps, *observing* is a better, and less creepy, way to describe it. Whatever you call it, the point is that folks are taking note of how you conduct yourself. They're mentally recording whether your actions match your speech. Essentially, they're looking on to determine whether the person you are really syncs with the person whom you claim to be.

The problem is that you hurt yourself when your words don't align with your actions. That very visible disconnect leads others to question whether they can trust you. And, the question of trust is raised not simply in connection with the matter at hand; it begins to affect their trust of you more broadly. After all, are you the person whom they're *hearing* or the one they're *seeing*?

So, how do you move forward?

#### **Set clear, relevant, realistic, and consistent values.**

It is important to carve out time periodically to look within and figure out what you believe in and why. Determine the standards that are to set the foundation for your individual (or your corporate) way of thinking and that are to guide how you operate. Those become the values upon which everything else rests.

Values also should be relevant and realistic. Sometimes people become enamored with the idea of creating values statements, and they forget that these statements are supposed to be outlining how they intend to live. But, because values should be markers, or reminders, that guide planning, decisions, and actions, it's important that they be relevant and realistic. They should make sense for who you are fundamentally. And, while values can state what you aspire to become, they shouldn't be so lofty that it would be impossible ever to meet the standard.

Besides being clear, relevant, and realistic, though, values should be consistent. It does no good to have a set of public values but then, in the background, to have a contradictory set of private values that actually guide decisions and behavior. Values, to be worthwhile, should be consistent -- whether written or unwritten, whether related to home or work, whether governing your individual actions or those of the people around you.

#### **Apply them first (and continually) to you before saddling others with them.**

Have you ever known someone to hold a set of values, but never seem to apply them personally? Nope, this is the case in which those values definitely must guide the actions of others, but the value-setter routinely and conveniently seems to get a pass.

As the one taking personal stock, or as an organization leader, the values you set must apply to *YOU* first and foremost. Yes, in a group setting, especially one in which people agree to live by certain standards, you must ensure that others are conforming to the way in which you all have decided to operate. However, "do as I say do, not as I do" is ineffective if not counterproductive. Application of your values to everyone but you leaves people resentful and leaves you appearing disingenuous. Instead, start with yourself. Ensure that, if no one else, *you* embody the spirit of the values you hold. Others will appreciate you for it, and you might just see them adopt the values...willingly.

#### **Be accountable.**

If you find yourself routinely discrediting or discounting anyone who has the courage to mention a disconnect between your words and your actions, you've got an accountability problem. If your company touts an open-door policy, but the last several people who dared to walk through that open door were mysteriously shipped to Siberia, you've got an accountability problem.

You see, having values is essential. Committing to apply values is critical. But, it's vital to be accountable...to someone...who can come and tell you and be heard when there's a problem with the way in which you're actually living out those values (or not, as the case may be).

Accountability is a key. And, that's because we can lose perspective when the craziness of daily life takes over and we're just busy. We can lose perspective when we're in the middle of a situation and we're too close to things to see clearly. We can lose perspective when we desperately want a certain outcome and aren't seeing beyond that target that we've set. However, because values are foundational, they can't be situational; they can't only apply when we have time to work them through; they can't only apply when we're comfortable with the outcomes they yield. If we have values, they apply...period. And, that's why accountability is so important. Opening yourself up to be accountable to another supplies that clearer head for times when your perspective is teetering and you need a gentle (or not so gentle) nudge as a reminder of what you've chosen to value, why, and the possible ramifications of veering off-course.

Will you always get it right? Absolutely not. My word of advice is not to seek perfection. (You're likely to become extremely frustrated if you do!) Rather, seek excellence and continual improvement. Both are much more attainable goals as you seek to live value-focused.

Need help setting, applying, and/or being accountable for *your* individual and/or corporate values? Contact us today to explore how **Executive Advantage** can partner with you. We're here to help you build your thriving [business](#) or [professional](#) challenges.

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*takes responsibility, accountable, loves and respects the game, loves and respects people.*  
~Frank McCourt

*"You always really have to remain consistent in your beliefs and philosophy."*  
~Mark Messier

*"It is not only what we do, but also what we do not do, for which we are accountable."*  
~Moliere

*"Sticking to your values, listening to your instincts, making your own choices is so important."*  
~Brittany Murphy

*"Each of us brings to our job, whatever it is, our lifetime of experience and our values."*  
~Sandra Day O'Connor

*"[B]e accountable all the time, even when no one [is] looking."*  
~Eddie Robinson

*"I wanted to explore the values that are at work, underpinning my life."*  
~Sidney Poitier

*"Work needs to be a reflection of your social values. You are how you work."*  
~Leigh Steinberg

*"The more clear you are on what you want, the more power you will have."*  
~Unknown

*"I want a film that... offers real hope and offers a realistic reflection of who we are and how we behave and still rocks you and moves you like cinema should."*  
~Rowan Woods

## About Executive Advantage

At **Executive Advantage**, we are committed to providing results-based business and management consulting, leadership development, and coaching support. We partner with business leaders to build healthy, well-functioning organizations, where goals are met and people thrive. We also partner with individuals to create professional (and personal) lives with clearer direction, improved results, and greater balance.

To learn more about **Executive Advantage**, contact us [online](#) or at (301) 280-5950.

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