



# Don't Tell Me Your Vision. Tell Me Your Values.

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I really don't care about your vision. I want to know your values.

I have yet to read a vision statement that is not as feel-good as a pair of fuzzy slippers and a cup of hot chocolate, sitting by the fire. But when I am trying to acquire human-safety-critical components for a manufactured good, whether for a car or truck, airplane or medical implant, your values are far more important than your aspirations. Of course, you want to exceed expectations. Big deal. It is your values that will determine whether or not you have a chance of even meeting them.

A lot of the management talk over the last few years has been aimed at mission statements and vision statements, and lately, I've noticed a few leading companies have started touting their "purpose statements."\* That is all well and good, and even expected. I remember coaching my crew to be able to explain our mission statement to ISO auditors when I was a plant manager.

But frankly, does having your employees know that you aspire to be "the market leader," (vision statement) or that you wish to "exceed expectations" (mission statement) give me, as a customer, confidence in your ability to provide product that meets my requirements? Not in my world. Your aspirations (vision) are nice, just as the pom-poms on those fuzzy slippers are "nice," but they do not convince me that you can do it. Your description of what you want to do (mission) tells me that you would like to do better, so that is encouraging, but is not enough to convince. What does it take to convince me that you are the supplier that I should engage? You must share your values.

What are your values? We can all name values that are important. Honesty, fair dealings and quality are values that come easily to my mind. But rather than just list values, we need to look at the types or classifications of values that need to be in place to be perceived as a supplier of choice. There are three different types of values that convince me of your legitimacy as a supplier: Integrity, Relationships and Quality.

## Integrity

Integrity is perhaps the most important type of value in a supplier partner. Honesty in all circumstances, even the difficult ones, is critical to sharing evidence and solving problems. Behaving both morally and ethically is the basis of



perceived integrity. If you would lie about a fact to save your company some minor expense, why should I trust you on the really important issues? Honesty and reliability are values that say to the customer: I will be there for you. You can count on me.

These are far more convincing to me as a customer than your vision of what you'd like to be.

## Relationships

My colleague has a litmus test for judging people. It is: "Do they speak with respect of others not present?" When people gossip, backstab or make snarky comments when others are not present, it shows that they do not truly view those people with respect. Respect is critical to a successful commercial relationship – to any relationship really. If one shares positive opinions when someone is present, but turns negative when they are away, is there honesty? Without honesty, can there be respect?

The number one thing that I look for in a potential supplier is evidence of respect towards customers. How can I judge that? Well, disrespectful companies get a reputation that is easy to find. To qualify a company as one that is respectful, find out how they treat and continue to develop their employees. How they show their respect for their employees is a strong indicator of how customers will be treated.

Another clue is how well do they communicate. Are they open and honest? Or are they guarded and secretive? What is the usability of their website, the readability of their materials? Are they politically correct or a heavy user of weasel/wiggle words? If I was in the market for a nonstick solution, I'd go buy Teflon™ cookware. I'm looking for respect in a relationship. Not disclaimers or deception.

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## Quality as a way of life

Everyone is for quality. Who isn't? In my experience, purchasing agents are more about low price than quality. They say that they are looking for quality, but their final decision is always decided on price. Quality as an organizational value touches on the other values mentioned above; there can be no quality if there is no honesty in reporting, measuring, sourcing and approval. Likewise, with no respect for the customer or end user, whether or not there is "quality" really doesn't matter much. After all, who cares about what the customer thinks?

Companies that value quality do. They know that it is the customer who defines quality, the customer who they respect, because ultimately that customer is the foundation of the business. But quality is not just about the product or service provided. It is also a dimension of how we provide products and services. Are we efficient, minimizing waste in our process so that we provide high value? Are we continuously working on improvements to our systems and processes?

## Commitment

I am not sure if commitment counts as a value, or if it is just a way of being, but it is an important indicator. I look for signs of commitment, or the lack of commitment, in the people I meet at potential suppliers (and in life) all the time. Having

great values is nothing if you lack the commitment to act upon them when needed. Commitment is what energizes execution of values in day-to-day performance; no commitment – no consistency. No reliability. No quality. No respect.

Commitment is the means of performing with integrity. Can you be fair and honest if you are not committed to the truth? Commitment is the means that drives respect. Can you really be respectful if your attitude regarding customers is noncommittal or it changes depending on whether or not they are in earshot? Commitment to quality is how we become better suppliers, more reliable suppliers, trusted suppliers. Lip service does nothing for quality. Aspiring to be a quality supplier is one thing, committing to doing what it takes to being a quality supplier is quite another.

Another year, another ISO audit to pass. Go ahead, coach your team on what the mission and vision are. But when the customer comes to visit, don't think that they'll be impressed by your mission and vision. What they'll look for is evidence of your values. And don't bother trying to cram for the visit. Your values will be evident and easy to see.

*\*See our article "Vision, Mission, Purpose?" here: [productionmaching.com/articles/vision-mission-purpose](http://productionmaching.com/articles/vision-mission-purpose)*

## HOT TOPICS

PMPA members support one another through email Listserves, where they can solve problems, share advice, sell excess material and equipment, and learn about new developments and opportunities. Here is a list of topics that were recently discussed:

- Counting small parts
- New OSHA injury and illness reporting requirements
- Wellness testing and EEOC
- Smoking policy and discipline
- A.I. 2400 Standard
- Centerless grinding suppliers
- Citizen A20 guide bushing
- Query about C2 carbide
- Machine tool accessory wanted
- Passivation issue
- Feeds and speeds for .031-inch hole in carbon steel
- House passes 40-hour work week bill
- Source for T-1 tool steel in large quantities
- Steel equivalent

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## PMPA CALENDAR

Below is the calendar of upcoming conferences and events scheduled for the 2015 program year. For the latest district/chapter meeting information, please view the Calendar of Events at [pmpa.org/events/calendar](http://pmpa.org/events/calendar). If you have questions about PMPA conferences or regional meetings, please contact: Monte Guitar, director of technical programs, at 440-526-0300 or [mguitar@pmpa.org](mailto:mguitar@pmpa.org).

**National Technical Conference**  
 April 19-21, 2015  
 Greater Columbus Convention Center  
 Columbus, Ohio

**Precision Machining Technology Show**  
 April 21-23, 2015  
 Greater Columbus Convention Center  
 Columbus, Ohio



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