

Throw your principles and values in the trash, adopt behaviors

Frédéric Le Pennec · 3 February 2025



Displayed values are reassuring, but it is the observable behaviors that truly create trust. To manage with consistency, it's better to embody concrete actions than to flaunt principles.

Having values and principles is often seen as a quality. We look for them in others, whether in a candidate, a colleague, a client, or a partner. It is reassuring.

Someone who displays clear values inspires confidence. We think they are reliable and will keep their commitments. And if we share these values, it creates a connection, a common ground.

But as soon as this same person states: **"I make it a matter of principle"** or **"It does not align with my values"**, the dialogue becomes more complicated. A blockage begins to surface. What seemed reassuring just moments earlier suddenly becomes a hindrance.

Why this shift?

Perhaps because we forget one essential thing: behind values and principles, there are above all **concrete behaviors**. And that's where everything comes into play.

Elastic and variable geometry principles

Values and principles tend to be adjustable according to circumstances. Add a pinch of bad faith (conscious or not), and you can justify just about anything and its opposite, as long as it relies on beautiful universal values.

How many leaders and managers place **honesty**, **transparency**, or **commitment** at the top of their company charter? But how many truly apply these values to themselves, in every decision, every action, every interaction?

In the end, our values and principles are often what we expect... **from others**.

A value is not visible, a behavior is observable

This is where the difference is fundamental. A value is an idea, a concept. A behavior, however, is tangible. It is seen, evaluated, and has a real impact.

If someone claims to promote listening but consistently interrupts their interlocutors, their stated value makes no sense. If they allege valuing trust but control every detail of their team's work, they send a clear signal: their behavior contradicts their principles.

By clinging to rigid principles, we forget that a value only has weight in its **concrete application**. Without coherent behaviors, it becomes hollow, meaningless.

Forget values, adopt behaviors

So, rather than choosing "trendy" values to display on a website or corporate speech, ask yourself a simple question: **what behavior should I adopt daily to embody what I claim to defend?**

It's through your actions that others will truly understand who you are. It's your behaviors that will inspire trust, far more than principles engraved on a corporate plaque.

Leaders, managers, do not choose the "right" values. **Adopt the right behaviors.**