

The Values Deck

Card Sorting Techniques



Introduction

The instruction card within The Values Deck box you received provides one possible way to sort the cards, however there are several card sorting techniques you might find useful.

Best Practices

Here are some best practices you may find help as you sort the cards.

- The card sorting techniques provided here are suggestions—customize as you see fit
- Don't get too literal on the value terms and definitions in this deck—they are fluid
- You bring meaning to each value term by whatever it means to you
- If you don't see a value listed in the deck you want, create your own on a Post-It note
- The same value shared between two or more people may be interpreted and defined differently; always seek to understand how people define their values
- Always have copies of the desk reference document in case you wind-up short on decks
- Use removable tape if you want to post the cards on whiteboards

Card Sorting Techniques

Must-have vs. Meaningful

Background

With this technique, participants are asked to distinguish between “must-have” and “meaningful” values. This approach is important, because more often than not, when people are presented with a series of values, they will often select or score a large number of items with a high degree of importance, making it difficult to actually distinguish what their real motivations are vs. the concepts they find to be agreeable.

- Must-have = a value you acted on or thought about in the last 24 hours or is non-negotiable for you
- Meaningful = a value that is of high importance, but not always a “must-have” value

For example, “preservation of the environment” might be a value that someone initially identifies as a must-have value. However, if this motivation does not manifest itself regularly in one's behavior, it may be more of a meaningful value than a must-have value. People sometimes struggle to accurately categorize values out of fear of shame or that doing so would diminish a worthy value that deserves more recognition socially (though it may not be acted on personally with any regularity).

Participants are asked to think about what values they have acted on or thought about in the last 24 hours or values they know to be non-negotiable juxtaposed to the values that they agree with or find to be important, but are not must-have values. The assumption in this technique is that the filter of time may be a good approximation of true motivations, unless the participant has enough self-awareness to know the values that he or she considers non-negotiable.

How It Works

1. Select all the value cards that represent your top values
2. Refine your results further by distinguishing between “must-have” and “meaningful” values
 - Must-have = a value you acted on or thought about in the last 24 hours or is non-negotiable for you
 - Meaningful = a value that is of high importance, but not always a “must have” value
1. Sort your “must-have” values in order priority
2. Write down your top 10 values on a sheet of paper
3. Put the cards back in numerical order, flip the deck over, and answer the questions about your values

The Simple Sort

Background

The simple sort is one of the easiest sorting techniques that uses two levels of prioritization. Participants just pick all the values they like from the deck, and then are asked to select the top 10 values they identify most from that list.

If you are really pressed for time in a group activity, this is probably the best exercise to do, and you may find the use of a timer to be helpful in keeping you on schedule.

How It Works

1. Select all the value cards that represent your values
2. Identify your highest value priorities by picking your top 10 values from that selection
3. Review and answer the questions on the back of the cards

Success & Struggle (Peaks & Valleys)

Background

People often witness their values in action as they experience success and struggle (peaks and valleys). Success and struggle are good indicators of when your motivations are being fulfilled or not.

- Success = my needs are being met; I am achieving my goals
- Struggle = my needs are not being met; I am not achieving my goals

How It Works

1. Select all the value cards that represent your successes in life (peaks)
2. Select all the value cards that represent your struggles in life (valleys)
3. Discuss and synthesize the insights you gathered about your successes and struggles
4. Identify your top 10 values from this list
5. Review and answer the questions on the back of the cards

Currencies of Life

Background

As the saying goes, “follow the money and see where it goes.”

Time, money, and energy are considered the currencies of life. And, how you spend these currencies can tell you a lot about your values because we often tend to spend time on things that we value.

- Time = the amount of time you spend on something
- Money = the amount of money you spend on something
- Energy = the amount of physical energy you spend on something

However, consider adding a fourth currency to this framework—thoughts. Time, money, and energy are observable behavior, whereas thoughts are not, and there’s often quite a bit of information tucked away in the recesses of our minds about our goals and motivations.

- Thoughts = the amount of thinking energy you spend on something

How It Works

1. On a sheet of paper, create three columns: time, energy, money (+ thoughts)
2. Select from the deck the values that represent how you spend your time, then write them down in the time column
3. Then, reassemble the cards again and select from the deck the values that represent how you spend your money, then write them down in the money column
4. Then, reassemble the cards again and select from the deck the values that represent how you spend your energy, then write them down in the energy column
5. Lastly, reassemble the cards again and select from the deck the values that represent how you spend your thoughts, then write them down in the thoughts column
6. Circle all the values that appear across time, money, energy, and thoughts
7. Select your top 10 values from all the circled values
8. Review and answer the questions on the back of the cards

Values Pyramid

Background

Pyramids are used extensively in all sorts of diagramming and are especially popular in management theory and in the field of personal and professional development thanks to the introduction of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs in the 1940s.

This technique uses a simple pyramid structure that is agnostic to any management or psychology theory to organize values from higher to lower order.

How It Works

1. Select all the value cards that represent your top values from the deck
2. Organize your values into three categories:
 - Top of the pyramid: pick two or three values (highest importance)
 - Middle of the pyramid: pick up to eight values (high importance)
 - Bottom of the pyramid: All other value cards you selected (important)
3. Identify your top 10 values from the top and middle of your pyramid
4. Review and answer the questions on the back of the cards

Wheel of Life

Background

Sometimes participants like to think about their values using the categories from the wheel of life. This technique allows participants to compartmentalize and distill their values by life situation or domain.

However, be aware that the research suggests that values transcend situations. In other words, someone doesn't have one set of values for work and one set for life. You have one set of values, and they have varying degrees of alignment with the various activities of your life.

How It Works

1. Share the Wheel of Life worksheet with the participants
2. Pick a Wheel of Life category and select the cards that apply to that category
3. OR, first pick all the value cards that apply to you and sort them by the wheel of life categories
4. Discuss your selections by category
5. Review and answer the questions on the back of the cards

Past-Present-Future

Background

As we experience life, some of our values can and do shift (dynamic values), while others remain relatively the same throughout our lifetime (static values). An example of dynamic values in action might be a life event such as getting married or having children; this may cause some other values, such as family security, to surface closer to the top of one's value priorities. Conversely, an example of a static value might be creativity; one might feel that he or she is driven by a consistent creative impulse that is likely to be present for a lifetime.

With this technique, participants examine their values from the past, present, and perceived future to bring self-awareness to their own personal evolution and to also bring awareness to any value patterns that stay the same over time.

How It Works

1. On a sheet of paper, create three columns: past, present, and future

2. Select from the deck the top 10 values of your past (and many of these may still be the same for you today), then write them down in the past column
3. Then, assemble the cards back together again and select from the deck the top 10 values of your present and write them down in the present column
4. Lastly, assemble the cards back together again and select from the deck the top 10 values you believe you will have in the future and write them down in the future column
5. Circle all the values that appear in your past, present, and future. What stayed the same? What changed? Why?
6. Select your top 10 values from all the circled values.
7. Review and answer the questions on the back of the cards

Nature vs. Nurture

Background

Occasionally, participants want to understand the formation of their values in the context of nature vs. nurture (using their own understanding of nature vs. nurture, which is often described as what “I want vs. what others have told me to want”).

While this definition is not accurate in how psychologists define nature vs. nurture, this technique is not designed to engage that debate, but rather offer an oversimplified sorting technique that may be useful within the context of coaching.

- Nature = culmination of life experiences that have created your own ideas about what you want
- Nurture = culmination of upbringing and social norms (other’s ideas) about what you want

How It Works

1. Select all the value cards that represent your nature (what you are)
2. Select all the value cards that represent your nurture (what you were raised to believe)
3. Identify your top 10 values and answer the questions
4. Review and answer the questions on the back of the cards

Complement vs. Conflict

Background

One of the most significant findings in the Schwartz research is the relationship between values and how values can complement and conflict with each other (values wheel).

This technique is designed to help individuals see how certain values they hold work well together and how others may be in direct opposition to each other (and may need more attention and intention in order to create better balance).

How It Works

1. Select all the value cards that represent your top values from the deck
2. Hand out the Schwartz Values Wheel worksheet
3. Instruct participants to recreate the values wheel using this template by organizing their value cards in the same order that they appear on the wheel, creating their own circle on the table
4. Then, have some discussion about the values that are adjacent to each other in their wheel and how they complement each other. How does this complementary relationship manifest itself in his or her own life?
5. Next, have some discussion about the values that are juxtaposed to each other in their wheel and how they conflict with each other. How does this conflicting relationship manifest itself in his or her own life?

Career Transition

Background

One of the biggest challenges faced by so many is how to align their personal values with the type of work they want to do for a living.

This technique is designed to help participants explore the values they want from their ideal job versus what they have experienced in the past.

How It Works

1. Print the Career Transition worksheet
2. Select all the values from your previous or current employer that were required for your job (you may or may not agree with all these values, that is okay), and write them down
3. Select all the values that you believe will be most important to your future career and write them down
4. Then answer the following questions:
 - Describe the difference between the two lists?
 - What do you want most in your new job?
 - What do you not want in your new job?
 - Describe the pros & cons of making a change (see back of card 12)
 - What will it take to make a successful transition?

5. You may also want to pair this activity with an assessment, the [O*Net Interest Profiler](#) based on Holland's Theory of Career Choice

Couples Only

Background

Sometimes when romantic couples (or business partners) struggle to grow and nurture a relationship, their values may be out of alignment and in some cases incompatible.

This technique is designed to help two people identify the unique values expressed between each other, how they are similar or different to each other, and what common ground can be achieved.

How It Works

1. Create two columns on a sheet of paper, one column for each person
2. Select all the value cards that you believe represent your values
3. Refine your selections further to get to your top 10 values
4. Write down the top 10 values for each person in each column
5. Then follow-up with these questions for each participant:
 - How do you define the values you selected as your top 10?
 - How aligned are you both on those values? Similar? Different?
 - Where do you as a couple have the most common ground?
 - What do you need more of from your partner? Less of?
 - What will it take to get there?
 - What do you appreciate about your partner in a new and interesting way?
 - What are you most grateful for about this conversation?

Values Tarot

Background

Sometimes rather than identifying your own values, it may be helpful to try to identify the values of other individuals, organizations, or brands as a way to gauge alignment between yourself and others. Values tarot is all about making your best guess at what you perceive to be the values of someone else in order to help you make better decisions when interacting with someone else.

How It Works

1. Pick an individual, organization, or brand that you want to read

2. Select all the cards that you believe represent this entity
3. Then, refine your results further by picking the top 10 values for this entity
4. Last, synthesize your insights on the top 10 values you selected, see how similar or different they are to your own values, and develop any relevant conclusions

What You Are Not

Background

Sometimes to define what we are, we must first define what we are not. This activity does a reverse sort of the values deck. You sort the cards by the values that do not reflect your motivations or goals.

How It Works

1. Select all the value cards that do not represent your values
2. Describe why you selected those values
3. One question: how does defining what you are not, help define what you are?

Free Form

Background

With this technique participants pick their own categories and methods to sort their values.

How It Works

1. Pick your own categories
2. Sort the cards in the way that is most meaningful to you
3. Synthesize in relevant priorities and insights from your framework