

Trait Trade

Linking Personal and Professional Values

Activity Summary

A highly interactive activity focusing participants' attention on individual and organizational values.

Goals

- To link personal values with professional goals.
- To highlight the importance of infusing values into professional work.
- To provide professional networking opportunities.

Group Size

10 to 100.

Time Required

Approximately 90 minutes.

Materials

- One cut-up copy of Trait Trade for groups with up to 25 participants. One additional set for each additional 25 participants—up to four sets for groups of 100.
- One copy of the entire list of traits per participant.
- A basket or container.
- One Trait Trade Values Worksheet per participant.

- Paper and a writing utensil for each participant.
- Flip chart with markers.
- (Optional) Music.

Physical Setting

Any indoor or outdoor space large enough to accommodate the group.

Facilitating Risk Rating

Moderate.

Prior to the Session

1. Copy the Trait Trade sheets onto sturdy, colored paper. Make one copy of the set for up to 25 participants, two for 26 to 50 participants, three for 51 to 75 participants, and four for 76 to 100 participants. There are 100 traits on the Trait Trade sheets and enough sets should be made so that each participant receives at least four traits.
2. Cut the traits along the lines, with one trait per small slip of paper (margins and header can be discarded). Place the cut-up traits into a basket, bowl, or other container suitable for passing around to participants.

Process

1. Introduce the session by explaining that participants will be focusing on what they value and how they define themselves and their organizations.
(3 minutes.)
2. Pass the container with the traits inside, asking each participant to randomly select four slips of paper—without looking at what is written on them. For large groups with more than one set of traits, simultaneously pass two or more baskets of traits. Once everyone has four traits, allow participants to read the ones they have. Those who received slips of paper that say “Other:” can write any trait they like on those slips of paper. Place any remaining traits on a table or desk somewhere in the room that is easily accessible to participants.
3. Tell participants they have 7 minutes to trade traits, with the goal of collecting four that they most value personally. Because they do not know what all

the traits are, the only way to find out what options exist is by mingling around the room. Explain that there are two ways to acquire a trait:

- Find another participant with a trait you value and convince that person to trade it with one of yours.
- Take one from the extras pile and replace it with one in your possession. If an "Other" slip is there, you may write whatever trait you wish on it. No additional "Other"s can be created.

You may wish to play upbeat background music. Ending the music can create an auditory cue that trading is over.

(10 minutes.)

4. When time is up, tell participants to return to their original seats and write down the four traits in their current possession. If there was a particular trait someone really wanted but was not able to trade for, that one can be noted as well.

(5 minutes.)

5. Tell the participants to prepare for Round 2. (Until this point, there was no indication there would be more than one trading session.) Say that this time the rules and format will be the same. However, they are to begin with the traits they have now and trade for four traits they believe their organization, department, or team *most values*. If there is a question as to what segment of the organization to consider, tell them to keep in mind the part of the organization that most impacts their daily work and interactions.

(10 minutes.)

6. Upon conclusion of the second, slightly abbreviated round (generally this one involves slightly less trading, and participants engage more rapidly), tell them to again return to their original seats and write down the four traits they selected on behalf of the workplace.

(3 minutes.)

7. Instruct participants to form triads to briefly share their two lists. Participants can discuss why traits were selected in each round, whether interpretation of traits varied among participants, and the impact of different perceptions.

(15 minutes.)

8. Bring the focus back to the large group. Ask for a show of hands of people who *traded all four traits* between Rounds 1 and 2 (in other words, personal traits were all different from workplace traits). Then ask for a show of hands

of those who *traded one to three* of their personal traits when collecting traits for the workplace. Lead a discussion with questions such as those below. As with all questions offered in this activity, it is not necessary to cover all of them. Select those best suited for the dynamics and interests of your particular group.

- What appealed to you about the traits you selected for yourself?
- How do you explain the differences between the traits you value personally versus the ones you believe your workplace values? Are you comfortable with those differences?
- If you perceive a split between your personal and organizational values, how do you reconcile and/or adapt to these differences?
- Were “Other” traits added? Why were they added?
- Were there traits for either round you wanted and could not obtain? What were they?
- Were comments or ideas discussed within a triad to share with the larger group?

(10 minutes.)

9. Ask for a show of hands of those who *kept all four traits* the same for both rounds, with no attempt to trade. Ask:

- Why did you keep the same traits for yourself as for your organization?
- What does this say about your choice of career and workplace? How does it impact your work life?
- Have you contributed to the synchronization of your personal and organizational values?

(Note: Selecting different traits for oneself and the workplace is not necessarily negative. Participants often provide excellent explanations for the differences while still indicating a positive work experience. There is not a value judgment around how many traits were traded between rounds; the goal is to contemplate and clarify values and choices.) Note key points on the flip chart.

(7 minutes.)

10. Tell participants to form new triads. Provide a copy of the Trait Trade Values Worksheet to each participant, along with a pen or pencil, and have them complete it individually.

(5 minutes.)

11. Ask the triads to conduct a brief conversation, sharing and discussing the values worksheets and resulting contracts. One person per triad should be designated as timekeeper to ensure that everyone has approximately equal time sharing. Participants should make sure each contract is connected to a specific, short-term (under four weeks for initial step) timeframe. When listening to others' worksheets and contracts, participants may make suggestions, offer support, and suggest enhancements to reinforce the goals and values shared.

(15 minutes.)

12. Lead a concluding discussion that includes some or all of the following questions:

- How does raising consciousness about traits valued by your organization impact your reaction to and processing of: Professional choices? Challenging relationships? Task accomplishment?
- Do you ever live in contradiction to your values? What is the impact? How can you align your choices with your values from this point forward?
- What is the impact of linking our values to our work lives?
- What will you do differently based on your experience and reflection during this activity? What is a specific application made in your contract? Why is it important to set a specific, time-bound goal?
- In what ways can you apply what we discussed and experienced to a particular work-related challenge?
- How can consciously integrating values into your work impact your performance and morale?

13. Conclude by distributing copies of the complete set of traits.

(10 minutes.)

Submitted by Devora Zack.

Devora Zack, president of the award-winning leadership development firm Only Connect Consulting, Inc. (OCC), has over ten years of experience leading seminars, developing strategies, and providing coaching with lasting positive impact on thousands of clients in organizations such as OPM, AOL, Deloitte, IRS, Cornell, HBCU, DHS, IMF, the U.S. Treasury, and AmeriCorps. Her style is dynamic, innovative, and results-driven. She has an MBA from Cornell University and a bachelor's degree from The University of Pennsylvania.

Trait Trade

Approachable	Inclusive	Educated
Bridge Builder	Thoughtful	Honest
Caring	Empathetic	Structured
Cautious	Spirited	Spontaneous
Charismatic	Intelligent	Vibrant
Compassionate	Connected	Respectful
Decisive	Wise	Enthusiastic
Dynamic	Strong	Quiet

Efficient	Accurate	Private
Fair	Loyal	Healthy
Family-Oriented	Focused	Aware
Thorough	Clear Thinking	Mentor
Grounded	Ambitious	Community Builder
Growth-Driven	Change Advocate	Stable
Sense of Humor	Kind	Hard-Working
Innovative	Energetic	Accomplished
Leader	Helper	Positive Thinker

Learner	Teacher	Independent
Motivated	Action-Oriented	Original
Open-Minded	Thinker	Feeler
Open	Faithful	Intense
Passionate	Happy	Calm
Professional	Involved	Committed
Rapport Builder	Flexible	Communicator
Relaxed	Unique	Driven
Service-Focused	Task-Focused	Climate-Focused

Sincere	Persistent	Knowledgeable
Sophisticated	Innocent	Playful
Skilled Speaker	Skilled Listener	Politically Savvy
Strong	Role Model	Tolerant
Team Player	Organized	Punctual
Competitive	Personable	Creative
Other:	Other:	Other:
Other:	Other:	Other:

Trait Trade Values Worksheet

1. What three traits most resonated with you in this activity (whether or not you were able to successfully trade for them):
 - (a)
 - (b)
 - (c)

2. What do these traits indicate about your abilities, interests, and values?

3. What is a specific aspect of your work life to which you can actively apply one or more of these values?

Contract

I commit to taking the following *action* to deepen the connection between my work life and values:

The first step toward achieving this goal in a stated specific timeframe is:

Signature: _____ Date for First Step: _____