



Stanford eCorner

Always Revisit and Refine Values

Ron Gutman, *HealthTap*

April 15, 2015

Video URL: <http://ecorner.stanford.edu/videos/3507/Always-Revisit-and-Refine-Values>

HealthTap's Ron Gutman recommends organizations make it a practice to regularly re-examine their vision and values after they have been defined. Teams that lose sight of their mission or their values will fail to attain their goals, Gutman says.



Transcript

At HealthTap when we started the beginning, before we wrote the first line of code and actually, in fact, before we wrote the first sketch on a napkin or any Balsamiq sketch on an iPad, we actually spent almost two weeks defining a vision and credo for the company and writing to ourselves in detail what are the values that are very, very important for us. What are the things that we stand by because - what are the things that we stand for, what are the things that are important for us to make what we want to make happen. And we thought about these values and there's this whole paradigm there that says all you need to have maybe like six to eight or they are different people think about it differently or like how many values you need to have and we said to ourselves, let's just outline all of the values that we believe in and then try to figure out which are the ones that are most important for us. And then we ended up with a list that was longer than the typical six, eight, ten, whatever the number is. We started eliminating a few of them and putting some of them together but ended up with a list that we're very, very passionate about. And we did it with the entire team. It was a small team back then but we did it with the entire team together. And that was very, very cool process, but that was just one point in time and then we started writing code, we started doing design, we started doing product and iterations. What was very important for us from that point on was to make sure that this remains fresh, that the vision and the credo and these values are things that we actually uphold, that we actually live by. So how do you it because you are so busy, you work around the clock, you don't sleep at night, you don't have enough people to do what you need to do and you need to do it quickly because you have very little resources and you need to prove a lot (14:55).

So who has time for values and vision and I mean like seriously, come on, give me a break. And that's the most important thing. This is the glue that keeps it all together. If you lose the mission or you lose the values and the kind of people that you want to surround yourself, you're not going to accomplish what you are trying to accomplish. So the way we tackled this one was we have a team meeting every week and we have a town home (15:20) meeting every weekend and then we come - all of us come together and every team meeting, we actually chose one of the values in our vision and credo and have a discussion about it. Keep it fresh, talk about it, right? Do people still believe in it, do people think it's still applicable maybe we need to change certain things, right? So people talk about the value. Just one value every week we choose one value and talk about it. We decided to name the conference rooms in our office with the values, right? So we don't just put a plaque on the wall that nobody ever looks at, right, because at some companies, you see, oh there's this plaque nobody ever looks at and it has all the values and whatever. We actually - people talk about conference room, let's meet at passion and positive energy, sense of adventure. Data and analysis, right? These are the names of the rooms in our office.

So they meet there, right, and team work and collaboration is a big room in our office, right? And they talk about it. So it becomes part of the routine of how we are thinking about the company and we live by it. And then we have a retreat. Every single year we have a yearly retreat that we take the entire company together and the retreat starts with the question why. Why are we here? Why are we doing what we are doing? So the same thing that we started the company, every yearly retreat starts

with the question of why. And going back to the vision and credo and allowing anyone and everyone in a company to say, hey, we think that this value is just not applicable anymore, or hey, we want to add something here or I am not sure that we're living by these things. Is this still something that belongs in a company that has now 70 people rather than a company that had five at the beginning or when we want go to 200 and 300, will that still be applicable. Do we have too many? We don't have enough. The discussion goes on and on and it's really important.