Shared Values Defined
Shared values are what engender trust and link an organization together. Shared values are also the identity by which an organization is known throughout its business areas. These values must be stated as both corporate objectives and individual values. Every organization and every leader will have a different set of values that are appropriate to its business situation.

Establishing Shared Values
Ensuring employee's understanding of organization's values and vision requires your organization to have clearly defined values. Without this, your organization can get itself into real trouble.

Defining shared values is more than putting words on paper. Most organizations have values statements or mission statements; yet many do not follow them. Winning organizations create successful cultures in a systematic way using various approaches that may include visual representations, training seminars, and/or socializing events.

1. Most employees, especially knowledge workers, need to know who you are and what you are and what you're about. Your talented people are looking for a "values fit" with their employers. Without it, they won't give you their best and will ultimately leave.

2. Values define what is and isn't acceptable – they become your organization's code of behavior. And making decisions without a code of behavior, especially in volatile times, is much more difficult and risky.

Case in Point | General Electric (GE)
Nowhere GE shared values take on importance greater importance than on a small, wallet-size card that GE employees now carry with them. GE's values are so important to the company, that Jack Welch had them inscribed and distributed to all GE employees, at every level of the company. But before the cards were furnished to the staff, GE had come to consensus on which core values it wanted to cultivate in its employees. Many hours were spent at GE's Leadership Institute and elsewhere deciding on exactly what those values should be. "It became a badge of honor not only to carry the card but also to uphold the values." As Jack Welch notes: "There isn't a human being in GE that wouldn't have the Values Guide with them. In their wallet, in their purse. It means everything and we live it. And we remove people who don't have those values, even when they post great results"
GE Values Guide

GE Leaders... Always with Unyielding Integrity:

- Have a Passion for Excellence and Hate Bureaucracy
- Are Open to Ideas from Anywhere... and Committed to Work-Out
- Live Quality... and Drive Cost and Speed for Competitive Advantage
- Have the Self-Confidence to Involve Everyone and Behave in a Boundaryless Fashion
- Create a Clear, Simple, Reality-Based Vision... and Communicate It to All Constituencies
- Have Enormous Energy and the Ability to Energize Others
- Stretch... Set Aggressive Goals... Reward Progress... Yet Understand Accountability and Commitment
- See Change as Opportunity... Not Threat
- Have Global Brains... and Build Diverse and Global Teams

1 Leading on the Edge off Chaos", Emmet C. Murphy and Mark A. Murphy, 2003