



*“We found that high ideals—a core ideology—often existed in the visionary companies not just when they were successful but also when they were struggling just to survive.”*

-James C. Collins & Jeffrey I. Porras, Built to Last

#### Audience:

- › Founder/Owner
- › Senior leaders
- › Often participation (through interviews, focus groups and surveys) with employees

#### Delivery:

- › Varies; typically an entire day

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# CREATING A CORE IDEOLOGY DEFINING OUR CONTRIBUTION

## *A Legacy of Contribution*

A core ideology is a shared understanding of an organization’s “reason for being.” Why was it created in the first place? Of course, organizations are started to make a profit and provide a living for its founders and employees. However, there is more...something that each company does to contribute meaningful value to its customers, community, employees and, perhaps, society as a whole.

Clarifying a core ideology is getting at this contribution. Whose lives will be enriched because of your products and services? How does your very existence make a difference to the communities or society of which you’re a part?

A core ideology also has to do with the “character” of your organization. What are the most important tenets, guiding principles or values by which you want people to conduct themselves? In this sense, your core ideology is like a founding document, your “constitution” that teaches people what you believe and how you want to behave. It’s from your ideology that you build your culture. A good ideology, well-executed, should shape attitudes, habits and behaviors of everyone within your company.

### **What you will do**

We take senior leaders (often beginning with the owner or founder of a business) through a process of examining the current ideology (whether explicit or not) and then modifying or creating an ideology that reflects your views of the legacy you want to leave as well as behaviors by which you want everyone to conduct themselves. Sometimes we gather data, as a prelude to this process, through interviews, focus groups or surveys to your employees.

Then, through dialogue and structured exercises, you will:

- › Understand the role of a clearly defined core ideology to your organization’s success
- › Explore the contribution you want to make (more than making a profit)
- › Define (or modify) your organization’s mission statement
- › Analyze the habits, attitudes and beliefs that drive your current culture
- › Reach a consensus on a set of guiding principles or values that will pervade everything you do
- › Explore how to bring these principles to life

In many cases a core ideology already exists. Then the challenge is to give it life, to make it more than words hanging on a wall or printed in a three ring binder. We explore what you want to accomplish with your ideology, including the kind of culture you want to create and consult with you about ways you can make it more real, ways in which you need to bring your own behaviors into better alignment with your ideology as well as ways in which you can instill and reinforce it with your employees.

Although spending time on core ideology doesn’t seem like “real work” to some, it is perhaps the deepest work that a leadership team can do. A clear ideology establishes direction, facilitates decision-making, motivates employees and elevates performance at every level of the organization.