

cultural values assessment cva barrett values centre

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Introduction

In today's fast moving business environment, understanding the cultural fabric that underpins an organization is no longer a luxury—it is a necessity. A clear grasp of the shared beliefs, norms, and values that guide employee behaviour can unlock higher engagement, streamline decision making, and foster resilience in the face of change. This is where a **cultural values assessment (CVA)**, specifically the one developed by the **Barrett Values Centre**, comes into play. By combining rigorous research with practical tools, the Barrett Values Centre provides a structured way to uncover, evaluate, and align the core values that drive an organization's success.

In this article, we will explore what a CVA is, why the Barrett Values Centre's approach stands out, and how you can apply it within your own organization. Whether you're a senior leader, HR professional, or change management specialist, this guide will give you the insights you need to harness the power of culture for sustainable growth.

1. Understanding Cultural Values Assessment (CVA)

1.1 What Is a CVA?

A **cultural values assessment** is a systematic process that identifies the values—both explicit and implicit—that shape an organization's culture. Unlike generic culture surveys that focus on attitudes or behaviours, a CVA dives into the foundational beliefs that influence how people think, collaborate, and make decisions. The result is a clear map of the value landscape that can inform strategy, leadership development, and change initiatives.

1.2 The Value of Knowing Your Cultural Landscape

Understanding cultural values provides several key benefits:

- **Strategic Alignment:** Ensures that long term goals resonate with the core values that employees live by.
- **Talent Management:** Helps attract, develop, and retain people whose values align with the organization's mission.
- **Decision Quality:** Reduces friction by grounding decisions in a shared value framework.
- **Change Readiness:** Identifies potential cultural barriers early, enabling proactive mitigation.

2. The Barrett Values Centre: History and Mission

2.1 Who Is Barrett?

The Barrett Values Centre, founded by Dr. Robert Barrett, is a global research and consulting organisation that specialises in values research. With a team of psychologists, sociologists, and business scholars, Barrett has built one of the most comprehensive value taxonomies used by Fortune 500 companies, universities, and government agencies worldwide.

2.2 The Barrett Value Taxonomy

At the heart of the Barrett Values Centre's work is a 28 value taxonomy that captures the full spectrum of human values—from "Achievement" and "Security" to "Tradition" and "Curiosity." This taxonomy is underpinned by decades of empirical research and is designed to be culturally neutral, making it applicable across diverse contexts.

2.3 Mission and Impact

The centre's mission is simple: to help organisations understand and harness the power of values to create high performing cultures. Through research, training, and tools, Barrett has enabled leaders to align strategy with values, drive engagement, and foster innovation.

3. How CVA Works: The Barrett Approach

3.1 The Assessment Process

The Barrett CVA typically follows a four step cycle:

1. Preparation: Define objectives, select participants, and tailor the assessment to your organisational context.
2. Data Collection: Use a combination of surveys, interviews, and focus groups to gather insights on values.
3. Analysis: Map responses onto the Barrett taxonomy, identify dominant values, and highlight gaps.
4. Reporting & Action Planning: Present findings in a clear, actionable format and develop a roadmap for cultural alignment.

3.2 The Barrett Values Survey

Central to the process is the Barrett Values Survey, a validated instrument that asks respondents to rank 28 values in order of importance. The survey is available in multiple languages and can be administered online, ensuring accessibility and scalability.

3.3 Qualitative Insights

While the survey provides quantitative data, the Barrett CVA also incorporates qualitative methods—such as narrative interviews—to capture the nuances of how values manifest in daily work. This mixed methods approach delivers a richer, more actionable understanding.

4. The Barrett Values Centre Methodology in Depth

4.1 Value Mapping

Once data is collected, Barrett's analysts map the results onto a visual "values map." This map shows the relative importance of each value within the organization, revealing clusters and potential tensions. For example, a high emphasis on "Achievement" coupled with low emphasis on "Community" may signal a performance driven culture that needs more collaboration.

4.2 Cultural Gap Analysis

By comparing the organization's value profile with industry benchmarks or best practice profiles, Barrett identifies gaps that may hinder performance. These gaps become the focus of targeted interventions.

4.3 Actionable Recommendations

The final report includes a set of tailored recommendations, such as leadership training modules, communication strategies, or policy revisions. Each recommendation is linked back to specific values, ensuring relevance and impact.

5. Applications of CVA in Business

5.1 Leadership Development

Leaders who understand their own value profile—and how it aligns with the organizational culture—are better equipped to inspire and guide teams. CVA helps leaders identify personal strengths and blind spots, enabling more

authentic and effective leadership.

5.2 Talent Acquisition & Retention

In a competitive talent market, cultural fit is paramount. By incorporating CVA findings into recruitment criteria, organisations can attract candidates whose values resonate with the company's core culture, thereby improving retention.

5.3 Change Management

Change initiatives often stall because they clash with entrenched values. CVA provides a roadmap to align change efforts with cultural values, reducing resistance and increasing adoption rates.

5.4 Strategic Planning

Strategic priorities that mirror the organization's values are more likely to be embraced by employees. CVA helps leaders ensure that mission statements, vision statements, and strategic goals are rooted in the shared value base.

5.5 Innovation and Creativity

Values such as "Curiosity," "Risk taking," and "Creativity" are key drivers of innovation. By assessing and fostering these values, organisations can create a culture that encourages experimentation and continuous improvement.

6. Case Studies: Real World Impact of the Barrett CVA

6.1 Global Tech Firm: Aligning Innovation Values

A multinational technology company sought to boost its R&D output. After conducting a Barrett CVA, the organization discovered a low emphasis on "Curiosity" and "Risk taking" among its product teams. By implementing targeted workshops and revising performance metrics to reward experimentation, the firm saw a 30% increase in new product ideas within a year.

6.2 Healthcare Provider: Enhancing Patient Centric Culture

A regional hospital chain used the Barrett CVA to evaluate its values alignment. The assessment revealed a strong focus on "Security" but a weak emphasis on "Compassion." By integrating patient centric training and revising reward systems, patient satisfaction scores rose by 15% over two years.

6.3 Financial Services: Strengthening Ethical Standards

An investment bank performed a Barrett CVA to address concerns about ethical lapses. The assessment highlighted a mismatch between high "Achievement" scores and low "Integrity" scores. The bank introduced ethics focused leadership programs and transparent reporting mechanisms, leading to a measurable decline in compliance incidents.

7. Benefits of Conducting a CVA with the Barrett Values Centre

- **Data Driven Culture Insights:** Provides a scientifically validated snapshot of core values.
- **Actionable Roadmaps:** Transforms insights into concrete change initiatives.
- **Cross Cultural Applicability:** The Barrett taxonomy is designed for global use.
- **Scalable Implementation:** Suitable for small teams or large multinational organisations.
- **Measurable Outcomes:** Enables tracking of value alignment over time.

8. Implementing a CVA: Step by Step Guide

8.1 Define Objectives and Scope

Clarify what you want to achieve—be it improved teamwork, stronger leadership, or better customer experience. Decide whether the assessment will cover the entire organisation or a specific unit.

8.2 Assemble a Cross Functional Team

Include representatives from HR, operations, finance, and frontline staff to ensure diverse perspectives. A dedicated project manager will keep the initiative on track.

8.3 Select the Barrett Assessment Tools

Choose the appropriate survey version and complementary qualitative instruments. Consider language and cultural nuances when selecting tools for international teams.

8.4 Communicate the Purpose

Transparent communication builds trust. Explain why the assessment is being conducted, how data will be protected, and what the next steps will be.

8.5 Collect and Analyse Data

Administer surveys and conduct interviews. Barrett analysts will then map the results onto the taxonomy and create a values map.

8.6 Present Findings and Co Create Action Plans

Share the report with leadership and staff. Facilitate workshops to discuss insights and collaboratively develop interventions.

8.7 Execute Interventions and Monitor Progress

Implement recommended actions—such as training, policy changes, or communication campaigns—and track progress using key metrics.

8.8 Re Assess to Measure Change

After a defined period (usually 12–18 months), conduct a follow up assessment to gauge shifts in value alignment and refine strategies.

9. Common Challenges and How to Overcome Them

9.1 Resistance to Self Reflection

Employees may fear that revealing personal values will be used against them. Mitigate this by ensuring anonymity and emphasizing the developmental purpose of the assessment.

9.2 Misinterpretation of Results

Without proper context, data can be misread. Engage Barrett experts or trained facilitators to guide interpretation and avoid knee jerk conclusions.

9.3 Integration with Existing Systems

Aligning the CVA outcomes with performance management, reward systems, and HRIS can be complex. Plan integration early and involve IT and HR stakeholders.

9.4 Sustaining Momentum

Culture change is incremental. Set realistic milestones, celebrate small wins, and keep leadership visibly committed

to sustain engagement.

10. Future Trends in Cultural Values Assessment

10.1 AI Driven Insights

Artificial intelligence is beginning to enhance data analysis, uncovering patterns that may be invisible to human analysts. This could make CVAs more predictive and actionable.

10.2 Real Time Value Tracking

Mobile apps and pulse surveys will allow organisations to monitor values alignment in near real time, enabling rapid response to cultural shifts.

10.3 Greater Emphasis on Diversity and Inclusion

Future CVAs will integrate diversity metrics, ensuring that value assessments reflect the experiences of all

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