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Have you ever thought about the difference between the words “value” and “values”? If you’re laughing and thinking, “Yeah, it’s the letter ‘s,’” well, you’re not wrong, but that’s not what I mean. When we talk about “value,” a word we usually use in a professional context, we’re usually referring to providing benefit to clients. “Values,” on the other hand, are the ideals we hold near and dear, and we often only discuss those outside of the workplace—and that’s a shame. Given that more than half of employees [report](#) feeling less than engaged at work, it’s high time we start asking how we can bring values into the workplace and create a clearer sense of purpose in our firms and in ourselves.

When I say a [purpose-driven](#) workplace, it’s not a matter of doing only what you most enjoy. Finding work to match your values doesn’t have to come in the form of finding your “dream job.” Bringing your values into your work, rather, is about

finding ways to align both what you do and how you do it with what matters to you.

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and too superficial. Identifying passions and hobbies is a worthy task, but values are something deeper. You really have to look inside yourself and ask what you care about. Don't be afraid to consider big, lofty, abstract ideas. This [article](#) contains an excellent list you can use as a jumping off point.

Once you created a list of values, it's helpful to rank them or give them star ratings for importance. Do you, for example, care more about autonomy or recognition? Usually, the more autonomy you have at a job, the less likely you are to receive public recognition. Reflecting on your career in this light, which most people have never done, can help give you a fresh perspective.

Micro- and macro-purpose

Your values manifest in work in all sorts of ways. On a small, granular scale, ask yourself how your daily tasks reflect values. If collaboration is important to you, you'll probably be much happier working on a tight-knit team than being siloed in your own office. People who like an ever-changing task list probably don't want to be at a firm that performs a narrow range of services. Those who want a predictable, steady workflow won't enjoy a start-up, but those who want to be a part of building something may love it.

As an accounting professional, you're at a great advantage in terms of finding meaningful work. What we do is truly important to our clients, so you'll never feel like your job is inessential. Accounting firms come in all shapes and sizes, and you can help build a firm in your image. You can serve clients whom you admire, like my recent [podcast](#) guest Marin Bright of Smart Meetings. She talked about her love for hotels and hospitality, which drove her passion in her business to serve those industries. Even though she doesn't work directly in a hotel, she has had a chance to specialize and make it part of her career, which in turn helps her to create more value for her customers. In Accounting we have the exact same kind of opportunity when

we specialize in niche areas that we are passionate about and when working with

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