Revisiting our Values

By Dr. Richard Kelley

It is hard to believe that 20 years have passed since members of our ‘ohana met with historian, author and educator George Hu’eu Sanford Kanahaele to discuss Hawaiian cultural values’ unique qualities and how those values might serve as a foundation that would set hospitality in the Hawaiian Islands apart from that of any other place on earth.

In the two decades that have passed since that meeting, we have learned how to incorporate the history and values of the first people to live in these lovely mid-Pacific lands into our everyday lives at home and at work in a program we call Ke ‘Ano Wa’a, which roughly translates as “The Outrigger Way.” Each letter in Ke ‘Ano Wa’a (some from the Hawaiian word, others from the English equivalent) represents a Hawaiian value:

- **Kīnā’ole (Flawlessness)**
  We do the right thing, in the right way, at the right time, in the right place, to the right person, for the right reason, with the right feeling, the first time.

- **Equality (Kaulike)**
  We foster open relationships based on honesty, trust and fairness; we respect each person equally.

- **A’o (Learn and share)**
  We create opportunities for mutual learning and empowerment that lead to personal and organizational growth and development.

- **Nā Mea Ho’okipa (Hosts)**
  As Hosts, we welcome and entertain our guests and friends with warmth and generosity.

- **‘Ohana (Family)**
  We are family working together joyfully to attain our goals and aspirations.

- **Wahi (Place)**
  We protect, care for and live in harmony with the land, our workplace, its peoples and cultures.

- **Accountability (Kuleana)**
  We have the courage and discipline to act on our responsibilities and to accept all consequences.

- **Aloha (Love)**
  We treat each other as we want to be treated – with love, compassion and dignity.

Ke ‘Año Wa’a stresses the value of the host culture, history and community – not only in Hawai‘i, but everywhere Outrigger has a property – and it encourages employees to share their knowledge of these things with guests. This stems from our conviction that visitors will enjoy a far more meaningful – and therefore more memorable – experience than they would on an ordinary “sun, surf and sand” vacation. We believe this makes a real difference in the quality of the guest experience.

The results have been outstanding. Internet hotel-rating sites consistently give our properties top ratings and quote comments from guests such as, “Exceeded our expectations,” “Short but oh so sweet....” and “Best hotel on Waikiki.”

As Outrigger has expanded across the Pacific Ocean and, recently, into the Indian Ocean, we have brought these values with us and adapted them to local traditions and cultures – Inafa’maolek on Guam, Mittrapab in Thailand and so forth.
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Our values inspire and touch the inner soul.

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There is a great deal of consistency in Ke ‘Aho Wa’a values as implemented from place to place, but that is not surprising, given the thousands of years of travel and mixing of cultures that has been demonstrated and confirmed by the Polynesian Voyaging Society and its oceangoing canoe, Hōkūle’a.1 Yet each location and culture in which we have properties has important nuances and variances that make it unique.

Contrast that with companies operating in the 48 contiguous states of the continental United States. Many authors of business books, blogs and newsletters have described the values common in successful companies operating in those areas.

Robert Dillenschneider in 5 Core Values for the Workplace lists:

- Integrity
- Perseverance
- Accountability
- Discipline
- Diligence

One of the most widely read business writers, speakers and consultants, Ken Blanchard, together with co-author Michael O’Connor, wrote Managing Values to help corporate leaders develop and integrate into everyday action and planning such values as:

- Honesty
- Fairness
- Integrity
- Cooperation

These are both fine books pointing the way to admirable goals but, in my opinion, neither inspires and touches one’s inner soul as do the values expressed in Outrigger’s Ke ‘Aho Wa’a and its cousins at Outrigger locations around the Pacific and Indian oceans.

As we celebrate the past 20 years of achievement, it is an opportunity to revisit our company values and …

1) Reaffirm that these are indeed the right values for a global company;

2) Ensure that we define our global values appropriately to reflect our global presence and cultural diversity, and;

3) Revisit each of our cultural values statements (e.g., Ke ‘Aho Wa’a, Inafa’maolek, Mittrapab, etc.) to align them with our global values.

Kaipo Ho, Outrigger’s cultural experiences manager, will be kicking this off next month at a conference that will bring together representatives from each of our properties in the Pacific, Oceania and the Indian Ocean.

It’s a huge project to complete in a relatively short timeframe, but I’m confident we will succeed. We will keep members of our ‘ohana posted in several ways, including through Saturday Briefing.

Wonderful programs like Ke ‘Aho Wa’a are fine examples of why I always say, “Outrigger is a Great Place to Work and Grow!”

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1 Outrigger is supporting the next journey of Hōkūle’a and its sister canoe, Hikianalia, which will be visiting 60 ports of call in 20 countries on a round-the-world voyage over the next five years.©