



Value for Value

by
Royce Holladay

Next in our exploration of the HSD simple rules is “**Give and get value for value.**” In any healthy human system individuals live in a delicate balance between contributing to the good of the whole and depending on the bounty of the system. This is neither a political nor social perspective. It is, rather, a matter of the economics of fit and sustainability. When an individual or group of individuals continues, over time, to take more than they give, that system is not sustainable. The same is true if individuals or groups continue, over time, to give more than they get back.

Consider what sometimes happens in non-profit organizations or faith communities. Often people will, out of their commitment to the cause or faith, take on assignments and tasks that call on them to contribute a great deal over time. Sometimes, these people “burn out,” using up their own reserves of energy and/or other resources and have no more to give. On the other hand, we all have known individuals or groups for whom there seems to be no end to what they are able to give.

In corporations, when leaders take all they can from the system, with little or no consideration for employees or stakeholders, they soon suck the organization dry--leaving the organization to collapse on itself. That’s what happened in the financial collapse in many companies in 2008. Those who were making money drew too much out of the system, contributing to the economic collapse that had global implications.

What is it that determines “value for value” for any given situation? While there are some obvious considerations in determining value for value, there are also more subtle, less tangible ways of measuring value. It’s about the flow of resources--both tangible and intangible--in the system, and the individual’s value of the resources they can access.

- Exchanging money (or other forms of payment) for time spent
- Making sure individuals have information and other resources they need to do their work
- Providing feedback and encouragement for a job well done
- Creating clarity about how an individual’s work contributes to the whole
- Allowing people to engage in creative and/or productive activities
- Ensuring access to professional advancement or recognition
- Providing opportunities for satisfactory social and affinity relationships
- Offering opportunities to teach and learn
- Providing personal and emotional support, and accepting it in return

These are but a few of the multiple examples of types of exchanges that people consider as they look for value for value. The very nature of complex systems calls us to consider each situation anew as we use this simple rule to guide our decisions and actions.

Every actor in every system needs and wants to establish a different value for value relationship. An Adaptive Action cycle will help you find the right fit for one person, place, and time.

What does an individual consider to be of value in this system? What existing patterns of engagement and activity help us know that?

So what do those patterns reveal about reasonable choices for making meaningful connections?

Now what will we do to create more and better value-for-value exchanges in our system?

The attached tool provides a foundational set of questions that can inform this Adaptive Action cycle. Use it to help you gain clarity in your own organization, community, or relationships as you establish better value-for-value exchanges. Let us know about your challenges around value for value. Be in touch.

Royce

rholladay@hsdinstitute.org



Influencing Your System

Give and Get Value for Value

What?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is “of value”? • What patterns exist that tell me what this individual / group wants to give? • What patterns exist that tell me what this individual / group wants to get? • How do these patterns shift as I focus on different individuals / groups / scales? • What history exists that helps me know what this individual / group has considered as value for value in the past? • What do we, as a system, have to offer individuals? • What do we, as a system, need from individuals / groups?
So what?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • So what can we offer or what do we need to need to offer individuals / groups? • So what does that mean we can ask of individuals / groups? • So how can I communicate this relationship in ways that individuals / groups can hear and know that I value their contributions? • So what does this mean as I consider the different needs, wants, requirements of different individuals / groups? • So what does this mean about the ways I can negotiate these differences? • So what policies and practices will enable me to live according to this simple rule in equitable ways that ensure access to value for value?
Now what?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Now what will I do to give and get value for value? • Now what can I do to design and implement policies and practices that support this simple rule? • Now what can I do to communicate decisions about value for value with transparency and clarity? • Now what will help me know whether our value-for-value calculations are effective and fair? • Now what will I do to collect the data to help me assess our system actions aimed at ensuring value for value?